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Board of Education

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Agency: Chicago Public Schools

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Takeaways

- The main takeaway is the presentation of the New Strategic Plan that looks to modernize the infrastructure of the school system as well as the curriculum. The plan will be executed in Summer 2024 when CPS officers expect for the first informative meetings about the “state of the schools” to begin.
- There is a loud resentment in the Black community regarding how Chicago Public Schools manage their priorities. As of now they feel left out and forgotten in the wake of the new immigrant crisis. CPS officers and the CPS Board said the Black Student Success Plan that is going to be implemented within the New Strategic Plan should solve many of the challenges that students in majority Black communities have to overcome.
- The school district is hiring special needs teachers to help with the new CPS students. Sara Kempner's presentation shows the most complete picture of the school situation of many of the immigrant kids that had arrived in Chicago during the last year. Most of them do not speak English and many have challenges other than attending classes and completing their homework.
- CTU representative Jackson Potter said the Skyline curriculum is a failure, but Bogdana Chkumbova the CEEdO defended the implementation of the curriculum amid the protests of the teachers.
- Many parents discussed the lack of oversight of the board over some school boards and executives. The most important complaints came from parents of the [Marine Leadership Academy](#) that continues to be mired in problems. The allegations of parents against the school were at times shocking.
- CEO Pedro Martinez said that the school transportation crisis will continue at least

until the second quarter of the school year since the city lacks enough drivers to cover all the routes. Many parents protested in the meeting how people who just arrived to the city were given priority in transportation over students in magnet schools and the general population.

Follow-Up Questions & Observations

- The school district is feeling the burden of the new immigrant students. By CPS numbers this population passes the 5000 minors most of them English Learners in temporary living conditions that have special needs. CTU reported that they are not meeting the needs of these students and that they are understaffed.
- On top of this, discontent is building among some parents because CPS is allegedly prioritizing immigrant populations over the general student population and magnet school students (The parents of magnet schools were particularly loud)
- Question: How many special needs and English Learners teachers does CPS need to cover the current and future needs?
- Is there a short term solution for the school bussing issue?
- I think it would be important to follow up on the North Lawndale STEM Partner Magnet Academy project. I think the success or failure of this endeavor to build a new high school could be a marker to measure the success of CPS new strategic plan in the years to come.
- I ask myself what are the challenges that this revamping project for all CPS real estate will have at state, federal and local level.

Notes

- This is the first Chicago Public Schools Board of Education meeting in four years, since before the pandemic. It will be hosted at the Austin College and Career Academy High School in Chicago West Side.
- The Board is presided by Jianan Shi, he is a former teacher in Chicago's West Side who also directed the education advocacy organization Raise your Hand before taking over the CPS Board. He is a new pick by mayor Johnson who also replaced 8 other members of the board. The Mayor faced some push back in his choices for the board by advocacy groups that said Chicago families had not been consulted about what they wanted for the agency. The office of the mayor allegedly [responded](#) to the advocacy groups by saying "We haven't asked [Families and advocacy groups] because we already know."
- The board met quorum at 5:08 p.m. thus the meeting started at this time. President Jianan Shi said that it has been "Four years since the Board meets in

the community.” These kinds of events promote transparency, he added.

- CPS executive officers were also present in the meeting to present to the board.
- Interim Principal at Austin College and Career Academy High School Dr. LaTacia Morgan-Greene warmly received the board and talked about the [Restorative Justice Initiative](#) that CPS had been considered successful to address violence and other issues in CPS facilities. These policies had affected positively black students that benefit from a different approach to [discipline](#).
- Board President Shi said that his board will transform the district through investing in a strategic plan to be presented by CPS officers that looks into addressing bad CPS previous decision making, violence, poverty and other maladies that hinders the success of Austin’s, and Chicago, students.
- Board President Shi also acknowledged the death of Chicago community activist [Joyce Chapman](#), who was involved in various community service agencies in Chicago and belonged to Lori Lightfoot’s CPS board until the beginning of mayor Johnson’s tenure.
- Then Kate Lynn Straw, Honorary Student Board Member talked about her priorities are “the same of the board.”
- Bogdana Chkoumbova CPS Chief of Education officer honored during her remarks the 3 longest serving Latino CPS staff. Mariana Myers, one of the honorees who had worked 45 years for the district, said, “when I came to this country from Mexico I never thought this would ever happen to me.” “I go to bed thinking about my clerk work and I wake up thinking about my clerk work”.
- Chkoumbova spoke about the district's efforts on improving bilingual education, particularly the teaching of Spanish, which she said is incorporated into classes in a new curriculum that is being implemented as of now.
- Pedro Martinez, CPS CEO, initiated his remarks by lauding the work of Joyce Chapman for Chicago. He updated the community about COVID-19. He said CPS will receive the vaccine and encourages the school community to get their shots.
- He said the district transportation capabilities are limited due to the lack of [drivers](#) even though CPS is attending hiring fairs and offering good benefits, (\$5000 bonuses, \$22-\$27 dollars an hour). [As of now transportation is going to be limited](#) to Diverse Learners, students in Temporary Living Situations and those with special transportation accommodations until at least the second quarter of the year.
- Academic Goals Achieved: Students 3-6 years old achieved the highest grades in their Math and Reading exams in 6 years. They also observed literacy gains from kindergarten to 2nd grade.
- Mid or above level grades quadrupled. For the overall population, in the last school year, reflecting on the success of CPS in recovering the student population

from the consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic. He also talked about the Black Student Success Plan and said that the English learner population in CPS has been steadily growing for the last 7 years.

- District Educational Facility Master Plan: Martinez said the executive officers will present the plan to the Board in Summer 2024. They will analyze the investment needed to have a school system for the 21st century. Martinez said they expected the bill to repair and modernize the schools of the district at around \$14.4 billion dollars. Chicago has many aging schools but called the investment something the city must do to give Chicago students “the learning environment they deserve. A 21st academic program requires 21st century facilities.” The plan procures savings and a greener, more sustainable CPS’ real estate looking into the future. The plan needs approval from the board and state, federal and local authorities.
- The slides about the project will be ready to be seen by constituents on Monday
- Approved by the Board: Special agenda committee will be on Oct. 27.
- Approved by the Board: Next Board Meeting on Oct. 25.
- Mary Fahey Hughes from the Special Advisory Committee presented a report about the search for a Special Education Department Chief. She said they organized four community listening sessions to inform about the search for a new Special Ed. Department Chief. They are still working in organizing the logistics with committees and subcommittees and invited people to participate in it.

Public Comments Section

- Union Representatives spoke first in the public comments section:
- **Jackson Potter** of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU): The CPS implemented a new curriculum, [Skyline](#), that is regarded by teachers as “not of high quality.” Principals and networks are mandating the curriculum to be used even though some materials come without translations, another breakdown at the rubric, some have 45 slides for kindergarteners, said Potter. Teachers said they don't have enough staff to cover the needs of enrolling. A lot of kids are coming in buses through the border flooding the schools with needs but there are not enough staff. The curriculum restricts academic freedom. Potter went way over his time. They said the need for Special Education teachers is daunting, and that they are not meeting the needs of students in the district.
- **Troy La Riviere, leader of the [Chicago Principals and Administrators Association](#)** protested that Potter went way over the allotted time. After offering his respect to the board he said “As beautiful as you are, how can you let this happen in the district” “How can the brightest, principals, be the best principals in the city be treated that way” he added referring to the complaint brought against CPS for

their alleged rushed removal of principals under investigation that led to the firing of [9 principals, 6 of them black men](#). A Chicago Sun-Times team added that its investigative report on the firing of the principals “raises questions about probes led by CPS attorneys, the school district’s aggressive tactics for removing principals and whether the highly disruptive actions are always justified.”

- LaRiviere said that in the last meeting he gave information to the board on a sexual assault allegation at Lindblom Math and Science Academy that had not been reported by 4 staff, adding that they were allowed to return to work this year. But Abdul Muhammad the Principal that allegedly actually tried to investigate the allegations, was fired. He is accusing the clerk at Lindblom, Yadira Casimiro, of spreading lies of Muhammad.
- LaRiviere added, “You are trying to paint a picture of a district that is democratic, of a staff that is inclusive, but all 8 of the principals that you targeted for removal were black, 7 black men.” “We need to look at the truth in our hearts.”
- Then LaRiviere criticized the removal process of CPS Principals. He asked, “what is this dark secretive process that you use to remove black principals?”
- He also said that there is no achievement gap, there is an opportunity gap. He added that Children grow once they get opportunities to grow and talked about the differences between the schools in different parts of the cities. He alleged that some schools do not have after school opportunities, and that they don't have facilities for kids to learn and grow. He talked about two pipelines, “School to prison” or “school to pilots”. He called for the fired principals to be reinstated.
- “If you don't believe in our children, please have the decency to step aside for someone who does [believe] brother” at this point, Board president Shi interrupted LaRiviere's [43:33] speech with a “Thank you.”
- Elena, a student at Hancock College Prep protested the decision of the Local School Council (LSC) on not renewing the contract of Principal Vanessa Fuentes. Students, staff and parents alleged that the Council is not following democratic procedure and that it takes [most of its decisions in secret ballots](#). The student called Hancock’s council “corrupt”.
- Chicago charter public schools representatives spoke about their schools and pleaded for [renewal of permits](#). Charter schools must renew their contracts with CPS after reviewing their performance every 5 years.
- Dwayne Truss, a former member (2019-2022) of the CPS Board said that the West and Southside communities are not given the same attention as other populations and that no committee to promote the excellence of Black students had been created while CPS is diligently addressing, for example, the immigrant crisis. He said to President board Shi “Dude it is not a good look specially when you are an Asian person talking to black folk in a black neighborhood telling them, well this is

what we gonna do, that is so disingenuous when you complained when we were in the board that we did not have a seat on the table” he added looking at the attendance, “folks as we see, same old, same old.”

- Fernando Barrios, and other parents talked about bullying and violence that had not been addressed in Marine Leadership Academy (MLA) in the West Side. The school had been in the news since 2021 after allegations of hazing, bullying and abuse were [reported](#).
- Zaira Soto, said her son, a 7th grade student, was allegedly assaulted at the school and said in Spanish that no staff intervened as her kid was repeatedly kicked and punched in the head and genitals for three minutes to the point that he could not stand on his feet and had difficulties breathing a during break on Sept. 12 after receiving repeated threats. She said her son informed the administration of the school about the threats but it didn’t do anything. She also alleged that the academy did not provide any medical attention to her son and that just called her to come pick up her son because “he had been in a fight.” “How is it possible that the administration of MLA does not follow the CPS policies regarding their students' safety?,” she asked. She is asking for the removal of the principal and an investigation on why the students were not supervised when her son was attacked.
- Parents are criticizing the CPS because of the [bus crisis](#). They say transportation is vital for magnet school students that have to travel 9 to 20 miles to go to school. Other parents asked themselves why the city does not consider all the students as equals. Minority and low income students are the most affected by this situation, said a mother.
- Members of the community of North Lawndale asked CEO Martinez why North Lawndale has two elementary schools but not high school. “We are still waiting for the \$20 million that Martinez promised to North Lawndale for a new highschool magnet academy” the North Lawndale STEM Partner Magnet Academy, a community organizer said. A mother of North Lawndale said the city is failing the kids in the neighborhood because they are on the streets because there is no school or after school activities.
- Laura Cruz, a parent at MLA said that her daughter was drugged at school on Sept. 7, 2022. She came for her daughter at 2:00 p.m. and found her daughter unconscious. The doctor told her that her daughter might have been intoxicated. She asks why the school did not call an ambulance. The assistant principal came and told her that her daughter was found by a guard in the bathroom unconscious. But friends told her that other students found her. After examination it was found her children had consumed cannabis at school. She said that kids are not safe at school.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ended at 8:20 p.m.

- Board member Tanya D. Woods acknowledged the community of North Lawndale request for funding for a new high school and promised that she will do everything under her power to get the funds for school.
- Board Vice President Elizabeth Todd-Breland acknowledged also the issues with black students studying in the district and understands the distrust of the community. She said that the proposed plan takes in account all these realities of disinvestment and neglect and said that a Black Student Success Plan is necessary before the end of the year.
- President Shi said that they were there to listen to the community and that they were intentional on listening to the feedback to the people affected by the inequities of the current school system and they will work on overcoming them.
- Kate Lynn Straw, Student Board Member said that she totally understood “I see the brunt of what it means to go to school in Chicago and struggle.”

Presentation by CPS Chief Officers

- CPS Chief of Education Officer (CEdO) Chkoumbova talked about the city having 200 more special education positions open to cover the needs of the population.
- The CEdO talked about the proficiency increase that Martinez mentioned at the beginning of the meeting. For the Chkoumbova, the biggest takeaway of the data is that English language charts showed Chicago students reached pre-pandemic levels of proficiency. Math proficiency grew too. She said K-2 students also did better than pandemic levels in the [i-Ready](#) testing system.
- Board Vice President Elizabeth Todd-Breland asked the CEdO what strategies they are using to close the gaps in education outcomes in Chicago. The CEdO said they are excited to report that the students saw significant gains at every grade level in the i-Ready(look for this)” CEdO said that they are looking at indicators that help identify where to better invest resources to uplift students' identities. Their strategy is having a holistic approach to education. Todd-Breland wanted to be sure that the data collected wont be used against teachers or students, Chkoumbova said that they use the data to make macro decisions and help them to decide where to allocate resources.
- Sarah Kempner from Enterprise Data Strategy presented a report about CPS student population trends by the 20th day of school. She said there was a change in the makeup of the student population. The biggest increase in enrollment are among non-English speaking students in a situation of temporary living. The biggest increases were in the North and Northwest side. 48.8% of increase in

English learner students, with 60% of them speaking Spanish. There has also been an increase in the Russian and Ukrainian speaking populations.

- CEO Pedro Martinez then presented the New CPS Strategic Plan, he says that the plan answers to a 10-year vision that was planned by CPS officers in 2010. The plan considers as of now 3 steps: First share details about facilities with the public, second listen to stakeholders to co-create solutions to the district challenges, the third step will be using the feedback from the community to create a district strategic plan for the next 5 years. The plan relies on striving to have a Daily Student Experience in which students: access grade level content, in which high-level tasks are implemented well, in school conditions that provide a rich and holistic student experience but with a consistent assessment and with consistent processes to identify student needs and respond to them. This should result in engaged and empowered students.
- Next CPS officers presented the “Black Student Success Plan” that will be integrated within the New Strategic Plan 5 year Plan for CPS. The plan will establish a comprehensive advisory team that will report directly to the CPS CEO, listen and respond to the community, set universal goals and make actionable recommendations that will lead to a multifaceted district wide strategy.
- The CPS Chief of Equity, Engagement and Strategy Fatima Cooke then presented the schedule for public engagement in the upcoming months. The schedule and locations are available [on the CPS website](#).
- CPS officers finally presented an example on how the first step is going to look by using a school in the West Side to show an interactive platform that will help communities understand the structural needs of the schools their kids are attending, so they can effectively participate in the decision making process about changes in their schools.
- President Shi, Vice President Todd-Breland and Board Member Lozano commented on the importance of the plan for the future of Chicagoans, and lauded the inclusion of the Black Student Success Plan that could potentially solve the many issues presented by Black Chicagoans during the meeting and also made a point of making sure that the communities are properly engage so they can be involved in the decisions of the strategic plan.

VOTE ON PUBLIC AGENDA ITEMS

NON-DELEGABLE BOARD REPORTS THAT REQUIRE MEMBER ACTION

MOTION - APPROVED

23-0928-MO1 Motion RE: Approval of Record of Proceedings of Meetings Open to the Public

Aug. 16, 2023, Aug. 17, 2023, and Aug. 24, 2023

RESOLUTIONS - APPROVED

23-0928-RS1 Resolution Regarding Inspector General Selvyn William Fletcher

23-0928-RS2 Resolution Authorize Appointment of Members to Local School Councils to Fill

Vacancies

POLICIES - APPROVED

POLICIES, CONTINUED - APPROVED

RULES - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE ACTING CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE ACTING CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER, CONTINUED - APPROVED

DELEGABLE REPORTS - APPROVED

REPORT FROM THE ACTING CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - APPROVED

REPORT FROM THE GENERAL COUNSEL - APPROVED

NON-DELEGABLE BOARD REPORTS THAT REQUIRE MEMBER ACTION - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE GENERAL COUNSEL - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE GENERAL COUNSEL, CONTINUED - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - APPROVED

REPORTS FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION - APPROVED

MOTION

23-0928-MO2 Motion RE: Adopt and Maintain as Confidential Closed Session Minutes from

Aug. 16, 2023 and Aug. 17, 2023 - **APPROVED**

The Chicago Public Schools Board of Education meeting was **adjourned** at 10:18 p.m.. Board President Shi said to adjourn the meeting that “For us [the plan] to succeed, we're going to need the largest, most effective community engagement that CPS has ever seen.”

The next meeting is going to be on Oct. 25.

Note to reader: Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@citybureau.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line. Learn more about Documenters on our [website](#).