

February 24, 2021 Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Monday, February 22nd and Thursday, February 25th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1	<p>To The Board of Education :</p> <p>First let me say, I applaud and appreciate all of you for your tireless efforts for the children of Illinois. I know it must seem thankless at times, but THANK YOU! I commend your professionalism and integrity throughout the turmoil.</p> <p>That said, I am going to be the parent (among many) who will push to reopen high school. As I type this, there are only 79 school days remaining for our CPS high school students and Academic Center 7th and 8th graders.. EVERY SINGLE DAY counts. These students do not have time to wait for negotiations and the inevitable delay tactics that the CTU is already signaling in LSC meetings and through the media. The LSCs letters to you and others are not representative of the school communities that they have been elected to represent. High School Parents deserve a choice of not if but when they can send their students back to school.</p> <p>The narrative must begin on a high school re-opening hybrid plan immediately. Our children are suffering silently when they should be focused on the next school dance, who they are going to the basketball game with or if they are in the starting line-up. The reality is that they are in their rooms, under the covers, eyes glazed over as their teacher discusses the current lesson. Do we really want to look back on this and wonder if there was something more we could have done to mitigate their isolation and anxiety?</p> <p>Mental health issues do not discriminate and are prevalent across the country among teenagers. Race, religion, ethnicity aside – we are all at risk. Depression, isolation and despair don't care how much money you have, where you live, or who your parents are. One might argue that this is a national public health emergency on par with this dreadful virus standing in front of us.</p> <p>The moving forward plans with hybrid learning in elementary schools is virtually identical to the debate to offer hybrid programming for high school families. Of course, some mitigation protocols will vary, but in the end, PreK, cluster, K-8 and high school students are in desperate need of physical interactions with their peers, social exchanges with their teachers and a return to normalcy. Parents deserve a choice for high schoolers too!</p> <p>Families need to see progress through actions. A sense of urgency from our local and state leaders. The following actions should be taken now in order to put all schools on the path to progress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Academic Centers located within high schools should immediately be slated to return to in-person hybrid, matching the rest of the district's 7th and 8th grade schedule.2. Conduct a survey - to be agreed upon by both sides - to understand the number of high school students who would return in Q4.
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3. Agree upon a return date, no later than the first day of Q4-April 4. A tentative date will allow parents to plan, students to dream, and will force the district and teachers union to be accountable to parents and students.

Once you start the public narrative and understand the desperation of many CPS high school families, you can begin to plan. Collaborative discussions with all stakeholders will evolve into best practices, safety plans and key metrics. But, these plans don't begin until you, CPS and the CTU start the public narrative.

No child should be left behind to suffer. Parents need and deserve a choice of when their child returns to in person learning.

Sincerely,
Desperate CPS High School Parent

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- 2 I would like to raise a concern to the Chicago Board of Education regarding CPS Athletics. Currently the State of Illinois, IDPH, and the IHSA has approved 3 contact days per week for up to two hours each day to be utilized by ALL IHSA sports for the purposes of conditioning and practice. This include sports that are currently not in session. CPS has yet to approve these days for sports and is only allowing in season sports to occur. Several schools surrounding Chicago and across the State have already begun using these days. This further places CPS student athletes behind these schools and the rest of the State. In addition it is a disservice to our athletes to take away opportunities from them when they need them the most. For the past two months, CPS, CDPH, and the Mayors office has touted how safe it is to return to school. They campaigned on putting teachers and student back in the classroom and said it was safe. If it is safe to return to school then it should be safe for our athletes to return and use the building as well. Also at this time CPS has approved Basketball to play and utilize the school buildings. From the start Basketball has been listed as a high risk sport. The majority of the remaining sports out of season right now are Medium to Low risk so it should be safe for them as well. What I am asking is that CPS approve the usage of Contact days as soon as possible so that we can offer our kids more opportunities to break away from the computers and be active physically in a safe environment. Thank you for your time.
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- 3 As a CPS parent, I am writing to urge the School Board to continue the push for a full reopening of Chicago public schools. Our children are deteriorating academically, socially and mentally. We desperately need children to resume full time learning to regain losses over the last year. In addition, resuming full time in-person learning will allow working women to resume real engagement in the workforce. As remote and hybrid learning continues, millions of American women are leaving the workforce in order to do the unpaid labor of teaching at home. Please support the economic advancement of women by supporting full-time in-person learning.
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- 4 We will never forgive the CTU for abandoning CPS children, 89% non-white, our children, for a year, despite the documented harm, despite science and reason, and for bullying parents and dividing communities. We will never attend CPS again and we will be leaving Chicago as soon as is possible.
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- 5 2 days of school is not enough. Chicago kids are being left behind in this unsustainable remote learning situation while suburban and private schools jump ahead or have been providing in person instruction and education 5 days a week as it should be. Please make it a priority to reopen schools fully and regularly on a 5 day basis. 2 days is just not enough!! and CPS kids will be suffering because of this while their more

privileged and affluent peers in the suburbs and private schools jump ahead of them academically and socioemotionally.

6	<p>Dear Board Members,</p> <p>I would like to encourage you to review your Mission Statement prior to each meeting to ensure that the decisions you make align with the goals of the Board rather than unions or other political organizations with competing interests.</p> <p>"To set goals and standards and make policies that make a high-quality public education system available to the children of Chicago. To oversee the operations of the Chicago Public Schools, guarantee their accountability to the goals and objectives set by the Board and ensure that its accomplishments meet the expectations of the citizens of Chicago."</p> <p>As a parent of 2 CPS students, a physician educator, and a citizen of Chicago, I do not believe that you are fulfilling your mission to provide "high-quality" education for our children. Citywide COVID-19 positivity rates are at an all-time low, and schools across the city and state have already opened their doors to students. Essential workers, many of whom worked throughout the pandemic, have increased their services safely. Grocery stores are open, dogs are being groomed, packages are being sorted and delivered, and public transportation continues to operate. In the medical arena, we have continued to care for patients and teach students throughout the pandemic with social distancing, masks, and rigorous cleaning protocols. Meanwhile, our children are isolated at home missing opportunities for social and emotional learning that can only occur in a classroom setting.</p> <p>Enough is Enough! Please work with public health experts, CPS administration, parents and teachers to develop and implement a plan for in-person learning for ALL ages for the remainder of the academic year.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
7	Please get our kids back to school. My 8th grader used to love school and get good grades. He is so demotivated by in person learning and anxious. He was so upset when school was cancelled yet again. Please think of the kids first and foremost with every decision you make. Families are leaving our school every week, leaving our city. Public school kids need the adults to get back to school. No more strikes, true professionals should stop using the kids for national attention and get back to school!
8	We are CPS parents of 11 years, and now all we can think about is how to get out of our public schools. Our last factor will be whether or not our high schools return THIS YEAR in the 4th quarter (hybrid or full-time) AND whether or not there is a guarantee of 5 full days IN PERSON in the fall. This is what many suburbs are offering and now that teachers are vaccinated, I am completely confused as to why CPS cannot make this happen. Parents cannot bear the burden of sustained remote/hybrid learning any longer. Our taxes are incredibly high and pay for full days in school. Parents need to know NOW what decisions are being made for high school reopenings THIS year and plans for the fall so that we can know if we must leave the city. CPS cannot give in any more than you already have. I think there are many, many teachers who want to return asap, now that they're vaccinated. Their voices are probably muffled by their union. You also have PARENTS to be accountable to and we have absolutely ZERO voice in this matter, yet both the CTU and CPS are willing to make us the means by which remote learning and hybrid happen. Not anymore. That said, thank you for getting our

elementary kids into schools. But, we need to keep going to get high schoolers in THIS school year. Thank you.

- 9 My name is Willie Preston and I am the father of six children. All of my children attend Chicago Public Schools. I am also a local School Council Member. I want the board to know that it is vital that our schools be safely re-opened immediately. Too many children in communities such as Auburn Gresham where I live and raise my children and communities such as Englewood where I was raised and still have young family members who live there are depending on our schools to be opened; not for daycare purposes as some have sadly pushed as a narrative to shame parents who want our children to learn in person, but because neighborhood schools are stabilizing forces in our communities at a time when stability is sometimes hard to find. The continuing of our schools being closed including high schools is clearly all politics and is not respecting of science. The Center for Disease control has clearly laid out its recommendations and said emphatically schools can safely reopen. To put this in proper perspective, my daughters are walking into their school building two times a week to attend cheerleading practice but at present they are not able to go in to that same building to get an education. My sons, both high schoolers are attending bowling practice, wrestling, and baseball practice but yet they don't even have a projected date when they might be able to return to school and learn. This does not make any sense. Children in my community are walking the streets during school hours while their parents are at work and finding nothing available but opportunities to get involved in crime. As board members of CPS you don't have to worry about running for office so the fact is you have the cover to do the right thing for the Children of Chicago without the heavy burden of running for office. This political cover coupled with the data from CPS that tells you that far too many CPS children, especially in low income communities, are falling behind due to simply not logging in should compel you all to take a firm position and move to reopen our schools safely and expeditiously. I pray that that my plea to save Chicagos future is received with openness and understanding because parents, communities, and children across Chicago are depending on you all who sit in this awesome position of power to get this right and by this I mean our public education system and not the politics of it.
- 10 I am a big proponent of in-person learning. Thank you to CPS for making it happen. I think we should be working quickly towards a way to get children back in school 5 days a week.
- 11 While I commend the district and mayor for advances in reopening with the hybrid model for elementary students in March, I believe that parents deserve a plan (by the end of this current school year) for the fall with an option for 5-day in-person learning. Remote/hybrid learning was meant to be a stop gap measure and should not be the model for next school year. Our children should not have to bear the brunt of learning loss any longer.
- 12 This is a request for a 5 day/week return to in-person instruction. The scientific data supporting a safe return to in-person school is overwhelming. I have experienced it for myself, as my CPS 2nd grader has safely attended a learning pod at a child care center since September and my Catholic school 6th grader began the year attending 2 days/week in-person and will be going 5 days/week March 1st. Data shows that remote school has failed many students academically and socially. CPS students should not be left behind, while others safely are in school and so many other places are open; stores, indoor waterparks, salons, restaurants, gyms, bars, airports, etc.
- 13 It is time to trust the science and open the schools. Numerous other school districts have been able to open successfully. I feel like the plan my child's school has presented to parents is a great plan to minimize spread of infection, if in fact there is a

carrier of the virus in the class. This has been a rough year for everyone. Every day I watch my child sit in front of a chrome book and try to learn in my home that is as best set up for her to be successful. I can only imagine how hard it has been for other families with numerous children remote learning. My daughter is isolated and I continue to watch her become more and more isolated because she cannot be in school learning and thriving with her peers. Covid is here and we need to figure out how to live with it by adhering to the guidelines laid out from the health professionals. Our children are falling behind. I understand teachers are working hard and so am I as a parent. However, my child would benefit from in person learning. At this point I feel as if I have failed my child as a parent because I didn't have a back up plan if CPS did not reopen. Why can't we now trust the science and get back to teaching the children of this city? They deserve to receive an excellent education and to be in school thriving and not isolated.

14	I am a black man, a CPS father, and a lifelong Chicago resident. The CTU's refusal to teach our children in person is a gross social injustice and has caused irreparable harm. The way they have shamed parents for speaking up for their children is shameful. I will do everything in my power to get my children out of CPS and into a positive learning environment with teachers who care about children and communities.
15	Please work to get our academic center students back in buildings asap. All other 7th and 8th graders in the district have the option to return to schools 3/8.
16	I would like to first say thank you for your tireless efforts to reopen schools for elementary students. I appreciate that you did not let a campaign of misinformation get in the way of science. As a parent of both an elementary student and a 7th grade Academic Center student, I have to also ask that you push forward quickly to reopen Academic Centers and High School. For those 7th graders left behind in the reopening plan and for 9th graders, the transition to a new school without any ability to make friends or social connections has been actually devastating to watch. For seniors, I cannot express how bad I feel for the normal senior experience that they are missing out on. I am in fear of the mental health consequences for a large group of students who have been isolated from their same age peers. Mental health issues do not discriminate by age, race, gender, etc. One could argue that continued isolation is a mental health crisis in and of itself. I want you to know that you have the full support of many, many parents and we are advocating more and more every day for OUR voice to be heard. We will do our best to get others to join in to this voice as long as we are able to see dedication from CPS to reopening high schools. I implore you and your team to move quickly and decisively to get these students back in school. With teachers being vaccinated soon and positivity rates spiraling downwards, there can be no excuses tolerated. As leaders of the city, we are asking that you lead the charge for a quick reopening of high schools. Thank you.
17	As a new CPS parent of a kindergartner, I was absolutely shocked this year with the political rhetoric and divisive language used to pit parents against teachers and each other during the reopening "negotiations". I want to commend Dr Jackson and Mayor Lightfoot for taking the initiative to move forward as the CTU used every tool and a lot of \$\$ to stall the important task of safely reopening schools. This is crucial as the

students have seem to be lost in the discussion along with many parents who have felt bullied and SILENCED by the harmful accusations about needing a choice for in-person learning. As the entire administration remains fully paid, MANY parents have had to step away from their careers in order to support the remote learning strategy surviving on 1 or zero incomes- this is not sustainable. A concrete plan needs to be implemented now to ensure all children have the choice to remain in person with an option of 5 days, so those parents can get back to work. The lack of creativity and resourcefulness amongst such a large group of highly educated people is baffling. It is not acceptable that we are left hanging by a thread with the clear power play that the CTU, blinded by their activism, is organizing with our children as pawns. The manipulation of statistics and facts is very dangerous there needs to be a change in how "transparency" is publicized. We need to learn from other districts' success as one of the last large school districts that cannot seem to unite- it is embarrassing. Let's put aside the partisan tactics and have pride in how our communities come together during "unprecedented" struggle. The name-calling needs to stop- lets set an example for our children and be professionals.

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- 18 The start of the school year for 2021 should be pushed back or moved earlier to allow people of the Jewish religion to observe one of the most important holidays of the year. Coming out of a rough year, the choice to miss the first day of school is putting many Jewish families in a difficult position. We want to be inclusive. We want to teach our kids to honor others' beliefs. We need to set an example to our children and show this community that all belief systems are respected and honored.
- 19 I am a CPS mother to 3 elementary students. I am very grateful that some form of in-person learning has resumed in our district. My children are ecstatic to return to their classrooms next week. CPS and all of the teachers and staff have done a great job in making the best of remote learning, however remote learning was never meant to be long-term. There simply is no substitute for in-person instruction. I am not a teacher nor could I ever provide the quality of education that teachers and in-school structure can. As I'm sure you are aware, expert clinical guidance, case studies, and scientific data continue to mount in support of students returning to in-person learning. In-person learning has proven to be safe and it is necessary that we act with urgency in order to return students to in-person learning. Too many families in our district are dealing with crippling financial and emotional issues that can be alleviated by a return to in-person instruction. We are losing too many students to suicide, crime, and dropping out. Children in families that lack the resources to support virtual learning will continue to fall behind their peers, exacerbating inequity. Similarly, families that have the ability are fleeing the district in droves, either opting for private, charter, or other district schools. Families deserve open communication, transparency, and opportunities for engagement when it comes to planning for their children's education. My ask of the board is this, CPS and CTU need to urgently work towards reopening high schools and a return to 5-day/week in-person instruction, and include parents and families in their planning. Thank you for your time.
- 20 hello, I am a senior that attends a Chicago public school (LPCA). currently I am looking into a lot of colleges to further my education but there is just a few problems starting with my school only being able to do online classes. I am writing to the board because Chicago students already have a problem when it comes to the education system. As well as the lack of education due to not having many resources like when it comes to an educational gap and the effort put in to schools in certain areas. Also I know that some things we don't have power over when it comes to the government but a lot of Chicago's students feel like we should be able to have a option to come into school if possible. second there are a lot of seniors are either failing or their struggling

trying to get everything together to transition into not only adult hood but the transition into their future education and career. due to Covid-19 we the students realize it puts a set back on everything not only for seniors and senior teachers but for k-11 students as well. not only does it mess with our present but this will also effect Cps students future. with 52% percent of students being hands on learners and some are social learners which is 99% effective. we the students believe you all should highly consider letting students have the opportunity to either stay home if they feel its safe or come back to our building to further their education. Please consider this email as an open option to further the education of Chicago students.

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- 21 Good morning unelected BOE! I have e-mailed every single one of you twice since January, and still have received no response to my question. I teach preK in Brighton Park, where many of our students have lost relatives to COVID-19. Our community is so hard-hit, all our preK classes chose 100% remote. However, preK teachers without accommodations are still forced to work from the buildings 5 days a week. We teach children with disabilities. Parents are calling me asking when the other teachers can go home. Their children aren't learning as well from teachers whose voices and faces are obscured by masks and face shields. The WIFI in the building is terrible, and the sound is terrible even with headphones on, and the teachers often have to wear coats in the building because our air purifier is unsafe - it's designed for a room half the size.
- This reopening plan is going to backfire if parents who don't feel safe to send their children back are watching teachers struggle in buildings that are clearly unsafe ON CAMERA, all day long? How are we going to build trust, and get buy-in from families on this plan, if they have to watch their teachers struggle to stay safe on camera?
- CDC recommends that buildings should be "reasonably" staffed to avoid viral outbreaks. In our case, we have 7 staff members coming into the building for 0 in-person students. From a public health perspective, why are we allowing more possible points of contact for COVID exposure, especially when, in schools like ours, parents are *explicitly requesting* that teachers be allowed to teach from home?