

Current Proposal and Goals

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) proposes to close four high schools in the Englewood area due to low enrollment. Under-enrolled schools face challenges in providing a well-rounded education for their students, particularly in offering robust program options for students and recruiting staff.¹ In turn, this makes it difficult to provide the high school experience that students deserve. Over the past 10 years, each of these schools has seen declines in enrollment of 70 to 85 percent, with current enrollment between 90 and 135 students at each school.

Community Town Hall

Chicago United for Equity (CUE) hosted a 3-hour town hall to solicit community input as part of a racial equity assessment process, examining the impact this proposal would have on low-income students and students of color. The town hall was advertised by local public officials through various mediums, both in-person and online. The event occurred on Saturday, January 13th and drew approximately 25 attendees, whose input in small group discussions contributed to this report.

Community Concerns

- Continuing the historical legacy of school closures and destabilization in minority communities.
- Lack of procedural transparency and responsiveness to input from the most impacted families.
- Additional burdens on students who have familial responsibilities, including academic disruption, safety concerns, and signaling of assigned value inherent in this proposal
- Lack of parity with investments being made in other neighborhoods of Chicago, where new school construction is not reliant on school closures.

Resulting Recommendations

1. Immediately pause this plan, until community-identified leadership is placed into decision-making roles on a leadership taskforce.
2. Develop community-led investment strategy for existing schools, preserving at minimum one of the existing community high schools.
3. Conduct a longer-term study on root causes for decreased student enrollment in Englewood.
4. Foster inclusive community planning processes to cultivate trust moving forward.

¹ Community members provided additional testimony about the lack of programming in existing schools, which all agreed was lacking. However, they cited concerns about the Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) formula, which provides base operational funding augmented with a per-pupil allocation to schools. Respondents stated that this formula accelerates disinvestment in schools, as when a few students leave, budgets decrease and lead to programmatic cuts. This mechanism fuels further disenrollment.

STEP #1: WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL AND THE DESIRED RESULTS AND OUTCOMES?

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) intends to better serve high school students in Englewood by implementing a multi-stage plan to restructure the public high school system in the area. First, CPS would close four existing high schools (Harper, Hope, Robeson and TEAM Englewood) due to low enrollment at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year. The proposal intends to relocate existing 9th-11th grade students at these schools to 4 other public high schools outside current Englewood boundaries (Bogan, Gage Park, Phillips and Chicago Vocational) for the remainder of their high school careers. CPS would then build a new high school on the Robeson site, slated to open in the 2019-2020 school year with an incoming class of freshmen. The school would enroll one grade level annually until the school grows to capacity in the Fall of 2022. The cost of the new construction would be \$85 million.

- a. The proposal is attempting to solve under-enrollment at neighborhood high schools in Englewood.
 - The lower enrollment at these high schools mirror trends of decreased enrollment rates at aligned, feeder grammar schools.
 - CPS cites data that indicates that 90% of area students enroll in schools outside the neighborhood, which is interpreted to signal parental dissatisfaction with existing neighborhood schools.

- b. The proposal seeks to provide Englewood students with a consolidated high-quality high school with programs to attract youth.
 - Community residents agree with CPS's assertion that the Englewood schools are need of significant infrastructure improvements. However, residents reflected that this is due to continued disinvestment in neighborhood schools while CPS has relied on the growing charter school options in the area to provide adequate resources for the community. Respondents expressed that this proposal is a way to try to provide a limited investment in the school quality in place of the longer-term investments that they should have received.

1. What does this proposal have an ability to impact?

Children and youth

The present and future children of Englewood will experience various effects. The proposal would have adverse effects on current students if they are forced to commute outside of their neighborhood. Future students could benefit from a new high school if CPS provides adequate funding and programs in addition to good staff and teachers.

Community engagement

The wider community was not consulted about closing every public high school in the area. Elected officials representing the district were not consulted as a part of this process. The Englewood community has a historic mistrust of government leaders and community testimony provided repeatedly cited a legacy of policy decisions made to disinvest from the community. This lack of trust

significantly impacts how policy decisions are interpreted and undermines even those policies that are created with good intentions.

Jobs

Many residents feel this proposal has been made in part to cut jobs to teachers because of CPS budget shortfalls. Some community members suggested the proposal is a way to give construction contracts to political supporters. Community members specifically cited concerns on the legacy of job cuts for African-American veteran educators, whose years of experience place them at the higher end of the teacher pay scale. Given this, it becomes more challenging for these educators to find new jobs in the district, absent a districtwide average pay scale that eliminates the structural disincentive to hire experienced educators.²

Economic development

New construction or retrofitted schools that provide educational programming that meets the needs of students can boost school achievement and ranking. High performing schools can attract investment in the area and bring other economic development activities.

Education

Investment in schools is likely to produce stronger educational outcomes if the proposal includes programming and instructional resources beyond facility improvements.

Transportation

Transportation routes for the CTA or school busing will be affected by the school closures and new school. The extended commutes will also impact the high school student's ability to look after siblings on their way to school and picking them up after school.

Environment

CPS has not identified what would happen to the closed school buildings, which could add further blight to the area. There will also be construction that can impact the local environment at the Robeson site if other buildings are repurposed.

Public Safety

Public safety of students was of great concern to many of the participants. Parents were particularly concerned with safety issues involving commutes to any of the receiving schools due to the distance traveled and issues stemming from the mixing of different communities. Safe passage zones have been created in the past to address similar concerns.

² Such pay scales exist in districts like Washington, DC, where schools are charged the average teacher pay rate across the district.

2. What was the community engagement process? Was it adequate? Why or why not?

Voices of West Englewood, Englewood Political Taskforce, and Englewood Steering Committee representatives present indicated that their input was invited after the proposal was constructed. At this point, while some local residents were included in the process, the voices of those most impacted by the proposal were not included in key decision-making.

Elected officials were also not engaged in the process, where they could help facilitate strong community engagement given their relationships and contacts in the community. The communication and contact with the community were reactive after the proposal was broadcasted, rather than engaging impacted constituents during the development of the proposal.

STEP #2: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND BURDENS OF THE PROPOSAL? WHO IS IMPACTED BY EACH?

1. Considering the data available and community testimony presented, who benefits under this proposal and how?

BENEFITS	BENEFITTED GROUPS
<p>Access to a new high school: Current 7th grade and below students will have access to a new high school, potentially as a school constructed with attractive programs and fully-enrolled student body.</p>	<p>Future generations of Englewood students served by a neighborhood high school option, specifically those in 7th grade or younger.</p>
<p>Potential for Economic Development: This proposal offers the potential of site redevelopment at Hope, Harper, and Team Englewood campuses. This may serve as a benefit to parties interested in larger site redevelopment in Englewood, which may include developers, other school operators, or community-based organizations looking for new spaces to grow their efforts. These efforts have the potential to further or close equity gaps, depending on how community voice guides these efforts and what services and community benefits occur as a result.</p>	<p>Interested parties in redevelopment efforts</p> <p>Potential for all Englewood residents based on what development occurs</p>
<p>Financial costs: CPS shows that investments needed to address deferred maintenance needs in the existing Englewood schools total \$115.8 million. The proposal allocates \$85 million for construction and \$8.3 million for transitional support, coming in under the infrastructure costs projected at existing buildings.</p>	<p>Chicago taxpayers</p> <p>CPS</p>

2. Considering the data available and experiences in the community, who is burdened by this proposal and how?

The overwhelming burdens of this proposal fall on the existing students who would not qualify to attend any public neighborhood high school in Englewood, due to the staggered enrollment process proposed that would launch a freshman-only school starting in school year 2019-2020 and add one incoming class per year. Current 8th to 11th grade students would not be able to enroll in the proposed new school. This harm explicitly impacts students in grades 8th - 11th. These students are almost exclusively African-American and low-income.³ The specific harms are broken down below.

³ CPS School Profiles of each school show that each of the four impacted schools enrolls between 75 to 98.8 percent African-American student bodies and that 96.5-100% of each school's student body qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch. See Appendix A.

BURDENS	BURDENED GROUPS
<p><u>Disruption of Academic Trajectory:</u></p> <p>School closings do have the potential to increase student outcomes. However, this is most likely in environments where students are transferred to significantly stronger environments, augmented with key supports.⁴ This proposal aims to transfer students to schools that all show comparable performance ratings, signaling that stronger outcomes are not likely for the impacted students.</p> <p>Additionally, there is reason to believe that these students are more likely to face negative outcomes specifically due to this disruption. Research from the 2013 elementary school closures shows immediately lower outcomes that recover to neutral impacts over time. This makes movement for high school students particularly challenging, given the limited time period available to recover from this move. High school closings are associated with negative academic outcomes, specifically in depressed GPAs (-10%), attendance (-4%), graduation rates (-6 to -10%), and college attendance (-3% to -5%).⁵</p>	<p>Currently enrolled 9th-11th grade students at Harper, Hope, Team Englewood, and Robeson</p>
<p><u>Travel:</u> All students face increased travel times, though the impact of this burden depends greatly on where in the existing school boundaries each student lives. Additional data on current locations would be helpful to identify the true range of travel increase, although community members measured distances of 4-6 miles from the existing high schools to the future schools.</p> <p>Given the scarcity of transportation resources in this community of Chicago, this is a particular concern because of the longer wait times and commute times projected. This is important to weigh in context of the systemic inequities in the policy landscape that exacerbate the negative impacts of this proposal.</p>	<p>Englewood students currently in 8th-11th grades</p>
<p><u>Safety and Responsibilities:</u> The students impacted by this proposal's longer commute would face challenges to safety given the lines of division in the communities that they are being asked to transverse. These safety concerns require larger scale community and policy interventions to not just</p>	<p>Englewood students currently in 8th-11th grades</p>

⁴ De la Torre, M., & Gwynne, J. (2009). When Schools Close: Effects on Displaced Students in Chicago Public Schools. Research Report. Consortium on Chicago School Research. 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED510792.pdf>

⁵ Larsen, M. F. (2014). Does Closing Schools Close Doors? The Effect of High School Closings on Achievement and Attainment. http://www.tulane.edu/~mflarsen/uploads/2/2/5/4/22549316/mflarsen_schoolclosings.pdf.

ensure positive outcomes, but to affirm students' confidence that this travel does not put them in harm's way.

This impact is not merely sentimental. The psychological burden of fearing for one's safety is associated with academic outcomes, among other concerns.

Community Cohesion: Students will have to leave their community for school, disrupting the social fabric of the community at a foundational level. The breaks in these community bonds between neighborhood students and staff in their schools, and the feelings of being an outsider once they enroll into their new schools are associated with negative academic performance as well.⁶

Englewood students currently in 8th-11th grade, primarily those in 9th-11th grades

Community Identity: Given the on-going transformation of public spaces in Englewood, residents expressed deep concerns about the loss of community identity associated with continued school closures. These schools have strong legacies within the community, with residents citing stories and histories that celebrate a time when African-American leaders drove Englewood's success as an economic powerhouse in Chicago. Community members expressed concerns about the current perceptions of Englewood marking it as a lost cause in need of gentrification that can only come through new residents "saving" the community. To historical residents, these closures stand as hallmark features of improvement efforts led by outsiders, which they fear will come with attempts to remove current residents from the community.

Englewood community members

Potential to Accelerate Displacement: Community stakeholders expressed concern that the additional travel times would motivate another exodus out of Englewood. Given trends from 2013, residents are concerned that those impacted by school closings will choose to leave the community altogether.⁷ In a community already seeing such significant population loss, any greater depopulation serves to threaten the survival of Englewood.

⁶ Pribesh, S., & Downey, D. B. (1999). Why are residential and school moves associated with poor school performance? *Demography*, 36(4), 521-534. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10604079>

⁷ Belsha, Kayln. "Thousands of black students leave Chicago for other segregated districts." <http://www.chicagoreporter.com/black-cps-student-migration/>

STEP #3: WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE RACIAL EQUITY?

Given burdens identified, the community stakeholders were asked to develop alternative strategies that address the two core issues at the table:

- How to limit burdens on 8th – 11th grade Englewood students
- How to address underlying, longer-term concerns about community vitality
- How to rebuild trust between government and community stakeholders

Here are the strategies that were developed:

- 1. Immediate pause to this plan, until community-identified leadership is placed into decision-making roles.** Specifically, community members asked for a taskforce that includes designated community leaders. These leaders should include local elected officials that represent the most impacted community members (students, families, and residents zoned to the schools impacted). All taskforce representatives should be affirmed through a community vote.
- 2. Community-led investment in existing schools.** Overwhelmingly, the greatest support went to this proposal to invest \$10 million into the beautification of the schools (\$2.5 million each) and \$7.5 million into each school for teaching, tools, technology, and books. Residents' rationale for this expensive strategy was the notion that past deferred costs should not be a financial justification for closure, given that the deferred costs were under the district's control. Residents assert that had adequate funding been invested in these schools initially, enrollment declines would not have happened. As a result, they have asked for:
 - Investment of \$10 million into the beautification of the schools (\$2.5 million each) and \$7.5 million into each school for teaching, tools, technology, and books
 - The \$7.5 million investment should seed attractive programs, determined by a community-led participatory process that engages students and families who are considering high school options in Englewood and outside Englewood. Creating a highly attractive program requires engagement of these families first.
- 3. Longer-term study on factors causing disenrollment.** Participants were also eager to address the root causes of the challenges faced today, which stem from the long-term disenrollment from existing schools. To address this issue, Chicago Public Schools and community leaders should work in partnership to conduct a study on the motivating factors that have led parents and families to choose high school options outside of Englewood and identify what critical supports could be provided to keep these families in the community.
- 4. Inclusive community planning to cultivate trust moving forward.** To increase a likelihood of success, participants agreed that Chicago Public Schools should develop more inclusive tables of decision-making, starting when key problems are first identified and well before their solutions have been determined. Co-creation of potential solutions allows for the district to access the wealth of community knowledge that allows stronger solutions to take hold. It also provides the district an opportunity to rebuild the trust that has been lost over decades of public policy

choices that have disproportionately disenfranchised communities of color. Moving forward in this plan, starkly different community meetings were requested, where viewpoints are documented and reported back to stakeholders to begin the process of rebuilding trust between the district and the community.

Appendix A:

Data Presentation at Racial Equity
Assessment Engagement

Saturday, Jan. 13th, 2018



CHICAGO UNITED FOR EQUITY

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Agenda

Introductions and Intention-Setting	5 mins
Presentations and Public Testimony	45 mins
Small Group Discussions	90 mins
Reflections / Next Steps	10 mins



Our Intentions

1. Build relationships.
2. Talk about challenging topics in a supportive environment.
3. Set a vision for racial equity.



Community Norms

1. Make no assumptions except good intentions.
2. Acknowledge your privilege and power.
3. Value equity over equality.
4. Come curious and engage deeply.
5. Step up, step back.
6. Speak for yourself, not for a group.

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What is a Racial Equity Assessment? And why do we need it?

1. It's a tool to solve community problems and avoid doing new harm.
2. It is used to break down structural racism.



Our Process

1. Everyone starts with the same REA form.
2. We all review evidence – both in numbers and in community testimony.
3. Community members will then get into small groups to discuss and fill out the REA form. This will be captured by our CUE Fellows, who will collect all of these into one final report to present to the Board of Education.

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Racial Equity Assessment Template Breakdown



Presentation



What is CPS trying to address?

- Large number of Englewood students travel 4+ miles from their home to attend high school
- Need for additional opportunities beyond general education programs at neighborhood schools
- Aging high school buildings that require maintenance and improvement



What is the CPS plan?

Step 1: Close 4 existing high schools in Englewood

- Robeson High School
- Team Englewood High School
- Hope High School
- Harper High School



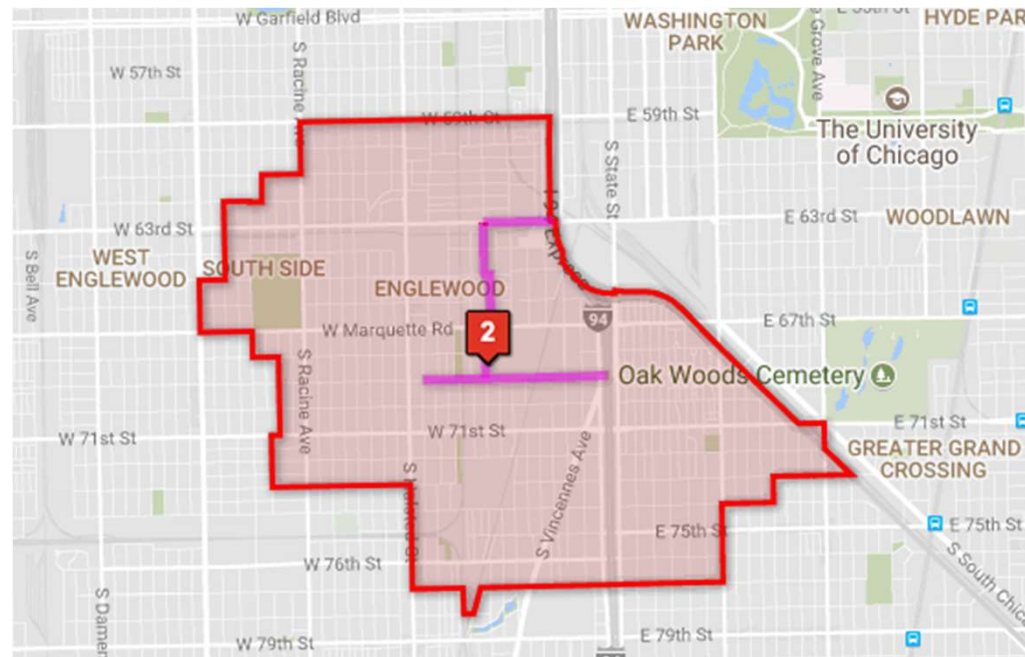
What is the CPS plan?

Profiles of existing Englewood neighborhood high schools



ROBESON HS

Black Students: 98.4%
Low Income Students: 100%
Programs Offered: General Education, Allied Health
Performance Rating: Level 2
Graduation Rate: 54.9%



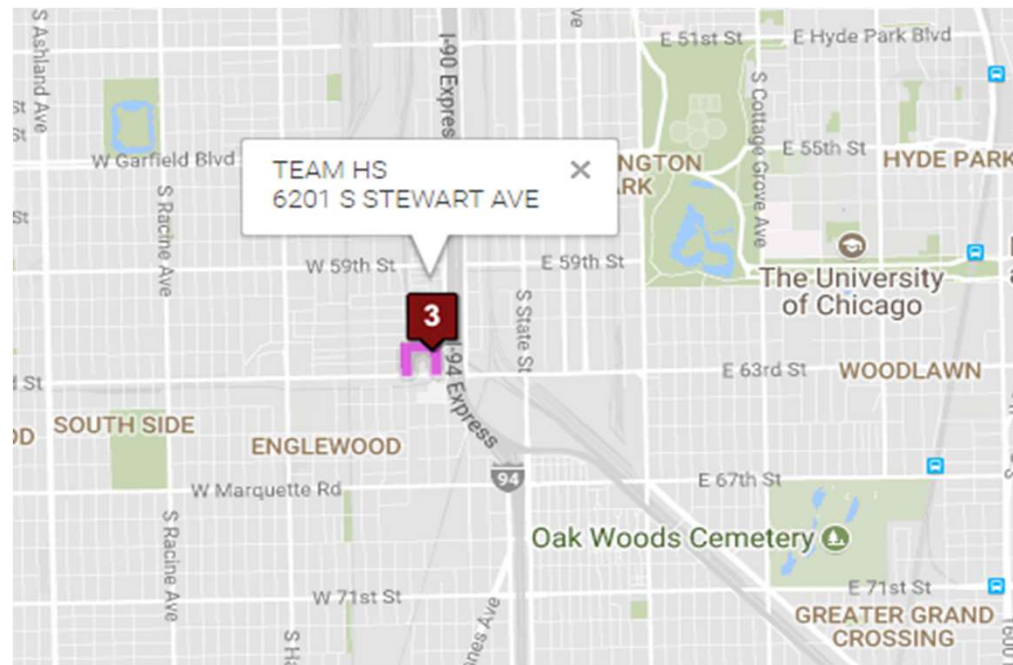
What is the CPS plan?

Profiles of existing Englewood neighborhood high schools



TEAM HS

Black Students: 98.8%
Low Income Students: 96.5%
Programs Offered: General Education
Performance Rating: Level 3
Graduation Rate: 75.9%



What is the CPS plan?

Profiles of existing Englewood neighborhood high schools



HOPE HS

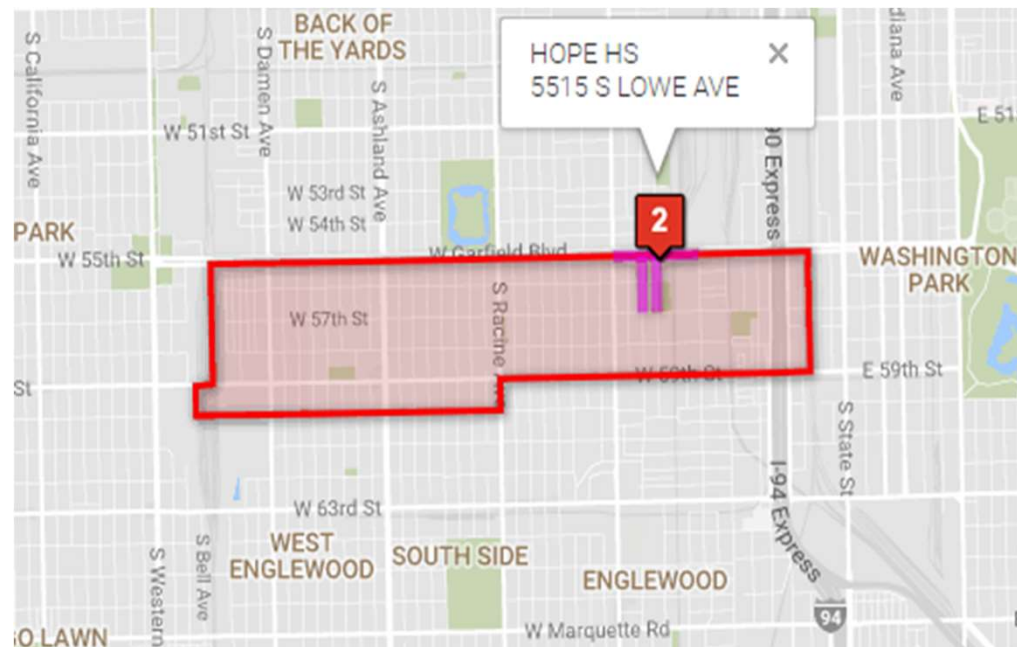
Black Students: 75.6%

Low Income Students: 97.8%

Programs Offered: General Education

Performance Rating: Level 2

Graduation Rate: 61.9%



What is the CPS plan?

Profiles of existing Englewood neighborhood high schools



HARPER HS

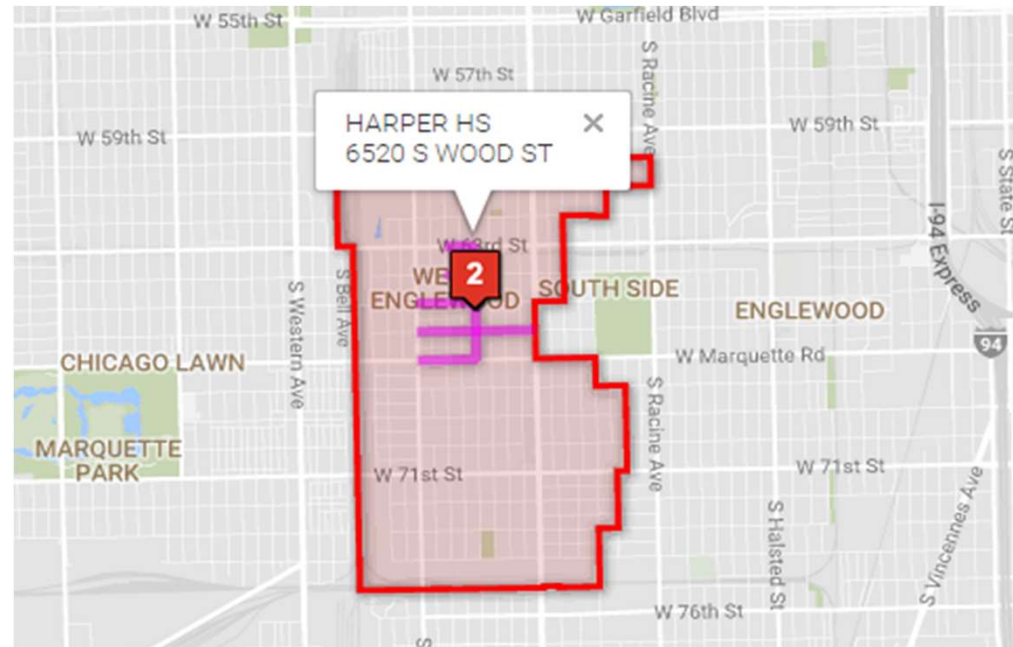
Black Students: 96.9%

Low Income Students: 98.4%

Programs Offered: General Education

Performance Rating: Level 2

Graduation Rate: 55.9%



What is the CPS plan?

Data CPS uses to justify school closures

Englewood Schools Face Declining Enrollment

School	2006 Enrollment	2006 Share of Students from Attendance Area*	2016 Enrollment	2016 Share of Students From Attendance Area
Harper HS	1,301	48%	167	10%
Hope HS	1,015	38%	136	8%
Robeson HS	1,509	35%	151	4%
TEAM Englewood	696	25%	160	N/A

*Share of students from attendance area is the percent of students who are zoned to the school who attend the school.

Englewood High Schools Have Significant Age and Deferred Maintenance Costs

School	Capacity	Year Built	Maintenance Needs
Harper HS	1,440	1911	\$38.7 million
Hope HS	744	1970	\$15.7 million
Robeson HS	1,296	1977	\$35 million
TEAM Englewood	672	1979	\$26.4 million

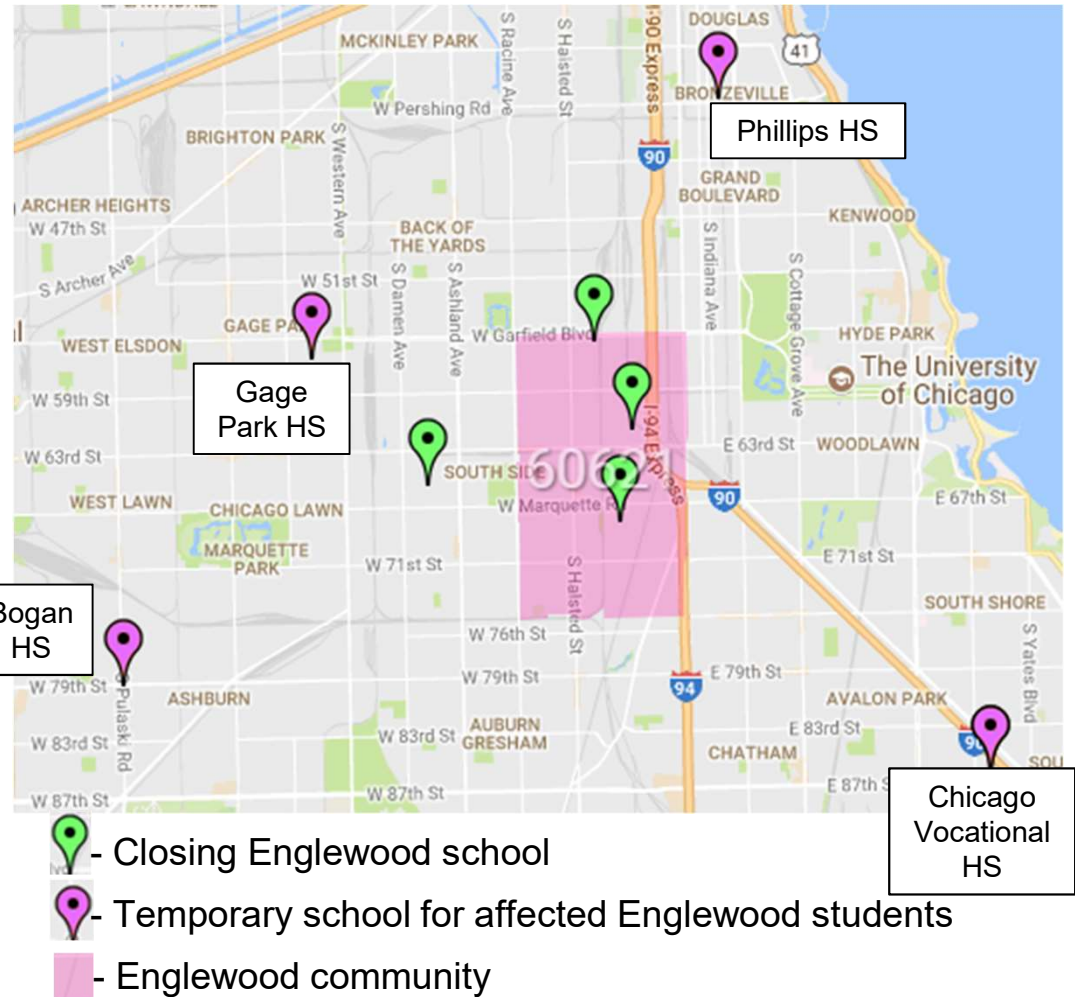
What is the CPS plan?

Step 2: Temporarily relocate students enrolled in the 4 closing schools

-Students enrolled in 4 closing high schools will have to transfer for the 2018-19 school year since the new school will not open until 2019.

-CPS offered to pay \$8.3 million to help students transition. Specific uses of the funds unclear.

-Chicago Vocational, Bogan, Phillips Academy and Gage Park high schools would expand their attendance boundaries to become default neighborhood high schools for students who attend the schools being closed



What is the CPS plan?

Step 3: Build a new high school in Englewood

- \$85 million price tag
- Set to open in fall 2019 (grade 9 only)
- 1200 student capacity
- Located on site of Robeson High School
- New outdoor sports facilities
community health center
- Partnership with nearby Kennedy-King College (early college credentials and vocational training)



CPS says that this proposal...

- 1) **Provides quality educational opportunities**: CPS says the new neighborhood high school in Englewood will provide students with access to more educational opportunities
- 2) **Saves money**: CPS says this will cost \$85 – this is less than the \$115.8 million they quote for repairing the four closing high schools
- 3) **Community Led**: CPS claims the community proposed and supports the plan to close the four neighborhood high schools to build the new Englewood high school

Things to consider...

- Impact of uprooting students from their current schools
- How CPS will use money available to develop Englewood schools
- Student safety and territorial boundaries in the Englewood community
- Community feedback on the plan
- Others?

Community Testimony



Small Group Discussions



Small Group Discussions

1. Keep the “small” in small group.
2. Fellows will capture notes.
3. This is your time to shine.

Closing / Next Steps



Join us again...

- **Community Meeting**
- Jan. 17 - Hamilton Park Fieldhouse, 513 W 72nd S
- **Public Hearing**
- Jan. 30 - CPS Central Office, 42 West Madison St
- **Report of Findings to be completed**
- Make sure you sign in and/or follow us on Facebook to see reminders:
[fb.com/ChicagoUnitedforEquity](https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoUnitedforEquity)
- FELLOWS – meet before you leave.

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APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY FORUM TESTIMONIALS

Current student: (Name redacted)

CPS should take more consideration. It's a cycle of poor education and poor decision making. School as an outlet to stay out of the streets and go to college. The age group that's out in the streets in 10-25 years old. Younger kids following the behavior of older kids.

Parent: Joseph Williams

2 years in Englewood, moved from 39th on the low end. Bringing different areas together can be an issue because of gang affiliation. If there's no plan to address that part, the proposal won't work (because of gang violence). CPS has their minds made up. Summer 2017 they started talking about it. Nobody was there in those meetings that that was the "community" input that they used. Glad I came here today. There's still hope to change this. If there's no other way to hit us, they hit us by touching our kids and their education. I feel safe in Englewood. There's a lot of good in Englewood. We are just trying to guide our young people.

Resident: Darryl Smith

Running for Cook County Commissioner in the 2nd district. 1987 graduate of Harper HS. Peace Treaty in 1981 in all Englewood HSs. No one from the village is part of these conversations/plans. "We get what they give us." We have to stop letting people shove stuff down our throat. Schools' programs are closed and not attracting students. Harper doesn't even have a pool or science program. Need to invest in the teachers. Kid killed at Fenger was the result of schools merging. Youth and elderly are most vulnerable. I don't care how many police they put out there; they're not going to stop it. We need the village. Take \$20 million per school to invest in programming.

Parent: Ronald Jackson

Young teachers don't know the students. Programs are gone. We need the data to see what was offered to students (public and charter). When principal left, programs left. Student enrollment decreased. Demand: Where the programs at? Where do you get \$85 million if you're broke? We're not (neighborhood) is not benefitting. Community groups can't talk with students. Violating student educational rights.

Community member: Melvin Aventa

Moved here in 1972. Graduated from Harper HS. If you begin to cut off capillaries, at some point, you'll damage tissue. That's what gentrification does to communities. Programs impact a lot. Look at the whole picture. Homeownership vs. rentals. Ownership over their community. Alderman Lopez sent kids around to get signatures. Crime rate decreased by 50% - people in the community care. We owe it to the children. As soon as projects got torn down, violence increase because people have been displaced and we will see the same with schools.

Community member: Rodney Johnson

Englewood QOL plan health. There are parallels between health and wealth such as addressing childhood asthma. We need to start by identifying stakeholders. Research on what people want to address. We react instead of engaging the community.

Resident and Real Estate Agent: Melvin D.

Removing school programs makes parents remove their students from the schools. The effects of deteriorating schools caused by the removal of trade programs have a more widespread impact on the community. Low rated neighborhood schools have a negative impact on the real estate prices in the area and the condition of homes.