

CORE: Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators

Coreteachers.com

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CPS 20-day Rule Results in Wide-spread Student Schedule Changes at Neighborhood High Schools

CORE Questions Role of CPS Policies in Destabilizing Schools and Communities

CHICAGO: CORE questions whether CPS policy is to blame for destabilizing school communities. Those two policies are: (1) closing neighborhood high schools and opening selective enrollment, charter and turnaround schools, forcing students to travel further for “neighborhood” schools; and (2) enforcing the “20-day rule” where no teaching positions may be changed in the first 20 instructional days, depriving students of a full month of classes with the same classmates and teachers.

“When you have a steady rise in student violence, school closures and opening charters that perform no better and unproven turnaround schools, and at the same time teachers’ years of experience is decreasing, we have questions. Is this the model we want to export to the rest of the nation?” said CORE co-chair Karen Lewis referring to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s Race to the Top initiative to improve 5,000 schools nationwide by “turning around” underperforming schools and opening charters.

“Study after study shows that charters are no better and no studies exist proving turnarounds work. Some have called it the “Chicago model” but where’s their proof? The research simply doesn’t exist,” Lewis questioned.

20-day Rule Deprives Students of a Stable School Year

At the June 24, 2009 Board of Education hearing, CORE members implored the Board to suspend the 20-day rule and fully staff schools from day one. CPS CEO Ron Huberman responded, “If on the first or second day of school, right, there are big numbers, we shouldn’t wait until the 20th day to adjust. We agree with you. It’s a process that needs to be improved ...’cause we all agree it’s disruptive.”

Unfortunately for students in general neighborhood high schools, the 20-day rule remains intact. (See attached survey results attached). Jay Rehak, a Whitney Young teacher, noted, “This doesn’t happen at magnets.”

For the third year in a row, Percy L. Julian High students’ schedules changed yesterday due to staffing cuts. According to a preliminary audit by Julian students, five teachers lost their jobs and approximately 350 students suffered schedule changes. Donzell Chester, a Julian sophomore, said, “It seems like this happens every year! It’s like we have to start over from scratch.”

Danielle Cieselski, a Robeson High math teacher reports that since her school brought these problems to the attention of the Board of Education last year, little has been done. “Last year, students were enrolled in classes without a teacher and some in classes with up to 80 students. This year, with greater Board oversight, we had teachers reporting up to 66 students in a classroom.”

Clemente High School in Humboldt Park is experiencing the same problems, according to teacher Cristen Chapman. “Over seven charters have opened nearby in the past few years and our enrollment has decreased to 1520 from 2400 in 2006. This means increased cuts in staff, instability for students and a message of failure to the school, and more tragically, to students.”

South Shore School of Entrepreneurship teacher Rivanna Jihan echoes Chapman's plight, “CPS is

phasing us out to make way for another selective enrollment school. This will further marginalize the students who need neighborhood schools the most.”

Lewis noted that there is a solution. “In New York, each eighth grader is locked into his or her high school choice in June. New York has fully staffed schools from day one. Chicago could do the same.”

Could Increased Violence Be Linked to “Market Destabilization?”

According to MSNBC, “Before 2006, an average of 10-15 students were fatally shot each year. That climbed to 24 fatal shootings in the 2006-07 school year, 23 deaths and 211 shootings in the 2007-08 school year and 34 deaths and 290 shootings last school year.”

In 2009 CPS identified 11 one-mile radius Chicago neighborhoods as “hot spots” where 55% of student shootings took place between September 2007 to January 2009 profiled below. (See <http://schoollocator.cps.k12.il.us>).

- Robeson High School (Woodlawn): Destabilized by closing of Englewood High and opening three charter high schools: Ace Technical, Urban Prep and Team Englewood.
- Clemente High School (Humboldt Park): Destabilized by closing Austin High School and opening seven charter schools (Aspira Ramirez, Prologue, four Noble Street campuses and Urban Prep).
- Fenger High School (Roseland): Destabilized by the closing of Carver High School and then the dismissal of its staff in a turnaround action.

“Fenger would have been a safer school if the students from Altgeld Gardens could have continued to attend Carver High in their own neighborhood," said Kelly Jirous, a Fenger teacher who was not rehired by AUSL, a turnaround agency. Ms. Jirous added that "it is never a good idea to fire all of the staff who know all the kids because the staff can stop things before they get out of hand."

According to Darryl Gibson, former Carver and Fenger LSC member, “To stabilize the Fenger situation, Carver should be returned to the community of Altgeld Gardens.”

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CORE represents rank-and-file members. The group is comprised of teachers, retired teachers, educational staff and other champions of public education.

Results from 10/5/09 20-Day Rule Audit

Source: CORE

School Name	Type	Widespread Student Schedule Changes	Probation	June to October 2009 Position Cuts	Enrollment decrease	Positions Unfilled	Classes covered by Substitutes
Julian	general	Yes	Yes	8	1700 to 1450	no	Yes
Clemente	general	Yes	Yes	24	1680 to 1520	No	Yes
CVCA	general	Yes	Yes	14	1550 to 1450	Yes	Yes,
Senn	general	Yes	Yes	2	1135 to 1070	No	No
Lincoln Park	general and selective	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Chicago Academy Little Village North	performance	No	No	No	No	1	No
Lawndale	performance	No	No	no	no	no	no
King Whitney Young	selective	No	No	No	No	No	No
	selective	No	No	No	No	No	No