

**RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CLOSING OF
MARY C. TERRELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
DUE TO CHRONIC ACADEMIC FAILURE**

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:

That the Chicago Board of Education close Mary C. Terrell Elementary School at the end of the 2001-2002 school year due to chronic academic failure.

DESCRIPTION:

Section 5/34-8.3 of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/34-8.3, authorizes the Board of Education, following the opportunity for a public hearing, to close schools on probation that, after one year on probation, fail to make adequate progress in correcting performance deficiencies. Pursuant to the Board of Education's Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools, 02-0424-PO2 ("the Policy"), the Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools may, following a public hearing, recommend to the Board the closing of a school due to chronic academic failure by the date of the annual May Board meeting.

Pursuant to Section 5/34-8.3 and the Policy, the Board has promulgated criteria governing the determination of when a school may be closed due to chronic academic failure and specifying the process by which that determination may be made. (See 02-0424-PO2).

Pursuant to the Policy, the CEO has determined that Mary C. Terrell Elementary School should be closed due to chronic academic failure. The CEO made that determination after a public hearing convened on May 6, 2002 pursuant to proper notice. The determination was based on a Statement of Findings prepared by an independent hearing officer, who received testimony and documentary evidence during the public hearing. The hearing officer's report included specific findings relating to the chronic academic failure of Terrell Elementary School. Those findings included the following:

1. At Terrell School, student results on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test ("ISAT") are in the lowest academic performance category. The following percentages of students tested at Terrell have met or exceeded State Standards on the ISAT, which placed the school in the lowest academic performance category in each of the last three (3) years the ISAT has been administered:

1998-1999	16.8
1999-2000	10.4
2000-2001	13.7

2. Fewer than 20% of students at Terrell are at or above grade level in reading as determined by results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills ("ITBS"). For the academic school years 1995-96 through 2000-01, the following percentages of tested Terrell students in grades three (3) through eight (8) scored at or above national norms in reading:

1995-1996	4.6
1996-1997	4.7
1997-1998	10.1
1998-1999	6.8
1999-2000	18.5
2000-2001	13.0

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3. Students at Terrell progress less than one school year in reading as measured by results on the ITBS. Specifically, on the 2000-2001 ITBS, Terrell students progressed, on an aggregate basis, by only .97 (ninety-seven hundredths) of one year in reading.

4. Students at Terrell live in close proximity to "higher performing schools" as defined in the Policy. Specifically, students at Terrell Elementary School live in close proximity to the following higher performing schools: Beethoven Elementary School; Coleman Elementary School; and Farren Elementary School.

5. At Beethoven Elementary, the following percentages of students met or exceeded State Standards on the ISAT in each of the last two (2) years the ISAT was administered:

1999-2000	31.2
2000-2001	33.2

6. At Beethoven Elementary, the following percentages of students tested scored at or above national norms in Reading in each of the last six (6) years the ITBS was administered:

1995-1996	21.3
1996-1997	19.0
1997-1998	35.2
1998-1999	30.2
1999-2000	46.6
2000-2001	42.8

7. At Coleman Elementary, the following percentages of students met or exceeded State Standards on the ISAT in each of the last two (2) years the ISAT was administered:

1999-2000	17.0
2000-2001	19.9

8. For the academic school years 1995-1996 through 2000-2001, the following percentages of Coleman students scored at or above national norms in Reading:

1995-1996	7.6
1996-1997	14.9
1997-1998	22.5
1998-1999	18.3
1999-2000	35.6
2000-2001	28.5

9. At Farren Elementary, the following percentages of students met or exceeded State Standards on the ISAT in each of the last two (2) years the ISAT was administered:

1999-2000	18.9
2000-2001	23.2

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10. The following percentages of tested Farren students for the academic school years 1995-1996 through 2000-2001 scored at or above national norms in Reading:

1995-1996	7.3
1996-1997	8.1
1997-1998	7.4
1998-1999	16.7
1999-2000	13.9
2000-2001	22.6

11. The system-wide elementary school attendance rate in 2000-2001 was approximately 93.2%, and at Terrell it was 90.8%.
12. The system-wide mobility rate for 2000-2001 was 25.2%, and at Terrell it was 30.0%.
13. The city-wide truancy rate for elementary schools in 2000-2001 was 3.9%, which is higher than the 2.6% at Terrell.
14. Fewer than 10% of the children at Terrell met or exceeded Illinois Standards for Reading in 2001. No students at Terrell were in the highest 25% of the students taking the ITBS test nationally, and only one in ten was above 50%. Nine out of every ten students enrolled at Terrell were in the bottom half of the students tested nation-wide. The evidence demonstrated that the students at Terrell are not only failing to make progress, but are in fact trending in the wrong direction. Almost half of the students tested lost ground on standardized tests last year. 112 of the 123 students tested at Terrell were in the bottom two quartiles.
15. Enrollment at Terrell has dropped dramatically, from 736 students in the 1996-1997 school year, to 184 students in the current year.
16. Contrary to the allegations made at the hearing that the selection of Terrell School for closure was based upon illegitimate considerations such as the socioeconomic condition of the community in which Terrell is located and the racial composition of its student population, the testimony revealed that a six-step analysis, which virtually mirrors Section V of the Board's Policy on Closing and Consolidation of Schools, was utilized to select schools for closing. Terrell was one of only three schools satisfying all of the criteria utilized in that analysis.
17. Contrary to the position taken by some of the opponents of Terrell being closed that a different form of the ITBS was used in the 2000-2001 school year, and that those scores declined system-wide during that time period, a review of the scores shows a system-wide increase in elementary school reading scores in the 2000-2001 school year. Additionally, there was no evidence that a new test was utilized as was alleged by the CTU.
18. Opponents of Terrell being closed argued that Terrell was selected for closing because it was in an impoverished community. There was ample evidence given, and in fact even the opponents conceded, that even poor children can learn. In fact, a review of the list of all of the schools in Chicago with a poverty rate of 85% or higher demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of schools located in impoverished communities - - literally hundreds of schools - - achieved reading scores on the ITBS in excess of the standard required by the Board.

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19. There has been stability in leadership at Terrell School during the period evaluated in determining whether a school should be closed. The current principal, Ceola Davis Barnes, has been at Terrell since 1997.

20. **GENERAL CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:**

The evidence received at the hearing overwhelmingly and conclusively establishes that the criteria set forth in Section V of the Board's Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools (Board Report 02-0424-PO2) have been satisfied, including the criteria incorporated by reference from Section I. D. of said policy that students in schools selected for closing have "higher performing schools" in close proximity to the academic attendance center selected for closing. Student achievement at Terrell on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test is in the lowest academic performance category. Fewer than 20% of the students are performing at or above grade level in Reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The school has a history of chronic probation status. Finally, students progress less than one school year in reading as measured by the results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. (Findings paraphrased from Hearings Officer's Report dated May 10, 2002.)

Based upon the hearing officer's above-referenced findings, the Chief Executive Officer concludes that ample evidence exists to support the closing of Mary C. Terrell Elementary School at the end of the 2001-2002 school year consistent with the Board's Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools (Board Report 02-0424-PO2), promulgated pursuant to Section 34.8.3 of the Illinois School Code.

LSC REVIEW: LSC approval is not applicable to this report.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATUS: None

FINANCIAL: None

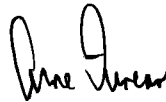
PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS: None

Approved for Consideration:



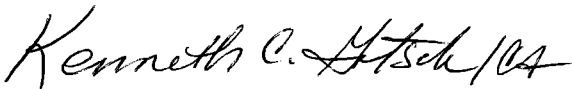
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