

FAQs for 2012-2013 Draft School Action Guidelines

What are draft school action guidelines and how are they supposed to be used?

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) released draft guidelines that will be used to help the public understand the criteria used to determine various school actions the District may take to help address challenges it faces in investing more resources to support student learning and give every child in Chicago access to a high-quality education. These guidelines are a draft, and after a 21-day public comment period, CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett will publish final guidelines. Decisions surrounding actions will be made with a rigorous community engagement process that gives parents and CPS communities a voice in the process and the respect they deserve as part of that process.

What criteria are you considering in your draft guidelines this year?

This year's draft guidelines propose criteria to inform future decisions surrounding school actions and help CPS make decisions that are in the best interest of students.

According to the draft guidelines, a school may be considered for closure, consolidation, reassignment boundary change or phase-out if:

- A school is underutilized or overcrowded based on CPS' Space Utilization Standards and student enrollment numbers recorded on the 20th attendance day for the 2012-2013 school year; or
- If two elementary schools, sharing some part of each other's attendance area, individually offer less than kindergarten through eighth grades and can be reconfigured to a single K-8 school.

The CEO may propose a co-location of two schools within the same facility if:

- The combined projected enrollment is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards; and
- The facility can support the academic programming of both schools.

How do the 2012-2013 Draft Guidelines differ from previous years' guidelines?

Several of the changes in this year's guidelines were prompted by community feedback. Changes in the guidelines include:

- Differentiate criteria for school consolidation, reassignment boundary change, closure or phase-out from criteria for co-location.
- Remove academic performance criteria, to focus on the District's space utilization challenges.
- Add space utilization criteria.
- Guidelines differentiate constraints placed on schools that may be considered for closure, consolidation or reassignment boundary change and how that differs from constraints placed on schools that may be considered for phase-out.
- CPS added additional criteria that the CEO may consider when proposing a closure, consolidation, reassignment boundary change or phase-out, including, but not limited to:

- School type and programming;
- School leadership;
- Family and community feedback received throughout the school year independent from the school action process;
- Analysis of transition planning costs;
- Neighborhood development plans; and
- Proximity, capacity and performance of other schools in the community.

How was the community engaged to solicit feedback and input into the guidelines?

CPS sought and incorporated community feedback on these draft guidelines and used multiple modes of communication to engage communities throughout Chicago. More than 1,000 individuals provided feedback via:

- Surveys sent to Local School Councils (LSCs), Community Action Councils (CACs), Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), community organizations and elected officials;
- Five facilitated community roundtable discussions held across the city;
- Meetings with the faith-based community;
- A citywide tele-town hall;
- Meetings with Chicago Teachers Union leadership;
- A citywide CAC leadership meeting;
- A Twitter tele-townhall; and
- Feedback solicited on cps.edu.

The public will also have a 21-day comment period to submit feedback on the guidelines. Comments can be submitted through the website at www.cps.edu/schoolactionsfeedback, via email to qualityschools@cps.edu; via fax to (773) 553-5345; or by mail to: Chicago Public Schools, 125 S. Clark Street, 5th Floor, Chicago, IL 60603, attn: CEO's Office re: Draft Guidelines. Public comments must be received by Nov. 21 at 5 p.m.

What suggestions were taken from the Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force?

The Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force, which is the body that reports to the state on CPS' compliance with state statute around school actions, provided several community engagement recommendations that CPS adopted, including:

- Hosting a tele-town hall;
- Creating an interactive webpage from which to solicit input from the public; and
- Distributing surveys to LSCs and other stakeholders.

CPS also followed the Task Force's recommendation to make feedback gathered available to the public. To view feedback received, visit: www.cps.edu/schoolactionsfeedback.

How many schools fall under these draft guidelines?

These are simply guidelines to provide criteria intended to help CPS make decisions around school actions that are in the best interest of students—there is no list of schools. Any decisions surrounding actions will not be made until CPS has conducted a rigorous community

engagement process that gives parents and school communities a voice in the process and respect they deserve as part of that process.

When do you expect to issue a list of schools being considered for actions?

This is an ongoing process that CPS will undertake by working in close partnership with stakeholders throughout the city, soliciting the input of parents, school communities, the faith community, CACs, LSCs, elected officials and other stakeholders to make the best decisions for our children as we begin to make difficult decisions about future investments within the District.

CPS will not move forward with any recommendations around closing underutilized schools if CEO Byrd-Bennett does not have total confidence that the district has the time and resources required to fully engage the community around these decisions and understand the rationale behind them by the December 1 deadline set forth in SB 630.

Q: If the right community engagement process can't happen by December 1, will CPS hold off on all actions this year?

CPS has made a commitment to do everything possible to ensure all children, in every community have access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college and career. Tough choices need to be made to meet this commitment, as 50 percent of schools are underused, and nearly 140 schools are more than half empty. Ignoring this problem is not an option. CPS must do something to ensure every dollar possible is being directed to support our students and their learning, but any decisions must be made in partnership with the community.

Without a guarantee that a rigorous community process can be done, CPS will need to look at other alternatives to address this during the upcoming year.