

Jan 29, 2026, Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Tuesday, Jan 27th and Friday, Jan 30th Submitted via
Written Comments Form

1	<p>Dear Members of the Board - I write to request that you continue to hold CPS accountable to your original demand of doing the work to preserve the ChiArts conservatory. While CPS is providing you with updates that they are moving forward in the process, the "process" is very one-sided. The community Advisory Council has been formed, but it is very clear from the beginning that this group will have very little influence regarding the future of ChiArts. The committee has been provided with 3 candidates from which to select an interim principal. According to the committee, the candidates do not possess what is needed to transition ChiArts to a CPS school while maintaining the pre-professional training and reputation of a nationally recognized art school. I urge the board to review the candidates who were presented - do these look like candidates that you would select in a time such as this? In addition, it is the parent's understanding that the current principal applied for the interim role - yet his application did not make it to the committee for review. When our kids are already facing so much uncertainty about their school's future, why would we not provide the current principal with the opportunity to advance. Our kids need stability and a future at ChiArts.</p> <p>Furthermore, we remain in limbo about the future of the conservatory - yet on Feb 13, the 500+ students who auditioned will be asked to make a decision about attending ChiArts. Imagine being accepted into the high school of your dreams, but not knowing if you can move forward with admissions because the school may look completely different and not focus on your chosen art. And this affects not only the incoming students, but current students as well.</p> <p>Why do we continue to try to fix something that is NOT broken. ChiArts students excel. They go on to make our city look like the amazing city of the arts that it is. Why are we still even having this conversation.</p> <p>I urge the board to put pressure on CPS. We have provided CPS with a possible transition plan, yet received no response. CPS is not hearing (they will say they listened at the 2 community meetings) to our community and we are very concerned about our children's futures. Please help us save ChiArts by compelling CPS to provide a plan in writing regarding updates on the conservatory model AND review the principals that we were provided regarding their match to our unique community.</p>
2	<p>Good evening, members of the Board My name is Veronica Dejesus-Mendez, and I am a parent of a freshman theater student at the Chicago High School for the Arts. I am here to speak on the critical importance of preserving our conservatory model and retaining our principal, Néstor Corona, as the school transitions to district management. For our scholar-artists, the three hours of daily intensive training aren't just an 'extra'; they are the core of their education and their pathway to college and careers. While I appreciate the Board's vote to keep ChiArts open, the commitment to preserve the conservatory 'to the greatest extent practicable' creates uncertainty. We ask for a firm guarantee that the 1:1 student-to-instrument access, professional artist-instructors, and extended day will remain fully funded. Stability is paramount during any transition. Principal Néstor Corona has provided vital leadership during a period of immense financial and operational pressure. His deep roots in performing arts and multilingual education have made him a champion for our diverse student body. Removing him now would disrupt the continuity our students need most. We urge the Board to ensure Principal Corona remains at the helm to guide ChiArts through this new chapter as a CPS-managed school.</p> <p>Don't just save our building; save our mission. Keep the conservatory model intact and keep Principal Corona on board. Thank you."</p>
3	<p>The CPS School Board must immediately commit to a clear, transparent, and fully funded budget for ChiArts that preserves the integrity of its arts conservatory model. ChiArts was founded on the promise of rigorous academics paired with deep, discipline-specific arts training. That promise is now being undermined by continued delay, inaction, and a lack of transparency.</p>

The absence of a finalized budget has left students, families, and faculty in prolonged uncertainty. Conservatory programs cannot function in limbo. Faculty are unable to plan, students are left questioning the future of their training, and families are being forced to make critical educational decisions without essential information. This uncertainty is actively eroding trust in CPS leadership and in the School Board's commitment to arts education.

More alarming still, based on CPS's own public comments, it does not appear that meaningful discussion of the ChiArts budget is even taking place. This is deeply concerning. A lack of visible planning or deliberation suggests that the future of the conservatory is being sidelined rather than addressed with the urgency it demands. Silence and omission are not neutral—they signal deprioritization.

Arts education is not an optional enhancement at ChiArts; it is the school's core mission. Any budget that weakens, reduces, or destabilizes the conservatory structure undermines the very purpose of the school and disproportionately harms students who chose ChiArts specifically for its intensive arts training. Delay, in this context, is a decision—and its consequences are already being felt.

We are deeply disappointed that ChiArts was not included on the CPS School Board agenda this month, despite the seriousness of these unresolved issues. Excluding ChiArts from the agenda signals a troubling lack of accountability and urgency. We expect and demand that ChiArts be placed on the agenda at the next Board meeting, with a clear plan and timeline for budget discussion and approval.

The CPS School Board must act decisively and transparently by committing to a budget that conserves and protects the ChiArts arts conservatory. Our students, families, and educators deserve stability, honesty, and leadership. Continued delay sends a clear message that arts education—and the trust of this community—are negotiable. They are not.

4 Chicago Board of Education – District 299

The Chicago Board of Education (“the Board”) has publicly affirmed its commitment to increased transparency and to expanding opportunities for meaningful public input at Board meetings. In alignment with that stated commitment, it is critical that the Board formally recognize, engage, and build sustained relationships with trusted community-based institutions that directly represent students, parents, and local stakeholders.

The Chi North Lawndale Chamber of Commerce is one such institution. Our Chamber includes parents, students, educators, business owners, nonprofit leaders, and residents who live and work within District 299. We represent families whose children attend Chicago Public Schools and who are directly impacted by the Board’s policies, funding decisions, and long-term educational strategy. As such, the Chamber should be regarded as a leading institutional partner and a consistent point of engagement for the Board in North Lawndale.

North Lawndale is a community that has experienced decades of educational and economic disinvestment. While the Board and City leadership have supported tax increases that directly impact residents in communities like ours, many students in North Lawndale continue to face unacceptable conditions—including the use of outdated textbooks and insufficient educational resources that lag generations behind current standards. This disconnect raises serious concerns about equity, accountability, and prioritization.

The Board has not only a fiduciary responsibility, but a moral obligation to ensure that communities bearing the weight of public investment decisions see tangible, measurable improvements in educational quality and opportunity. That obligation includes building authentic, ongoing relationships with institutions that are already embedded in the community and actively organizing parents, students, and stakeholders toward collective outcomes.

	<p>The Chi North Lawndale Chamber of Commerce stands ready to serve as a strategic partner to the Chicago Board of Education—to elevate community voice, support student success, and help align educational policy with economic opportunity. Transparency must be matched with action, and public input must translate into institutional partnership. Our students, families, and community deserve nothing less.</p>
5	<p>The ADLC has many meetings set up, but it's an empty promise with no future. This is a misuse of resources. We have been selected by the ChiArts community to help during this unsure period. Being denied an active role in the selection of the school's principal shows that CPS is not interested in community feedback or the safety of our students.</p>
6	<p>I am a parent of a ChiArts junior in the visual arts conservatory. I am very excited that the CPS Board voted to take over management of the school. However, I am disappointed in how the transition process is occurring. We need as much stability as possible and I believe that Mr. Nestor Corona, the current principal, be considered as part of the principal pool. We went through a long process to approve him in the last year and he has been a stabilizing force in this process.</p>
7	<p>The community requests that the Board of Education approve the Chaste Hair Institute for the location of the previous Louis Armstrong school for development of a new larger school for them. This can accommodate the projected student enrollment growth while supporting long-term educational goals for the community. The community would love to have a cosmetology school in the area and this is perfect! Chaste Hair has demonstrated the strength, ability and passion this area needs they actually care about the community and serving. Chaste Hair Institute!</p>
8	<p>The Office of Student Support and Engagement (OSSE)/Office of College and Career Success (OCCS) in CPS Is Quietly Dismantling a Program That Helped Thousands of Vulnerable High School Students.</p> <p>Former Teachers of CPS Student Outreach & Re-Engagement (SOAR),</p> <p>The OSSE/OCCS program in CPS is quietly dismantling one of its most effective dropout-prevention and credit recovery programs—without public discussion, without transparency, and without a plan to serve the students left behind.</p> <p>For more than a decade, the Student Outreach & Re-Engagement (SOAR) program helped some of CPS's most vulnerable high school students—young people who had dropped out, become chronically truant, or fallen just short of graduation—earn credits, re-enroll, and graduate. SOAR did this by combining in-person credit recovery taught by licensed high school teachers with outreach, mentoring, and wraparound supports delivered in trusted community spaces.</p> <p>In December 2025, that model was all but dismantled after several years of neglectful leadership and inaction.</p> <p>All licensed SOAR high school teachers were surprisingly laid off mid-school year. In-person credit recovery was eliminated. Yet students continue to be enrolled in online credit recovery courses—without licensed high school educators to teach, support, or legally oversee them.</p> <p>SOAR leadership insists the program still exists. But without licensed teachers, without in-person instruction, without outreach to disconnected youth, and without intentional leadership SOAR is no longer the program it claims to be.</p> <p>This matters because credit recovery is the heart of SOAR. It is how students under 16, students who cannot attend alternative schools, students with health or mental health challenges, and students who have already dropped out access a path back to graduation. Removing licensed educators from that process doesn't just weaken the program—it effectively shuts the door on thousands of students. WHEN THE HEART IS REMOVED FROM THE BODY...IT DIES!</p> <p>Equally troubling is the lack of transparency. SOAR staff (including the Manager of all SOAR sites), families, community partners, and even school counselors were not informed that SOAR was being redefined mid-year OR that teachers were being laid off.</p> <p>Teachers, CPS Talent, and CTU reps were told that teacher layoffs resulted for the non-renewal of a grant; however, the Truant Alternative Optional Education Program (TAOEP) grants were</p>

renewed for FY26 and continues to fund current SOAR staff, with multiple positions remaining unfilled. Also, SOAR staff—including teachers, re-engagement specialists, coordinators, facilitators, and the director were funded through the same grants in FY25 and FY24. How were ALL teachers singled out for FY26 if two consecutive years prior similar TAOEP grants collectively funded most SOAR positions? OSSE/OCCS also receive funding support from the CPS 115 General Education Fund. The same fund that is currently paying the laid off teachers as reassigned teachers/substitutes. Teachers offered to stay on as reassigned subs as to not cause disruptions to students. The offer was explicitly declined by OSSE/OCCS leadership.

I have spent 30 years as an Educator in CPS. During my tenure with SOAR, I have watched thousands of students who were written off earn diplomas because we met them where they were—with intentional leadership, licensed teachers, academic flexibility, mentoring, wraparound services, human and therapeutic support. I have also watched what happens when programs quietly withdraw services and call it “realignment.”

Chicago's students deserve better.

The Board of Education must demand transparency, restore licensed high school educators to SOAR, recommit to serving the students this program was created for. Further, CPS must revamp, enhance, expand, and fund this program! The cost of doing nothing will be measured not in spreadsheets—but in lost graduates, lost opportunity, and lost trust.

Thank you

9	Chaste Hair Institute for the previous Louis Armstrong location, the community is in support of them winning this bid. no one else deserves it more, their dedication and passion is what we all need and strive to be to each other. Approve this school for this location.
10	We the community are in full support and stand behind Chaste Hair Institute for the previous Louis Armstrong location, we want them to win this bid. They demonstrate the leadership skills and connection with the community we need in this area. Having a cosmetology in this area will be of great benefit and provide hands on learning, building skills and increase of jobs for all.
11	Chaste Hair deserves to win this bid and we the community are in full support. Cosmetology school for this community will mean a lot and bringing joy, education and opportunities to us, especially those that aren't able to travel a great distance to find a school. I want to go to a school like this, that cares so much about others and their community to have this much dedication and service to teach. Approving Chaste Hair for this BID will make a huge difference. Chaste Hair Institute for the win!
12	I live in the community and the Haugan middle school was built for us, the neighbors who go to Haugan. My daughter is in an overcrowded room and we need to space. North River should either share the space or leave, because we don't need 2 different public schools pulling from the neighborhood. I am a home owner and taxpayer so this is really important to me. I want the kids in our neighborhood to have room to move and have art that isn't on a cart!
13	CPS needs to focus and prioritize our children and their education. Cluttered, over filled classrooms are not able to provide care and support for each individual child. We want smaller classrooms and teacher/ student ratios. Do better for our children.
14	Como madre y padre mentor es desconsolador ver a diario a nuestros niños pasando por la necesidad de NO tener espacios para sus actividades artísticas ,sus citas con terapeutas y su desarrollo educativo nuestros niños estan hacinados y si lo pensamos muy bien no estamos excluidos en caso de alguna emergencia natural que suceda algo lamentable como perder vidas de nuestros niños intentando evacuar la escuela pedimos a CPS que nuestro caso sea tomado en cuenta y nos sedan el espacio que esta libre en NORTH RIVER
15	I am a parent at Haugan Elementary, and I am angry that our children continue to be asked to learn in overcrowded, inadequate conditions while the concerns of families are repeatedly ignored.
	Year after year, we raise the same issues. Class sizes grow. Learning spaces disappear. Children are crammed into rooms never meant to hold this many students, and teachers are forced to make impossible choices just to get through the day. This is not fair to our kids, and it is not acceptable.

Overcrowding is not a minor inconvenience!! It affects learning, behavior, mental health, and safety. Our children deserve attention, support, and space to succeed, yet Haugan families and staff are left feeling dismissed and unheard.

We are tired of waiting and tired of vague promises. The CPS Board needs to take immediate, concrete action to address overcrowding at Haugan, whether through expansion, boundary changes, or other real solutions, not more delays.

Our kids only get one elementary school experience. They should not have to sacrifice their education because the system refuses to act. We are asking and demanding , that the CPS Board do better!

16 My name is Gabriel Paez, a bilingual teacher at Haugan Elementary, where over 75% of our student population are ELs, with many languages spoken. This reality reflects the direction of many of our schools, and of the district as a whole- ELs are the fastest growing student group in the district. It is troubling that a massive school district, with a significant and growing EL population does not offer any centrally funded and universally provided ESL curriculum or programs to all schools that need it. Teaching English as a second language must be systemic, high quality, and consistent across our schools. A student may transfer from a CPS school with high quality and well organized ESL programs, to a different school nearby without any ESL curricula or programs. This inconsistency from school to school, and from network to network is a disservice to our ELs, who deserve and are legally entitled to high quality bilingual and ESL programs. CPS must live up to the law and provide ELs with ESL curricula in whatever school they find themselves. This curricula must be free to schools, and provided by the Board, without having to depend on principals to make the decision to invest or not in ESL programs. Consider that in the Safari Montage platform, all schools have access to French as a foreign language curriculum, which is laudable and needed to expand our foreign language offerings. However, in Safari Montage (or any other CPS platform), it is unacceptable that there is no universally available ESL program to teach English as a second language. This has been brought to OMME and Chief Assaf repeatedly during monthly CTU-CPS Joint meetings, but there has been no movement announced towards this much needed resource. CPS simply cannot continue to put off investing in a universally available ESL curriculum given the growing need. Language justice is racial justice is social justice is educational justice. Thank you.

17 I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding the ongoing overcrowding and space constraints at Haugan Elementary School.

Families and staff are being asked to accept increasingly compromised learning conditions due to a lack of adequate space. Classrooms, shared areas, and student resources are clearly strained, and this directly impacts the quality of education, safety, and overall school experience for our children.

What is especially frustrating is the decision not to utilize a nearby, nearly empty CPS school building that could help alleviate these very real and immediate issues. Leaving a viable school facility unused while students and teachers struggle with overcrowding is, quite frankly, a ridiculous and unacceptable outcome. It reflects a disconnect between district-level decision-making and the day-to-day realities faced by students, families, and educators.

As a parent, I expect CPS leadership to prioritize practical, common-sense solutions that put students first, ensuring that neighborhood public schools are supported over private charter schools. Utilizing existing, vacant facilities seems like an obvious step toward addressing overcrowding, yet that opportunity is being ignored.

I urge the Board to revisit this decision, engage transparently with the Haugan community, and take swift action to address the space challenges at our school. Our children deserve learning environments that support—not hinder—their education.

	Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to seeing meaningful action taken.
18	<p>Three years ago, I saw a former student at the playground. She was with her middle school son and I was with my two year old daughter. You see, I teach adult English language learners in the Albany Park Community. Over the past ten years, my students' children have attended Haugan and I have heard them speak about the high quality instruction their children have received, but the sad state of the building. Then, at the playground that day, my students started to talk about the new Haugan principal . My student explained that this principal was actively working to find funding and make plans to restore parts of the building, construct a new playground, make a new parking lot, and add trees to the island of blacktop only space around the building. With tears in her eyes, my student said to me, "This principal told us this is just the beginning. First, they will make our physical space beautiful so the children and parents can see that we are worthy of having good things."</p> <p>This moment has stayed with me and was key as I decided on the school in which I would send my daughter to for elementary school. She is now a preschool student at Haugan, our neighborhood school, and we see this philosophy in action every day. The principal and all staff believe our children are worthy of an exceptional education. It is in that spirit, that we have seen Haugan leadership advocate for more space within the former Aspira/Haugan charter school and it is with this spirit that our community is continually grieved by the lack of space in our Haugan building. With kindergarten sizes of 30 children, I am not confident that this is a good learning environment for my daughter and I am wrestling with the difficult decision of staying at a school I love with administration I trust. This doesn't have to be a difficult decision, though. A school building, originally constructed for Haugan's neighborhood students, sits a block and a half away. It is far from full capacity with the entire second floor empty. We have leadership that has proved more than capable of having constructive colocation conversations. We have evidence that CPS's own space formula is inaccurate and outdated:</p> <p>https://cpsapples2apples.com/2025/12/12/updated-space-utilization-formula-does-it-fix-problems/</p> <p>Still, we do not have a solution and week after week we implore the Chicago School Board to hear our cries for help and propose a solution.</p> <p>If we stay at Haugan, my daughter won't have a school library. She will potentially receive small group instruction in tiny converted closet space. She will share a classroom with 29 other kindergarten students. Does the Chicago Board of Education believe this communicates the core educational philosophy that our children are worthy of our best? I implore you as a mother and an educator to do everything within your power to acknowledge our locally-driven solutions to this very real problem and help us co-locate in the former Aspira/Haugan building or at the very least obtain temporary co-location for us while an annex is built for Haugan.</p>
19	<p>As a second-grade special education inclusion teacher at Helge Haugan Elementary, I find it difficult to provide my students with the accommodations they need to be successful. In a benchmark grade, it is stressful for students and teachers to test or reteach in small groups in a noisy hallway. These students are already challenged, and not having a quiet space only adds to the difficulty of their learning. Haugan is so overcrowded that we have to schedule locations weeks in advance to ensure students have a proper space to test and learn. If students require additional time to complete work or to be retaught, the hallway may be the only space available. A hallway already crowded with MTSS interventionists and students transitioning to and from essential classes, recess, and lunch is inconducive to the desired purpose of supporting students with special needs. As a teacher who cares very much for her students, I implore you to help provide an adequate and fair solution to support our future generation.</p>
20	We are overcrowded at Haugan Elementary and need space ASAP.
21	Pedimos de favor que nos proporcione el espacio sugerido pues como ya sabran necesitamos el espacio yo como Mama tengo a mis niños con terapia de habla apoyo en el desarrollo y muchas otras ayudas lamentablemente nuestra escuela no cuenta con espacios suficiente ..
22	I'm writing this because Haugan elementary school is where my son has studied for the past 5 years. Haugan is an amazing school and great for our community many students attend Haugan. It is becoming more and more crowded as many other students are coming in .I my self have

	<p>another child that I would like for her to study at Haugan elementary but as news has break that the space is becoming less available it worries me that my daughter will not attend the school and be close to her brother and be part of Haugan elementary community. I ask that you guys find a solution for this situation I know Haugan staff where discussing to move the middle school grades to another building but that has failed. I think that's a great idea that middle schoolers are moved to another building this would make enough space for those new children that are coming in. Please we as parents ask for a solution to this situation it would be great that my children and other families continue to be part of this school. This helps my family in many ways one is that the school is close to home it would make it much easier if both my children attended Haugan Elementary. I ask you guys to please consider all the families that don't have access to a vehicle or a form of transportation who walk to Haugan because it is close and I know some of this families have other children waiting to become students at this school. Thank You</p>
23	There has been significant energy and voices dedicated to this and I am adding my own - please support Haugan Elementary to find a solution for the overcrowding. With CPS enrollment declining, supporting overburdened schools is incredibly necessary to maintain confidence in leadership and the future of my child's education.
24	Buenos dias, me dirijo para pedir Apoyo en el espacio para la escuela, nuestros niños necesitan espacio , no nos olviden
25	I am in support of Chaste Hair Institute of winning the Bid for Louis Armstrong old location, let's keep it educational and make it a cosmetology school and help our community. Let's approve and have Chaste in this location. Let's continue to educate our community and generation. Chaste Hair truly value and inspire others. Help them make their dream come true. Support Chaste Hair Institute for the winning BID.
26	Hola me dirijo a los representantes de CPS soy Lucy Esquivel madre de un alumno de Haugan estamos viviendo tiempo de sobre poblacion en la escuela es de sentido urgente una colocacion en el espacio que pertenecia a Aspira no hay una biblioteca el que era ese espacio se usa como oficina con 13 personas en ese espacio aviendo resiben cosejeria estudiantes que no tienen pribacidad por ley tendria esto noes algo que es justo y legal si vien es sierto que se acomodaron espacios para usarlos como aulas fue situacion forsada dada la situacion queremos soluciones no que nos digan o travels que viniero y se sentaro y no viero que era una situacion que requiera tal colocacion ya que como ustedes lo dijeron solo vinieron y se sentaron el 7 de octubre vinieron ahora fuera de escuela nunca dieron ni an dado un paseo por la escuela en horas de clases otra desus respuestas sin sentido que nos andado ustedes esque no se pueden juntar los niños de North River con Haugan porque no tiene sentido porque yo estube en las reuniones de colocacion de Aspira con Nort River cuando se les preguntó de como se manejaría tal situacion con ambos estudiantes ustedes su respuesta fue que todo estaba resuelto y ahora ven problema para esta colocacion tambien en su respuesta de ustedes an dicho que North River esta resiviendo niños del area locual es falso a Haugan yegaron familias alos cuales se les nego la inscripcion asus hijos ellos al ser una escuela Magnet solo resiven niños por loteria y al ellos ocupar todo el espacio bacio les tomaria 5 años Omas llenar el espacio que quedo vacio mientras Haugan tiene el problema ahora pido pronta solution esto se esta sintiendo como favoritismo basta ya no nos ignoren ustedes se sentirian agusto reunirse con su sicologo y que personas agenes eaten oyendo lo que deveria ser pribado nesesitamos respuestas justas
27	I'm writing this letter because I like to keep Aspira Early College Hs open, because I think this is a great school but this school needs support economically and needs more students as well. This school have a really good teachers and students but the school doesn't have any support to keep it open. I'm graduating this year but I would like to see this school open next year. This school in my opinion was the best ever I can be, I had been in 2 others school but specially was the best in my opinion. Just because the teachers support me in everything I need and helped me to learn new things.
28	In the fall we begged that you save Chi-Arts & the entire board pretended to agree. It is now almost Spring & the board keeps dangling a carrot over our heads with no concrete plan or decision. I spoke at a meeting in Oct. & was so hopeful that I could continue to live in the city, work in the city & safely raise my children in the city. I now know better & was so naive to think that the board would continue this legacy of a safe haven that is Chi-arts. The news is always talking about "curfew for teens" & politicians calling for consequences but fail to realize there is

	nothing for the youth!!! The little there is keeps shrinking until it disappears...Every last board member should be ashamed. As for me & mine, we will be packing up to the burbs like every other person I know has done. I am embarrassed & ashamed for each board member
29	I am writing on behalf of Haugan Elementary. I am both a teacher and a parent of a kindergarten student there. We work very hard to provide robust, engaging education to all of our students but the space issues are making it difficult. My daughter's kindergarten class is so crowded and truly has too many children in a small space. These 5 and 6 year olds need to be able to engage in kinesthetic movement as it helps with their learning. I know they don't have the space to move around, much less practice skills with additional supports/manipulatives. I am concerned. I also see a lot of classes, MTSS groups and counseling taking place in hallways, closets, where ever they can find. Not only does this violate privacy, but it makes it harder for the teachers, clinicians and others to do their job as effectively. All kids deserve classrooms with space, adequate spaces to receive support so that it doesn't feel like an afterthought. We care deeply about the quality of education our students deserve and its time CPS cares as much as helps us solve our issues with overcrowding!
30	I am writing today urging the board to take action on the overcrowding situation at Haugan Elementary. I am a community member, tax payer & parent of a student at Haugan. The fact that our co-location proposal was denied when an entire floor of an elementary school just 2 blocks away sits vacant, is unacceptable. Our students and teachers deserve much better than meetings in literal closets and teaching on carts and in hallways. Please do something to address the overcrowding. Please do not make our vibrant community suffer any further when so much has already been taken from our neighborhood in the last several months. We deserve space for our students to learn and grow.
31	Our neighborhood had an obvious solution to a local problem which was ignored by CPS, without any good reason behind the decision. Why are we paying to keep a school running at a fraction of capacity while a block away another school lacks space for basic functions?
32	I'm writing to report my concerns as a parent about the overcrowding at Haugan Elementary. My son is in kindergarten there and I attended the meetings related to this. I am so disheartened to hear that the board doesn't seem willing to fix the overcrowding issues at our school. My kindergartener is learning to read/write with 30 kids in his class. They pack private offices for administration and are using hallways as private space. We want clear immediate relief for these overcrowding issues. I am requesting that you revisit the collocation site with the Leland school.
33	<p>For sixteen years I taught in the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic schools. I took a break after my son was born, and when he turned four we had a choice: send him to a Catholic school that I knew, or take a chance on our neighborhood public school. We chose to send him to Haugan Elementary.</p> <p>In the short time that he's been there, we've befriended children whose parents or grandparents hail from such far-flung places as central Indiana, but also from Japan, Mexico, Guatemala, and Ecuador. Some of our favorite playmates are a child with selective mutism and another who wears braces to help strengthen her walking. I have made new friends too, and I feel lucky to be part of such a diverse, vibrant community.</p> <p>Haugan is an epicenter of community-building and connection. It reflects the best of what makes our country great: people from all walks of life working together to help each other and make life better for the next generation. This is what we want from our neighborhood schools! "Haugan" is not just a building where kids go to learn history, math, and science. It's a community where parents feel supported, where neighbors feel invested. You've heard from many of those stakeholders over the past few months.</p> <p>I was anxious about leaving the Catholic schools because I'd heard horror stories about the dysfunction within CPS. My experience in Haugan itself has been delightful. In all my years of teaching it's one of the best-run schools I have encountered. But I am quite discouraged by the responses of CPS and the Office of Portfolio Management. When a school like Haugan, that is doing so many things right, asks CPS for help, you should sit up and take notice! Teachers,</p>

	<p>parents, and community members have repeatedly begged CPS to listen and act, only to be met with silence. This is not the way to earn people's trust.</p> <p>Haugan deserves an open, honest dialogue at the very least. And if you actually value neighborhood schools and want to make their success a priority, then you should find a way to give Haugan enough space to adequately address the learning needs of its student body.</p>
34	<p>As a Haugan parent of two kids (one who needs speech therapy), I was really disappointed by the CPS CEO not to move the proposal to co-locate at the empty portion of the building at North River. The library room had to close and is being used as a shared office by way too many staff. My son's speech therapist has a small office that is shared with other staff members. Teachers don't have space to work in (for example, specials teachers, like art, have to take carts to travel around the entire building). Teachers for students with high-needs are co-sharing spaces and trying to help students in spaces that are absolutely not conducive. This is unacceptable. And there is space at North River sitting open, while our neighborhood school is struggling just a block and a half away. I also wonder if this was a more affluent neighborhood- if the CEO and CPS board would be more responsive. I think my question to you is: would you be comfortable sending your child to a school in these conditions?</p>
35	<p>It's ridiculous that a school like Haugan elementary is not being given more space at a nearby closed charter school. We are crowded and the kids have no room to learn and be safe. CPS is once again shirking its mission to create equity in education. Why should these students at a local school have less than a selective enrollment or a school in a more affluent neighborhood? Why should the teachers and staff be forced to make do when better options exist? Using shady metrics to tell us we're not overcrowded is gas lighting. Do better CPS.</p>
36	<p>I am deeply concerned by my recent experience reporting abuse of power and retaliation. It is deeply concerning that CPS response to such matters in a manner that lacks urgency. We live in the age of miracle and wonder. Google Calendar is a thing. When someone reports that they are being abused or retaliated against in their workplace, there needs to be an immediate hearing scheduled with a standard plan to keep the reporting employee safe distributed to all parties. The district needs to be more concerned about the violated rights of their employees.</p>

****ATTACHMENTS****

My name is Tiffany Harvey and I am a long-term Albany Park resident, a Haugan parent, and the current chairperson of Haugan's LSC. For a full year now, numerous members of the Haugan community have reached out to you repeatedly. We testified at meetings, submitted written comments, reached out to multiple board members and showed them our school, all in an effort to support our request to use space vacated by Aspira Charter in the building located at 3729 W. Leland ("the Leland Building") and now partially occupied by North River School, a citywide enrollment school with lottery-based admission.

We believe securing space in the Leland Building is our only realistic means of addressing our overcrowding. CPS lacks money to build an addition or another second campus for us, and why would it when there is room in the Leland Building? We have explained that we are terribly crowded now, many of our staff and students are working in unacceptable conditions, and that we reasonably anticipate significant additional growth in the near future.

So far, all our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Our request to co-locate was denied on December 1, 2025, without any explanation to our school community other than that "93% (now 100% with the new CTU contract) isn't crowded." Since then we have heard nothing. We were told previously that the request of North River to double in size would be considered this month, and can only assume, sadly, that whatever decision CPS makes about North River's request or the Leland building is considered none of Haugan's concern given that our co-location request was denied.

Granting North River's request would perpetuate the injustices of giving the Leland building to Aspira more than 20 years ago against the community's wishes. Unfortunately, as explained below, granting North River's request would also go a step further, in terms of harming and ignoring the needs and rights of the Haugan community, than did the Aspira process in 2004-2005.

Haugan LSC Community Representative Marni Willenson has previously shared with you that she was on the Transitional Advisory Committee (TAC) which originally evaluated proposals for the Leland building, and whose recommendations were ignored when CPS decided to give the building to Aspira Charter rather than Haugan.

Ms. Willenson has authorized me to share a writing from the TAC, which sets forth, in part, the criteria they considered in making their recommendation. I have quoted from it below and attached the entire memo at the end of the comments. This memo lays to rest any argument that the Leland Building was originally created for any purpose other than to relieve Haugan's overcrowding and serve Haugan attendance area students. It also makes clear that broad community feedback was important:

Selection of schools will be heavily informed by the community, which will evaluate proposals and make recommendations to the Board.... (It should be noted that Haugan TAC members are keenly aware that we are

serving in the public interest, and in the public trust and faith, and that we define “community” in the broadest sense possible, including students, parents, teachers, residents, businesses, non-profits, and faith-based organizations.)

All proposals... must be designed to: Ensure a correlation with the environment, pedagogy, programs and approaches in place at Haugan Elementary School, Have non-selective admissions processes and procedures, so that all students from the community are assured enrollment...

(It is only fitting that, given Haugan’s interest in, and commitment to, the welfare of the young, and the construction of a new facility to remedy overcrowding at the elementary school that bears his name, the new Albany Park middle school will also be named for him.)...

Terrible as the result was, back in 2004, in ignoring the community’s wishes, granting North River’s request will be, in many ways, worse. North River has made clear that it wants to remain entirely separate from Haugan, that from its perspective, Haugan’s needs are entirely unrelated to its functioning and desire to create a wall to wall citywide school in a neighborhood that desperately needs more zoned, neighborhood seats. While we were assured in 2022 that we could collaborate with North River if we needed space and that it was better for us to get a CPS school in the building, so far, there have been no benefits to Haugan by North River moving in. Our leaders and LSC were unable to secure even the promise of a meeting with LSC until 9 months into this saga, and while some of North River’s students are zoned for Haugan this does not relieve our overcrowding.

While, back in 2005, Aspira was mandated to admit Haugan attendance area students, and to coordinate with Haugan for continuity and support of students, North River operates, and wishes to continue, entirely separately from Haugan, with no coordination, collaboration, or communication. Unlike in 2004, the needs of Haugan students and attendance area families REGARDING THE SCHOOL BUILT FOR HAUGAN are not even part of the conversation, Alfonso Carmona, the former Portfolio Chief, told us that “he doesn’t consider this a Haugan problem but an Albany Park problem.”

But school attendance statistics show that our crowding and, just as importantly, our potential for growth, are, specifically, Haugan issues, not Albany Park problems. Consider the percentage of attendance area students who attend each of our local neighborhood schools. (Citywide schools like North River do not have attendance areas, thus their “usage” rates cannot be measured this way.) These statistics are from last school year. In November 2025 the CPS portfolio office informed us that since then, Haugan’s attendance area percentage has shot up from 55% to 59%, a big jump. However, our current usage rate is still much lower than that of most other nearby neighborhood schools. So we have a lot of room for growth just by attracting more attendance area students, and are on a clear trajectory to do so, unless CPS artificially caps our usage at 59% by failing to address our crowding.

School Year	School Name	Percentage of students in attendance area attending
2024-2025	ALBANY PARK	79.4%
2024-2025	BATEMAN	74.2%
2024-2025	BELDING	67.9%
2024-2025	CLEVELAND	49.4%
2024-2025	HAUGAN	55.0%
2024-2025	HENRY	43.0%
2024-2025	HIBBARD	78.9%
2024-2025	PALMER	77.0%
2024-2025	VOLTA	64.5%

Any plan, whether intentional or not, to cap the growth of Haugan (which is again, the only neighborhood school for its attendance area students, North River operates entirely separately and has no obligation to enroll Haugan attendance area students) by a hard limit of 59% based on no more space, directly contradicts the CPS strategic plan to make sure each child can rely on their neighborhood school as a strong choice. This is wrong in that it thwarts CPS policy, and because the current strategic focus on neighborhood schools is a much-needed correction from policies in recent decades that focused on choice, starved our local schools, and made family life and city living so much more complicated than it has to be. Having done it both ways (neighborhood school vs. choice/selective options) I would always advise prospective CPS parents that there are tremendous benefits to choosing the neighborhood school when possible.

As an aside, this chart also shows that nearby Henry is attracting an extremely low percentage of its attendance area students. It is under-enrolled and North River draws a large percentage of its students from Henry's attendance area. In a totally different way, expanding North River will also likely hurt Henry and thereby sabotage CPS's strategic plan for its attendance area as well.

As we have said from the beginning, we are open to several different options to resolve our crowding and best use the space at the Aspira building for the community, and open to additional dialogue about our community's needs. But we are extremely disheartened that so far the only proposal we know of on the table is to double a citywide lottery based school with no regard for the community's wishes, the needs of Haugan families and educators, CPS's strategic plan, or common sense. Once again, please help us. Please deny North River's request to double in size and grant Haugan's request to temporarily use space in the Leland building starting next school year until a permanent solution is achieved.

**COPIED TRANSITIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
ADDENDUM, FALL 2004. (Courtesy of Marni Willenson)**

HAUGAN MIDDLE SCHOOL RFP ADDENDUM

A. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RENAISSANCE 2010

Renaissance 2010 is a plan to improve the educational choices and opportunities for students throughout Chicago. Under the plan, at least 100 new schools will be created over the next six years. These new schools will help to address the following issues: * Under-utilization of CPS buildings

- * Lack of high school options
- * Over-crowding
- * Low performance

Renaissance 2010 schools will be a combination of CPS-run, contract and charter schools. They will be awarded via an RFP process. Selection of schools will be heavily informed by the community, which will evaluate proposals and make recommendations to the Board. All schools will be accountable via Performance Agreements that outline expectations for student achievement, on-going community and parent involvement and school management.

Renaissance 2010 is an overarching plan that consists of multiple strategies. One strategy is to focus on geographic concentrations of under-utilized buildings and/or low performing schools with a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of that geography and its neighborhoods.

New buildings will be required in some areas to relieve over-crowding. Schools designed to address over-crowding will be brought on under the Renaissance 2010 umbrella. Thus, these schools will be designed with community input and selected via an RFP.

B. THE HAUGAN MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION ADVISORY COUNCIL A

Transition Advisory Council (TAC) was formed to guide the RFP addendum to be issued for Haugan Middle School, and to participate in the proposal review and selection process. The TAC has the following composition:

- Tamara Brey, area resident
- Dawn D'Amico, parent
- Roxanne Ferrici, educator
- Denise Franklin, area resident
- Rodger Konow, Chicago Park District
- Chicago Ald. Margaret Laurino, elected official
- State Sen. Iris Y. Martinez, elected official

Mary Martinez-Verner, CPS teacher/educator
Joyce Nakamura, CPS teacher/educator
Wade Roberts, educator
Eleanor Rodriguez, parent
Vesna Stelcer, local/community business
Florence Stoller, CBO member
Marni Willenson, local/community business
Diane Yost, CBO member

The TAC's initial responsibilities include developing an RFP addendum that reflects the community's need for a new middle school to alleviate overcrowding at the existing Helge A. Haugen Elementary School; to ensure and gather wide and involved and active community participation in the process; to act in the informed and best interests of the community; and to research best practices and successful school role models. (It should be noted that Haugen TAC members are keenly aware that we are serving in the public interest, and in the public trust and faith, and that we define "community" in the broadest sense possible, including students, parents, teachers, residents, businesses, non-profits, and faith-based organizations.)

The TAC will serve as host of an Open House on November 3, 2004 for community members and interested applicants and will participate in the Chicago Public Schools New Schools Expo on November 6, 2004. The Council will review proposals beginning the week of November 22, 2004 through December 3, 2004; will serve as host of community forums/interviews with the finalists on December 1 and December 8, 2004; and will present its final recommendation by December 17, 2004.

The Haugen TAC would like to note that all proposals submitted in response to the RFP must adhere to the guidelines specified and suggested in this document, and must be designed to:

Ensure a correlation with the environment, pedagogy, programs and approaches in place at Haugen Elementary School,

Have non-selective admissions processes and procedures, so that all students from the community are assured enrollment,

Have high expectations and academic rigor that supports the intellectual and social expansion and development of students, and successfully prepares them for high school and beyond, including admission to selective-enrollment high schools, Include programs to support a diverse student body, and,

Include outreach programs to both involve and serve the unique nature and diverse population of the community.

While the TAC encourages innovation and proposals that center on particular themes or pedagogical approaches, these must build upon the five points outlined above, and ought to address specifications elsewhere in this document. All proposals should seek to create, nurture, sustain, and strengthen a community of active, excited, and engaged learners (with "community" again defined in the widest sense of the term).

C. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Haugan Middle School is located in, and will largely but not exclusively serve, Albany Park, which, census statistics indicate, is Chicago's most diverse neighborhood, with more languages and dialects (at least 36) spoken than in any other community. Albany Park has the highest percentage of foreign-born residents of any community in Chicago, and its principal ZIP postal code (60625) is the third-most diverse in the entire United States. On the diversity scale of 1-100 (with 1 indicating homogeneity and 100 indicating that no two residents share the same ethnic background/origin), Albany Park scored a very high 77 based upon 2000 census results, up from 70 in 1990.

Like many Chicago neighborhoods, Albany Park's population has evolved dramatically over several generations. Until the early 1960s, the community was largely composed of upper-working-class Jewish residents (most of them immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants). Over the past 40 years, the population has changed to include a high percentage of poverty-level and low-income working-class residents from a diverse variety of backgrounds. Today, Albany Park (sometimes referred to as "The Port-of Entry to Chicago") is a vibrant, rich, and multi-ethnic neighborhood, generally composed of proud, tolerant, and hard-working immigrants and descendants of recent immigrants.

Located on Chicago's northwest side, the neighborhood includes some lower-density, higher-income census tracts, but Albany Park's core (encompassing 41,000+ people, or 82% of the total population, according to the 1990 census) is high-need and high-density. The 1990 census (the most recent demographics available) suggests the depth of economic disadvantage:

Average per capita income \$10,273	Persons with income below poverty level 17%
Female headed households below poverty level 47%	Households with less than \$15,000 income 25%
Households with less than \$25,000 income 46%	Households receiving public assistance or with no reported income 26%
K-3 school children receiving free or reduced cost lunches 94%	Unemployed/those not in the labor force (16 and out of school, or older) 42%

As always, educational disadvantage accompanies economic disadvantage. More than 35% of residents 25 and older have not completed their high school education (1990 census). The dropout rate at nearby Roosevelt High School for 1997-98 was 19%, compared to 16% citywide. More than 47% of Albany Park residents are foreign-born, with many unable or limited in their ability to use the English language; at Albany Park's Haugan, Hibbard, and Volta Elementary Schools, an average of 45% of the children are considered to have limited proficiency in English.

The 1990 census for the Albany Park core area indicates this distribution of ethnicities: 26% Hispanic; 20% Asian or Pacific Islanders; 3% Black; 12% Middle-Eastern; 0.5% Native-American; and 38.5% White. According to the same census, some 60% of the area's residents lived elsewhere in 1985. This includes at least 6,812 (or 15%) who relocated from overseas, and 17,637 (or 39%) who previously resided in other parts of Chicago. The migration into Albany Park from elsewhere in the city more than doubled since the 1980 census, fueled, in large part, by the relocation of people of Hispanic origin from gentrified communities such as Uptown, Bucktown, Humboldt Park, and Wicker Park. In addition, a large percentage of the White population relocated here from other gentrifying areas of the city, or migrated directly

from rural poor areas of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The 2000 census for Albany Park reports this distribution of ethnicities: 46% Hispanic; 18% Asian or Pacific Islanders; 3% African-Americans; 0.2% Native Americans; and 28% White.

There are indicators to suggest that Albany Park is beginning to gentrify, a possible future that many residents approach and consider with unease. For the most part, residents identify with the community; proudly consider it to be home; enjoy the rich mix of independently owned shops, restaurants and businesses; and revel in the exciting and world-broadening cultural diversity, mix, and influences that make Albany Park a veritable United Nations of a neighborhood.

D. HISTORY OF HELGE A. HAUGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Helge A. Haugan was a public-spirited citizen who was very much interested in the welfare of young citizens. Haugan was born in Christiana, Norway on October 26, 1847, migrated to Quebec, Canada in 1858, and settled in Chicago in 1863. Haugan opened a plumbing store on Milwaukee Avenue and entered into the private banking industry. Eventually, Haugan partnered with John S. Lindgren to secure a charter for their private bank, The State Bank of Chicago. Haugan died on May 17, 1909.

In 1912, in order to accommodate the growing Albany Park population, a school was built in the block bounded by Wilson, Avers, Sunnyside, and Hamlin Avenues and was named after Haugan.

(It is only fitting that, given Haugan's interest in, and commitment to, the welfare of the young, and the construction of a new facility to remedy overcrowding at the elementary school that bears his name, the new Albany Park middle school will also be named for him.)

Haugan's enrollment in February 2003 was 1,297 students in grades PreK-8. Haugan is on controlled enrollment, with 483 students bussed to other schools, and 138 students receiving specialized services. Special education students are served in a variety of instructional models, including resource and self-contained special classes with mainstreaming and inclusion. Since 2000, the number of E.D., L.D., SPL, and EMH students increased.

Haugan has a gifted program for students in grades 1-8. There are self-contained Spanish bilingual classrooms in grades K-3. Students who speak a language other than Spanish receive ESL services. The average class size is 25 in grades 1-8.

Since 1995, the attendance rate has been above 95% (NCLB attendance rate is 88%). The highest attendance rate during 2002-2003 was in the month of September. The lowest attendance rate was in the month of March. Many students leave the country with their families during the month of December.

The truancy rate has decreased: in 2000, the rate was 1.1%, which improved in 2003 to 0.1%. The mobility rate also improved significantly: in 2000, the mobility rate was 27.1%, which increased in 2003 to 18.7%. Students often transfer out when they leave the country for an extended period of time and re-enroll when they return. The number of students transferring out to leave the country is very high; as a result, they fall behind.

The largest number of retained students has been in the 6th grade. The 6th grade students retained were in Spanish bilingual self-contained classrooms until 4th grade. Males constituted the highest percentage of students retained.

Haugan is classified as a stably mixed school, with a population of 74.1% Hispanic, 11.1% White, 4.5% Black, 9.9% Asian, and 0.4% Native-American. Although the percent of LEP (Limited English Proficient) students has not dramatically changed over 2000-2003, the ethnic composition is changed, marked by a significant rise in the Hispanic population in the area and the migration of smaller ethnic groups, such as Asian and European. The percent of LEP student in 2003 is 40.9% of the school population. In 2003, 87.6% of the students were from low-income families.

Test data from the last 3 years (2001-2003) indicate that Haugan students' overall performance in all state tests have shown improvements. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding Illinois Learning Standards were 37% in 2001, 38% in 2002, and 43.5% in 2003. The outcomes are perhaps evidence of the success of various programs instituted in the 2002-2003 school year, such as tutoring, homework help, after-school programs, and 21st Century programs. It is worth noting that Haugan has the largest percentage of LEP students: 40% or more, compared to 22% in sub-region schools and 13.5% district-wide.

On the ISAT, it appears that as students move from primary to intermediate upper grades, their scores decline in all subjects tested except for science and social science. The percentage of 5th and 8th grade students meeting state standards in reading, writing, and math dropped in 2003. Test scores reflect the reality that 85% of the student population originates from a non-English language background, with 40% of students needing transitional education programs or transitional programs of instruction.

The latest statistics on Haugan Elementary's catchment area indicate these overall demographics: 54% Hispanic; 26% White; 3% African-American; 0% Native American; 14% Asian; 0% Pacific Islander; 3% other.

INSERT NON-VOTING AGED STATS HERE

E. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS BY THE TRANSITIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (TAC)

Although the TAC is heartened by the improvements in test scores at Haugan Elementary, it observes that there is still significant room for further progress, particularly at the upper grade levels, which would be taught at the new Haugan Middle School. Applicants should be reminded that most, if not all, students will come from Haugan Elementary; therefore, proposals should address the easy transition of students. Some consistency with, and continuation of, programs, practices, pedagogy, and environment may be viewed as positive elements of applications, as might the adoption of such continuing initiatives as tutoring, homework help, and after-school programs; the TAC strongly desires that students experience the same, if not a higher, level of support.

The TAC is interested in innovation, such as proposals that focus upon particular themes, new initiatives, or pedagogical approaches. Such applications should include non anecdotal evidence attesting to the success of such teaching and learning methodologies, particularly among schools with similar student demographics.

All applicants should include detailed plans, and evidence, for further, ideally dramatic, improvements in student academic performance, and retention. Proposals should refer to successful models and best practices in the education of middle-school-aged children, and demonstrate how the type of contract being sought best meets the goals, outcomes, and purposes outlined in this addendum.

A strong ESL program is necessary, as components both within and outside of the regular curriculum.

Given the multi-ethnic nature of the neighborhood and of the student and parent constituencies, the new middle school presents an interesting and fertile opportunity for foreign-language arts and multi-cultural learning: an environment in which students learn with, but, importantly, from each other.

Applicants should bear in mind that Haugan's catchment area also includes more affluent areas and less-challenged student/parent constituencies, and that the neighborhood continues, as always, to evolve and to change. Ideal proposals should reflect dynamism and the capacity to grow, evolve, and adapt to meet the needs of a fluid community

In order to create and to grow a community of learners, proposals should demonstrate a plan to actively involve all of the community constituencies, encourage and welcome their contributions, and to serve the varied needs of this vital and diverse neighborhood (including, but not limited to, after-school programs). Applicants should demonstrate the ability and commitment to playing a strong and important part in the life and culture of the community, including, but not limited to: support to parents in need (such as language and adult-learning programs and opportunities to better understand children's needs and the paramount importance of education); the identification, and bridging, of impediments to parental involvement in the life and culture of learning and school; incentives to encourage community involvement, particularly that of parents; and strong and inventive programs in partnership with community-based organizations and resources.

The curriculum should be rigorous, closely informed by a strong and ongoing relationship with Haugan Elementary so that there can be scaffolding of and special attention given to subjects, such as reading, writing, and math, for which statistics indicate a drop of the level of student performance in upper grades. While expectations of students should be high, each student should have a reasonable opportunity not only to succeed, but also to excel, which, given the demographics, strongly suggests extensive and creative support programs.

Proposals should discuss comprehensive and on-going plans for assessing students, faculty and curriculum; the type of community involvement in school oversight; and the composition and qualifications of teachers. The TAC strongly believes in a mix of seasoned and new teachers, and in an environment in which veteran teachers are involved in the mentoring of newer teachers. Applicants should discuss a selection process for teachers that reflects rigorous expectations and high standards. Current Haugan Elementary teachers should be encouraged to apply for transfer to the new middle school.

F. IMPORTANT DATES

November 3, 2004: Haugan Middle School TAC Open House for applicants and community

November 6, 2004: Chicago Public Schools New Schools Expo

November 22-December 3, 2004: Haugan Middle School TAC reviews proposals

December 1 and December 8, 2004: Haugan Middle School TAC Open Houses/Interviews for finalists and community

December 17, 2004: deadline for Haugan Middle School TAC final recommendation

****ATTACHMENTS****

Hello, my name is Walter Brzeski and I'm a life-long Chicago and former CPS employee,

Board member Jitu Brown spoke on how frustrating it is to deal with governmental layers to attain information at one board meeting.

Here's the perfect example as the CPS FOIA Office refuses to respond with documents to the following **EIGHT (8)** FOIA Requests I sent into them. It's now been **368 DAYS** as of 01/24/2025 since one FOIA Request was made and no response has been forthcoming as yet from CPS.

I'm asking for the board to provide me assistance in getting all **EIGHT (8)** FOIA Requests answered to with the responsive documents as requested from the CPS FOIA Office.

1. N016753-012125

Investigation Unit reports from Paul Munoz and Kelly Tarrant for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years

Days Lapsed since Initial Filing: 249 Business Days, 368 Calendar Days

4 CPS Extensions: 03/21/25, 04/18/25, 04/04/25, 05/02/25

2. N017165-031925

The requested documents to the following CPS FOIA Requests: 1. N014194-091223, 2. N014563-120423, 3. N015230-050324, 4. N015374-060624, 5. N015415-061424, 6. N015701-062124 (Date FOIA Request was narrowed: 07/23/24), 7. N016314-101424, & 8. N016753-012125

Days Lapsed since Initial Filing: 210 Business Days, 311 Calendar Days
1 CPS Extension: 05/01/25

3. N017565-060125

Security video near Room 128 and adjacent hallway for Steinmetz College Prep on the dates 04/30/25 and 05/14/2025 from 5:15pm - 8:30pm. The only people in the vicinity of Room 128 and the hallway were to have been adult LSC members and principal arriving and departing their meetings on the aforementioned dates. NOTE: Please blur any students' faces in the area and utilize the best possible format for video footage in the CPS response.

Days Lapsed since Initial Filing: 158 Business Days, 237 Calendar Days

3 CPS Extensions: 07/16/25, 07/30/25, 09/13/25

4. N018215-091025

CPS responses and responsive documents to these Non-Commercial FOIA Requests: #1 - N016753-012125 (Investigation Unit reports from Paul Munoz and Kelly Tarrant for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years),

#2 - N017165-031925 (The requested documents to the following CPS FOIA Requests: 1. N014194-091223, 2. N014563-120423, 3. N015230-050324, 4. N015374-060624, 5. N015415-061424, 6. N015701-062124 (Date FOIA Request was narrowed: 07/23/24), 7. N016314-101424, & 8. N016753-012125),

#3 - N017565-060125 (Security video near Room 128 and adjacent hallway for Steinmetz College Prep on the dates 04/30/25 and 05/14/2025 from 5:15pm - 8:30pm. The only people in the vicinity of Room 128 and the hallway were to have been adult LSC members and principal arriving and departing their meetings on the aforementioned dates. NOTE: Please blur any students' faces in the area and utilize the best possible format for video footage in the CPS response.),

#4 - N017874-071125 (Please provide all records related to former Chicago Public Schools employees Ilida Villegas and Tanya Harvey, most recently employed at Steinmetz College Prep, including but not limited to the following: Investigative files, including any Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports involving or referencing either individual. Disciplinary records, including warning resolutions and investigative memoranda. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) pertaining to either individual. Personnel files from initial date of hire through separation from CPS. Incident reports involving or referencing either individual. Arbitrators' reports or decisions related to either employee. Resignation letters, if applicable. Do Not Hire (DNH) designations, if applicable. Most recent salary and employment/work history for each individual. Please include all responsive documents regardless of format or storage location. Let me know if you'd like to include a preferred date range or narrow the request further.), and

#5 - N018105-082125 (Records sufficient to show the following: 1. Membership in the DNH Committee 2. Agendas from the DNH committee meetings from January 1, 2025 - the date this FOIA is processed This request is made on behalf of The FOIA Bakery. Because this request is in the public interest for Illinois nonprofit The FOIA Bakery's work to advocate for public education, please waive any fees in accordance with 5 ILCS § 140/6(c). Feel free to contact me with any questions, or if clarification is needed.)

**Days Lapsed since Initial Filing:
95 Business Days, 145 Calendar
Days**

6 CPS Extensions: 10/24/25, 11/07/25, 11/21/25,
12/08/25, 12/22/25, 01/12/25

5. N018216-091025

Investigation Unit reports from Paul Munoz and Kelly Tarrant for the 2023-24, 2024-25, AND 2025-26 school years

**Days Lapsed since Initial Filing:
95 Business Days, 145 Calendar
Days**

**6 CPS Extensions: 10/24/25, 11/07/25, 11/21/25,
12/08/25, 12/22/25, 01/12/25**

6. N018272-092125

1) All documents on the IHSCDEA distracted driving program in CPS high schools (materials, contracts, budgets, correspondence, evaluations).
2) Names, titles, and roles of individuals leading or initiating the program, including but limited to former Prosser Career Academy HS principal Kenneth Hunter. 3) List of high schools involved, with implementation dates and materials. 4) Compensation and attendance sign sheets for all CPS employees in attendance at the IHSCDEA Region 1 Fall Workshop on Saturday September 20, 2025 at Kennedy HS

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y5sgDrib4jHWZ9J1XtFdEoqkxAu7gPcPziX1wY7-EAI/edit?tab=t.0>) 5) All presentations by Kenneth Hunter and other presenters at the aforementioned event.

**Days Lapsed since Initial Filing:
81 Business Days, 125 Calendar
Days**

**7 CPS Extensions: 11/04/25, 11/18/25, 12/03/25,
12/17/25, 01/07/25, 01/22/25, 02/05/25**

7. N018449-102925

I request the following records for Kelly Tarrant (most recently Investigative Manager, CPS Law): Complete personnel file
Work & salary history,
Separation/resignation/termination letters, emails, MOUs,
Termination of benefits notices,
Termination hearing documents (notices, transcripts, findings)
Investigative files on misconduct,
Written & verbal warnings, and
all other records created, received, or relied upon to terminate her employment

**Days Lapsed since Initial Filing:
55 Business Days, 87 Calendar
Days**

3 CPS Extensions: 12/03/25, 12/17/25, 01/02/26

8. N018699-121125

You have requested the following records: I request all records, emails, reports, complaints, notes, and communications from January 1, 2022 to the present regarding: (1) Marva Nichols-Griffin of Dunbar High School, including any allegations or investigations involving contract steering, nepotism, vendor fraud, theft or misuse of CPS property, unauthorized leasing of CPS space, missing Pitney Bowes equipment, counterfeit merchandise, or inappropriate gatherings involving CPS staff; (2) Krista Alston and the Pleasant Gift Missionary Baptist Church address, including records related to address usage by CPS employees or students, potential fraudulent address issues, conflicts of interest, or LSC-related concerns; and (3) any communications or documentation involving political interference or mandatory OIG reporting, including any reported call from President Toni Preckwinkle to the CPS CEO and any records related to whether CPS employee Verma Ruchi fulfilled required OIG reporting obligations.

**Days Lapsed since Initial
Filing: 27 Business Days, 44
Calendar Days
1 CPS Extension: 01/14/26**

****ATTACHMENTS****



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January 27, 2026

Request for Review of the Chicago Public Schools Local School Wellness Policy and the Prohibition of Pork Products

Submitted to:

Chicago Public Schools Board of Education

Submitted by:

Illinois Pork Producers Association (IPPA)
Contact: Jennifer Tirey, Executive Director
jennifer@ilpork.com

Purpose

The Illinois Pork Producers Association (IPPA) respectfully requests that the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Board of Education conduct a formal review of the Local School Wellness Policy provision that prohibits the inclusion of pork products in all CPS breakfast and lunch offerings.

“All CPS menu items are pork-free, and a vegetarian and/or plant-based option will be made available daily.” School Wellness Policy IV(A)(2)e.

Link to policy: https://www.cps.edu/sites/cps-policy-rules/policies/700/704/704-7/#a_iv--nutrition-environment-and-services

Link to the board vote: [December 16, 2020 - Chicago Board of Education](#)

(The vote occurred at 5:21:09 under public agenda section, the board voted on PO2 to rescind the June 2017 Health and Wellness Policy and adopt this new policy. There was no discussion, and the vote was 6 yes and 0 no.)

This request reflects evolving national nutrition guidance, CPS’s participation in federal nutrition programs, the cultural relevance of pork to CPS families, and the importance of cost-effective, nutrient-dense protein options for students. IPPA is requesting a review of the existing ban on pork products in all CPS breakfast and lunch offerings.



Demographic Background of CPS Constituents

Chicago Public Schools is the fourth-largest school district in the United States, serving 325,305 students across 634 schools and providing approximately 350,000 meals daily through the Community Eligibility Provision.

Student Demographics (2024–25):

- Latino/Hispanic: 47.3%
- Black/African American: 34.2%
- White: 11.3%
- Asian: 4.7%
- Multiracial: 1.8%

The scale and diversity of CPS underscore the need for nutrition policies that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and aligned with federal nutrition standards.

Pork Consumption and Cultural Relevance

Fresh pork is widely consumed across all major demographic groups in Chicago:

- All Chicago households: 78.4%
- Hispanic/Latino households: 79.6%
- African American households: 75.8%
- Asian-American households: 77.0%
- White households: 79.1%

These data points indicate that pork is a familiar and culturally relevant protein for many CPS families, particularly within the district's largest student population.

National Nutrition Guidance and Protein Needs

The 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, issued by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, emphasize the importance of adequate daily protein intake and encourage consumption of nutrient-dense protein foods as part of healthy dietary patterns.

Updated guidance reflects growing consensus that higher protein intake supports child growth, muscle development, satiety, and overall health. The guidelines recognize a range of animal and



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plant protein sources, including red meat—as appropriate components of a balanced diet when prepared and served in nutrient-dense forms.

Pork qualifies as a nutrient-dense protein, providing essential nutrients such as:

- High-quality complete protein
- Iron and zinc
- Vitamin B, including B12
- Choline, important for brain development
- Importantly, in addition to being flavorful and easily prepared, it is widely enjoyed across the Chicago Public School constituency and is a high quality, nutrient dense and low-cost protein choice for the CPS menu.

USDA Foods, Section 32, and Cost-Effective Nutrition

Chicago Public Schools participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and receives USDA Foods to support meal service. Pork products are included in the USDA Section 32 purchasing program, which allows USDA to procure American-grown agricultural products—including pork—for distribution to schools at reduced or no cost.

Because CPS maintains a blanket prohibition on pork:

- The district is unable to utilize USDA-provided pork products
- CPS forgoes access to an affordable, nutrient-dense protein option
- Opportunities to stretch food service dollars while meeting nutrition standards are limited

Allowing pork within CPS meal planning could improve program flexibility, support American agriculture, and align with federal procurement systems already designed to help districts manage costs.

Policy Background and Documentation Gaps

The CPS Local School Wellness Policy currently prohibits pork in all school meals. However:

- The 2017 CPS wellness policy did not include a pork ban
- The current policy was adopted in December 2020
- Multiple FOIA requests submitted by IPPA, and national partners have failed to identify produce any documentation explaining:
 - The rationale for the ban
 - Supporting nutrition or cost analysis



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- Specific board deliberation related to pork

As a result, a district-wide nutrition policy affecting hundreds of thousands of students, and imposing significant cost mandates on Chicago public schools, lacks either any public support or clear justification.

Engagement with CPS Nutrition Leadership

In March 2025, IPPA met with CPS nutrition leadership and national nutrition experts. During this discussion:

- CPS dietitians indicated they were unaware of the original reasoning for the pork ban
- While religious accommodation was suggested as a possible basis, there is no evidence in the record that this was ever a consideration. Regardless, CPS routinely offers multiple entrée options
- Pork was acknowledged as:
 - A high-quality, nutrient-dense protein
 - Culturally relevant to CPS students
 - Affordable and operationally feasible

Despite initial openness to discussion, CPS later declined to pursue any consideration of pork menu offerings due to the existing CPS policy.

Why a Policy Review Is Warranted

1. Alignment with Current Nutrition Science
Federal dietary guidance supports higher protein intake and nutrient-dense animal proteins.
2. Cultural Inclusion and Equity
Pork is widely consumed within CPS communities and is part of many traditional cuisines.
3. Student Choice and Accommodation
CPS already offers multiple entrée options, reducing the need for a blanket prohibition.
4. Fiscal Responsibility
The pork ban prevents CPS from utilizing USDA Foods available through Section 32, limiting access to cost-effective protein options.
5. Transparency and Governance
Significant nutrition policy decisions should be supported by documented rationale and public accountability.



Request to the CPS Board of Education

IPPA respectfully requests that the CPS Board:

- Initiate a formal review of the Local School Wellness Policy provision prohibiting pork
- Direct staff to identify the original rationale and supporting documentation for the ban
- Consider input from nutrition experts, food service partners, and community stakeholders
- Evaluate whether pilot programs or limited menu testing are appropriate

Fiscal Impact: USDA Foods & Cost Savings

CPS Participation in USDA Foods

Chicago Public Schools participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and receives USDA Foods, which are provided to school districts at reduced or no cost to help meet federal nutrition requirements while managing food service budgets.

Section 32 and Pork Eligibility

Pork products are included in the USDA Section 32 purchasing program, which allows USDA to procure surplus and domestically produced agricultural commodities—including pork—for distribution to schools nationwide.

Impact of the Pork Prohibition

Because CPS maintains a blanket ban on pork products:

- The district is unable to accept or serve USDA-provided pork
- CPS forgoes access to a nutrient-dense, high-quality protein available through federal procurement
- Food service teams lose a cost-effective option that could help offset rising food and labor costs

Opportunity

Allowing pork within CPS meal planning would:

- Expand the range of USDA Foods available to the district
- Increase flexibility in menu development
- Support efficient use of federal resources
- Potentially reduce per-meal protein costs while maintaining nutrition standards

A review of the pork prohibition would enable CPS to assess whether continued exclusion aligns with fiscal stewardship goals and full utilization of USDA Foods available to NSLP participants.



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Willingness to Engage

IPPA is committed to constructive collaboration and welcomes the opportunity to meet one-on-one with any Board member interested in learning more.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

Contact:

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