

November 17, 2021 Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Monday, November 15th and Thursday, November 18th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1	<p>Hello, my name is Russell and I have been a cadre substitute with CPS since March. I am in the process of becoming a full-time teacher, and I am so excited to be working with the young people in my community! During both of my last two semesters at CPS, however, I have had principals assign me to classes whose teachers were out on maternity leave. Cadres and substitutes should NOT be used to fill positions for teachers on leave--- that is what Temporarily Assigned Teachers (TAT) positions are for. After a week or two subbing in a class whose teacher is on leave, the principal will shuffle us around and assign another sub instead of hiring a TAT or regular teacher. That's not right! The students in these classes end up without a consistent teacher for a whole semester at times, and it's incredibly detrimental to their learning.</p> <p>Students need stability now more than ever. CPS isn't pulling the wool over our eyes--- this is clearly a way of having employees complete more work (lesson planning, grading, department meetings, etc) without having to pay a full-time teacher for the work. It's harmful to the substitutes that we desperately need now more than ever-- and driving them away from the profession. And, ultimately and most importantly, it's hurting our students.</p>
2	<p>It is no secret that Chicago, for a number of reasons that include maternity leave, is facing a large shortage of school workers. With that considered, the individuals willing to help out with the shortage of educators in the least deserve to be properly compensated for their devotion to these students . Subs, specifically subs stationed at one school, are seeing the same classes of students on a daily basis, hence doing the work of a full-time teacher, but are not being compensated as such. Some subs are even being asked to take on large quantities of students, or multiple classes at once, in an effort to keep students involved in all the core subjects. Without subs, some classes would literally not be able to be taught at all. The schools are quickly discovering that this method increases the job turnover rate immensely, which in turn takes a negative affect on the students. In order for this to stop, school workers should be compensated fairly, accurately and in a timely manner, for their efforts. Until they are paid correctly, nothing will improve.</p>
3	<p>I have several comments about substitute issue relate to the shortage and concerns current substitutes are dealing with. The problem is significantly more complex than just hiring additional subs. There are systematic issues at play that created the sub shortage.</p> <p>First, CPS and school administrators dictate if subs are assigned or not. CPS laid off 862 full time subs in June, and cut their health insurance during COVID. Now there are only about 108 full-time subs. Student based budgets also impact having enough subs. The cadre subs are paid out of individual school budgets. Unfortunately, school principals determine if cadres are hired. They also usually dictate all the sub jobs school clerks assign. I believe CPS downtown administrators pressure principals to assign or not assign cadres and day to day subs. This contributes to the shortage. So CPS</p>

downtown, school principals, school clerks, and Sub Services are all involved in subs being assigned in schools. Sometimes schools and Sub Services cancel subs' jobs without explanation to the subs. It has happened to me and other subs. Sometimes CPS and school administrators are using regular teachers and other staff to cover absences on a regular basis, even before COVID.

Second, subs are disrespected by CPS in multiple ways. They are asked to cover more than one teacher at the same time, cover security, lunch, recess, care rooms, office clerks, etc. I have covered 2 teachers at the same time, or multiple teachers throughout the day, even asked to cover during my lunch. I have also been used when a school clerk was absent to file attendance notes, answer parents questions, print/fold/envelope letters going home. I know several subs expected to cover multiple lunch and recess duties in a single day, and others to be security or care attendants. These other duties are not what subs are supposed to be assigned to do. The worst misuse of CPS subs is using us as TATs without TAT pay or benefits. It occurred before COVID, but now even more. Myself and many others have been assigned to cover vacant positions or leaves. Even worse is using us to cover SPED positions, which is clearly a violation. Take a look at Frontline, and you will see schools with long term assignments for subs that should be TAT positions. Take a look at Frontline, as see all the sub jobs to fill vacant positions. When you use subs for these jobs, we must make lesson plans, grade and record assignments, contact parents, attend meetings, etc. but at a daily rate of pay of \$133-\$203 with no sick days, no health insurance (unless a cadre with health insurance), and few holidays. If subs do the work of TATs, CPS should pay us a regular salary with benefits.

Third, there are health concerns that impact sub coverage. Schools following or not following COVID safety protocols affect subs wanting to work because most do not have health insurance. If a sub is a close contact or their child, they have to quarantine. It will all be missed days of work without pay. If we get sick, no sick days and no pay. Last year when I was a close contact, CDPH required me to quarantine 14 days. As a cadre, I missed days of work, but was told I would not be paid for those days. I know other cadres who got COVID and missed days, and got no pay. One cadre suffers from long haul COVID, and had to stop working for months. That long haul CPS cadre also lost health insurance when you laid her off in June. CPS told this person she was not eligible for any leave. We are sometimes told we are temporary; other times we are told we are not eligible for unemployment. It all depends on what CPS does or does not want to cover for us. Even the new IL bill will not help subs because we are "educational staff."

Fourth, FMLA and ADA are another set of issues affecting some subs. I am an immune suppressed substitute. Last year I was approved for ADA at first. In the Spring I was rejected even though my doctors told me I would die if I got COVID. When schools reopened, few schools would assign me remote work and I lost many days. I was also laid off as a cadre in June. Can you imagine being 62, a stage 3 cancer survivor, having congestive heart failure, RA,, asthma, and taking immune suppressing drugs, being denied ADA or any option to work virtually with CPS, and having your health insurance cut while COVID continues? So I have complete empathy with any CPS staff or CPS student who is immune compromised and wanted a remote option this year.

I sincerely hope that some board members read this statement in order to truly understand what CPS subs are dealing with. These are some of the reasons CPS sub

	coverage is at 60% coverage. The issues are huge. Just hiring some more subs will not address these concerns. Hiring 139 more cadres is nothing more than a bandaid.
4	The attached letter is submitted to the board on behalf of the signatories. Point of contact for this matter is Mike Hoffman, COO, Start Early at mhoffman@startearly.org
5	CPS has the option to administer standardized test. We should be focused on the emotional health of our school communities. What steps are being taken to address negative behavior and the correlation to over testing? How are we focusing, positively, on acclimating student, teachers and parents to COVID mandates while addressing safety concerns while returning? Things are not NORMAL yet.
6	<p>Topic: New keyboard for Elementary students</p> <p>Hello Mr. Sendhil Revuluri ,</p> <p>Elementary teachers and parents state, one of the biggest problems for elementary students is that they can't type efficiently using the current QWERTY keyboard.</p> <p>Young students see the QWERTY keyboard as being illogical and very frustrating to learn. Their feelings of frustration give way to disengagement with the task that requires the keyboard.</p> <p>This email is pertaining to a new keyboard innovation that will accelerate, by 10x, the learning and typing skills of Pre-K thru 5th graders, when compared to the traditional QWERTY keyboard.</p> <p>The name of this new keyboard innovation is "keyStack®", It can be found in the Apple App Store.</p> <p>Have you ever seen a two year old child type their alphabet in 40 seconds, after 15 seconds of training instructions? This is possible with the keyStack® keyboard app.</p> <p>The attached pdf doc contains functional specifics, links to demos and patent information, with respect to the keyStack® keyboard app.</p> <p>keyStack® can be used on iPad or iPhone devices.</p> <p>Using keyStack® can save CPS over \$20,000,000 (Twenty-million dollars) per year.</p> <p>I would like to setup a Zoom meeting, so we can discuss your specific needs in more detail.</p> <p>Please reply with an acknowledgment.</p> <p>Thank You, Nolan Jones (Inventor/Software Engineer) Website: inbits.tech</p>

Dear CEO Martinez and Chicago Board of Education members,

I'm an elected representative of the Goudy Technology Academy Local School Council. Along with my council members, I serve our school community and elevate the voices of our students, staff, community members and their families. CPS received \$1.8B in federal funds to combat COVID-19 and had all summer to prepare for a full reopening. Many in our community are concerned about the lack of essential mitigation measures to keep our children, families, and neighbors safe. Contact tracing, quarantining, and COVID-19 testing for students and staff have been limited. The building safety upgrades have fallen short at Goudy and across the district. Our school has had six COVID-19 cases and six classrooms in quarantine in the last two months. We are only one of many examples of COVID-19 outbreaks in CPS, especially schools like ours serving low-income students and working with limited resources due to years of budget cuts from inequitable student-based budgeting. We struggle to adequately socially distance and our ventilation systems also have not been reevaluated since the spring. Some families lack access to medical care.

I am urging Chicago Public Schools to:

- Expand the CPS contact tracing program to fully serve our 300,000 students and 35,000 staff
- Create clear criteria as to when a school should be closed for deep cleaning and for every student and staff person to be tested in order to prevent further spread of a COVID-19 outbreak
- Provide families with walk-in testing sites in every neighborhood so students can return to class as quickly as possible after being sent home sick or after an exposure
- Increase infrastructure to support expanded COVID-19 screening testing in every school and simplify the application process to encourage more families to sign students up
- Supply every school with at least one additional custodian and ensure backup custodians will be available when regular custodians are on leave or there are open positions
- Check every school's ventilation system immediately to ensure that safety standards are still being met now that schools are full and in light of the much more contagious Delta variant
- Increase vaccination events and make Goudy Technology Academy a vaccination site

We urge CPS to expand the contact tracing program and guarantee exposed families will be contacted within 48 hours of CPS being notified of a positive case. CPS COVID-19 policies have also been ever changing and largely confusing to parents and staff alike. There is currently no criteria in place as to when a school should be closed for deep cleaning and to test every student and staff member to prevent further spread of the disease. And for many of the families at our school and across the city, it is difficult and/or expensive to access to COVID-19 testing and CPS school testing has been poorly executed. We signed up over 100 additional students and were then faced with delays from the district. For example, two of our LSC members' children should have been tested October 19th, but weren't due to district staffing issues. The next day their entire class was put into quarantine, which is a huge missed opportunity for a surveillance program. The district must have clear guidelines and provide families with

free, accessible testing in order for students to safely return back to class. When one of our members checked the CPS website for testing facilities, the two sites listed did not have any appointments available. And we are deeply concerned to hear that CPS will no longer commit to testing all students weekly even though New York City public schools test 10% of their students every week. We also urge CPS to increase vaccination events to ensure that all eligible students and families who want to can be vaccinated. We request a vaccine clinic at Goudy to administer shots here as there is no CPS clinic close by. In communities like ours and around the city, families and students often lack access to healthcare, which is why CPS must use its federal COVID-19 funds to keep children safe.

Building safety is another critical area where CPS mitigation measures have fallen short. The district committed to hiring 400 additional custodians, but Goudy has had an open custodian position for two months despite numerous attempts to have it filled and even though this support is essential in keeping students and staff safe and healthy. We urge the district to improve building safety by giving schools an additional custodian and provide backup custodians when regular staff are on leave or leave a position. We had two COVID-19 cases while our usual custodians were off and we only had one custodian instead of three cleaning our school building, forcing teachers and students to help out. Furthermore, Goudy has not had its ventilation system checked for safety since the spring before the much more contagious Delta variant was dominant, and we have not been told when another evaluation will be done. And we also have the CTA Red Line being renovated next door to us, so some classrooms cannot open windows due to noise and air quality issues. The CPS website states that the district “will monitor air quality and provide a HEPA filter for all occupied classrooms and staff spaces” (<https://www.cps.edu/sites/back-to-school/updates-faq/>). If this is the case, CPS should be rechecking ventilation systems regularly and updating school buildings immediately.

I urge CPS to use federal relief funds to fully safeguard our schools and communities. Goudy cannot wait any longer for this life-saving support. I implore you to make these critical updates immediately.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Ward,
Community Representative
Goudy Technology Academy Local School Council

8 I SENT THIS AS AN ATTACHMENT WITH HYPERLINKS IN A PDF, but here is a plain text version just in case.

Dear Board,

I'm Cyndi Elliott, from the CPS Dyslexia Family Collaborative. I'm happy to hear about recent developments to improve student reading achievement, such as the much-needed Wilson training.

But like every parent of a dyslexic child knows, the problem is bigger than the 20% of kids with dyslexia that CPS does not identify or support. The more we read and research, we discover it's not just our dyslexic kids who are being failed — it's 50% or more of students being failed by current instruction. In 2019, 72% of CPS kids did not meet expectations.

There is a growing movement in the science of reading that is supported by many teachers as well as frustrated parents. Fueled by the amazing reporting done by Emily Hanford — and recent revelations on how the two most widely used curricula are not aligned with best practices — there are thousands of groups reframing literacy as a social justice issue and a basic constitutional right.

So in this climate of decades of low reading scores and ineffective instruction, we clearly need better reading instruction for ALL. Many states have passed legislation advocating for teacher education based on the science of reading, and Illinois needs to be next.

There is a statewide Resolution on the agenda at the upcoming ISAB meeting on Saturday November 20, 2021, and we urge you to send a delegate to vote YES on Resolution #1. This is a critical prong in a multi-pronged strategy to empower our kids to read, write and spell at grade level. Here's a summary:

1. Pre-Service Teacher Education and Licensure in Literacy Submitted by: Avoca SD 37
BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Illinois Association of School Boards shall advocate for legislation mandating the Illinois State Board of Education require pre-service teachers seeking licensure in the areas listed complete at least one undergraduate level literacy education course solely dedicated to scientifically proven methods of reading instruction.” (full text on page 9)

If we train pre-service teachers in the science of reading, then the changes being made throughout CPS will gain momentum, and will come with buy-in from within our valued school communities and educators.

I started a petition urging the Board to vote YES. Currently it has almost 300 signatures, many from teachers. The media may report on the effort as well. Here are just a few of the comments:

“I've been watching kids lose out because of untrained teachers for decades. We need all teachers to understand how reading works!”

“I'm a school psychologist and I know the science of reading is the way forward.”

“I have elementary age students in CPS who are not getting the reading support they need.”

“I'm a retired teacher. I know there is a science to teaching students to read. I've worked with teachers who knew more than me & I learned from them. I've worked with teachers who had no clue & didn't seem to have the time to learn.”

Again, I urge you to send a delegate to the IASB meeting this Saturday and vote Yes on Resolution 1.

Gratefully,
Cyndi Elliott
Member, CPS Family Dyslexia Collaborative

ATTACHMENTS

To: Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Copy to: Bryan Stokes, Chief of Early Childhood Education, Chicago Public Schools
Dr. Stephanie Jones, Chief of Diverse Learner Supports and Services, Chicago Public Schools
Sybil Madison, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Nataly Barrera, Acting Director of Early Learning, Office of the Mayor
Brandie Knazze, Commissioner, Department of Family and Support Services

Dear Mr. Martinez,

We, the undersigned Head Start Grantees, who provide early care and education services to young children with disabilities across the city of Chicago, are writing to express our grave concern. We object to the process by which a decision was made by the Chicago Public Schools Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) to discontinue the use of a CPS Disabilities Team to assist with the identification, referral, and provision of services for children with disabilities enrolled in Head Start programs. Several of our organizations have received support from the Disabilities Team as previous Department of Family and Support Services Head Start delegate agencies. We have found many of the services provided by this team to be essential to CPS fulfilling its obligations as the Local Education Agency charged with identifying, evaluating, and serving children with disabilities and were not made aware that continuation of these services would come at a significant cost to our organizations until early October – well after we had finalized and submitted our budgets to the federal Office of Head Start.

We wish to reiterate our willingness to work collaboratively with ODLSS to make progress toward our shared goal of ensuring that children with disabilities enrolled in our programs have access to the services they need. As you know, the landscape of services available to children in Chicago through federal Head Start funding has recently changed and our organizations are committed to seizing this opportunity to partner together to build an early learning system in Chicago that embodies a commitment to inclusion for all children and gives them the best chance for success in school and in life. As the Local Education Agency responsible for identifying and serving these children, we invite CPS to join us in this effort.

Strong collaboration and communication between CPS and community-based early childhood programs are critical for ensuring access and inclusion for children with disabilities in Chicago's mixed delivery system.

To ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required by statute to make sure at least 10 percent of their funded enrollment is filled by these children. In their [Joint Statement](#), the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services underscore the importance of formal agreements and strong collaboration between LEAs and Head Start programs for ensuring access to inclusive early learning opportunities for children with disabilities in a range of settings. Additionally, [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) require Head Start Grantees to develop agreements with the LEA responsible for implementing IDEA. As the previously existing Head Start Grantees in Chicago, the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and Start Early have had a long-standing formal agreement with CPS to engage in communication and collaborative processes that allow

children with disabilities to remain enrolled in their community-based Head Start program while receiving special education services from the school district. We look forward to expanding this formal agreement to include the additional Head Start Grantees in Chicago and we implore CPS to take the following immediate action to put in place the following necessary collaborative processes and procedures:

- **Schedule and engage in quarterly data dialogue meetings and regularly share data to review percentages of children being referred to CPS for evaluation and to track the status of children who are referred, evaluated, and determined to be eligible for services.**
- **Work collaboratively with the Head Start Grantees to update and reinstate joint annual trainings on Best Practices from Referral through Service Delivery for both CPS and Head Start staff to provide opportunities to share knowledge, build capacity, and strengthen relationships among all staff.**

We ask that you refer to our draft Memorandum of Agreement for more details on each of these and other areas of collaboration.

As the LEA, CPS is responsible for activities related to Child Find.

As CPS is responsible for seeking out and identifying all children who may be eligible for special education through ongoing screenings, the developmental screenings conducted by Head Start staff assist CPS in fulfilling its responsibility as the Child Find entity. We call for CPS to immediately begin to or continue implementing the following practices that promote efficiency and effectiveness in identifying and evaluating children with suspected and diagnosed disabilities:

- **In the event that CPS personnel are not available to review referrals, dedicate qualified CPS personnel to provide training to Head Start staff on the appropriate developmental screening tools and then begin accepting all referrals that result from Head Start screenings, teacher observations, and family discussions.**
- **Provide sufficient, qualified CPS personnel to adhere to all legal timelines for responding to referrals and evaluating children with suspected disabilities**
- **Provide sufficient, qualified CPS personnel to schedule evaluations, conduct evaluations, and communicate information about evaluation appointments to parents/guardians and Head Start staff.**
- **Dedicate CPS personnel to share data from the CPS IMPACT data system on the status of referrals and pending evaluations with Head Start staff, including referral decisions, dates for evaluations, decisions on eligibility for services, and placements.**

We ask that you refer to our draft Memorandum of Agreement for more details on how to implement each of these practices.

As the LEA, CPS should ensure that eligible children with disabilities are receiving services in the Least Restrictive Environment.

CPS holds responsibility for providing access to special education services for children who are found eligible and for ensuring that these services are delivered in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Through their [Joint Statement](#) and [Dear Colleague Letter](#), the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services have clarified that in early childhood, the least restrictive environment requires a continuum of placement options, including the child's

Head Start program. We offer our partnership to CPS to assist in immediately implementing the following practices to make sure eligible children are receiving services in the appropriate setting:

- **Initiate a planning process now to begin offering services in community-based Head Start programs to children with IEPs for whom the LRE has been determined to be their Head Start program by the 2022-2023 school year so as to eliminate disruptions caused by busing students from their Head Start program to a CPS school in the middle of the school day. Please note that this may need to occur earlier than the 2022-2023 school year if CPS is unable to provide the necessary transportation for students to access services during the 2021-2022 school year.**
- **Dedicate CPS personnel to work with families and Head Start contacts on any placement concerns.**
- **Allow Head Start contacts to access CPS forms so that families are able to come prepared with requests and documentation.**
- **Identify CPS personnel to work with families and Head Start contacts on any transportation concerns.**
- **Share IEPs and progress reports (with parents' consent) with the appropriate Head Start program staff and establish a communication plan between teachers and families to ensure cohesion across the educational settings.**

We ask that you refer to our draft Memorandum of Agreement for more details on ensuring access to services in the Least Restrictive Environment for eligible children enrolled in Head Start.

We are submitting these requests for immediate action due to the delayed action on the part of CPS to implement collaborative processes as outlined in our draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). We also request that CPS sign and return the current MOA, which was agreed to by DFSS, Start Early, and CPS in April 2021, but has yet to be signed by CPS. We also request that action is taken to finalize, sign, and return a new version of the MOA that includes input from the new Head Start Grantees and formalizes their partnership with CPS as well, **by no later than November 24, 2021.**

The partnership we are proposing between our organizations and CPS will be essential to ensuring equitable access to early learning for young children with disabilities, which has been recognized as a priority by the [Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding](#), the [Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development](#), and the [U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services](#). Inclusion of children with disabilities in a mixed delivery system that includes both school and community-based early learning options is also a priority for federal funding that may soon be made available through the [Build Back Better Act](#).

We appreciate the consideration given to this communication and we stand ready to partner with you to ensure that children with disabilities enrolled in our programs are receiving the support they need.

Sincerely,

Bela Moté, President and CEO, Carole Robertson Center
Edgar Ramirez, President and CEO, Chicago Commons
Sara Ray Stoelinga, President and CEO, Easterseals serving Chicago and Greater Rockford
Scott H. Perkins, President & CEO, Henry Booth House
Diana Mendley Rauner, President, Start Early

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Cyndi Elliott
Member, CPS Family Dyslexia Collaborative