

**RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CLOSING OF  
MARY MAPES DODGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
DUE TO CHRONIC ACADEMIC FAILURE**

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:**

That the Chicago Board of Education close Mary Mapes Dodge 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 Mapes Dodge Elementary School should be closed due to chronic academic failure. The CEO made that determination after a public hearing convened on May 7, 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 Dodge Elementary School. Those findings included the following:

1. At Dodge School, student results on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test ("ISAT") are in the lowest academic performance category. The following percentages of students tested at Dodge have met or exceeded State Standards on the ISAT, which placed the school in the lowest academic performance category in each of the last two (2) years the ISAT has been administered:

1999-2000	14.0
2000-2001	13.9

2. Fewer than 20% of students at Dodge 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 Dodge students in grades three (3) through (8) scored at or above national norms in reading:

1995-1996	9.9
1996-1997	12.4
1997-1998	13.0
1998-1999	15.6
1999-2000	14.3
2000-2001	14.1

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3. Students at Dodge progress less than one school year in reading as measured by results on the ITBS. Specifically, on the 2000-2001 ITBS, Dodge students progressed, on an aggregate basis, by only .70 (seven-tenths) of one year in reading.

4. Students at Dodge live in close proximity to "higher performing schools" as defined in the Policy. Specifically, students at Dodge Elementary School live in close proximity to the following higher performing schools: Calhoun North Elementary School; Cather Elementary School; Dett Elementary School; and Grant Elementary School.

5. At Calhoun North, 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	14.6
2000-2001	17.2.

6. At Calhoun North, 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	13.1
1996-1997	12.9
1997-1998	17.6
1998-1999	20.5
1999-2000	22.1
2000-2001	21.2

7. At Cather 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	19.5
2000-2001	15.1

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

1995-1996	9.7
1996-1997	13.2
1997-1998	17.1
1998-1999	23.9
1999-2000	20.7
2000-2001	27.8

9. At Dett 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	37.2
2000-2001	37.4

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

1995-1996	15.8
1996-1997	21.2
1997-1998	27.3
1998-1999	32.5
1999-2000	27.5
2000-2001	31.2

11. At Grant 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	16.3
2000-2001	22.7

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

1995-1996	11.3
1996-1997	11.2
1997-1998	16.6
1998-1999	18.6
1999-2000	27.6
2000-2001	22.3

13. The system-wide elementary school attendance rate in 2000-2001 was approximately 93.2%, and at Dodge it was 91%.

14. The system-wide mobility rate for 2000-2001 was 25.2%, and at Dodge it was an astonishing 48.9%.

15. The city-wide truancy rate for elementary schools in 2000-2001 was 3.9%, but was a considerably higher 18.2% at Dodge.

16. Fewer than 14% of the children tested at Dodge met or exceeded Illinois Standards for Reading in 2001. Only two (2) Dodge students were in the highest 25% of the students taking the ITBS test nationally. Almost nine out of every ten students tested at Dodge were in the bottom half of the students tested nation-wide. The evidence demonstrated that the students at Dodge are not only failing to make progress, but are in fact trending in the wrong direction. Over 60% of the students tested lost ground on standardized tests last year.

17. Contrary to the allegations made at the hearing that the selection of Dodge School for closure was based upon illegitimate considerations such as the socioeconomic condition of the community in which Dodge 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. Dodge was one of only three schools satisfying all of the criteria utilized in that analysis.

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18. Contrary to the position taken by some of the opponents of Dodge 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.
19. Opponents of Dodge being closed argued that Dodge 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.
20. Contrary to the argument presented by the Chicago Teachers' Union that the ITBS was being improperly used by CPS, the Publisher of the test, Riverside Publishing, has expressed in writing that using the ITBS as a part of a multiple indication system is perfectly appropriate. That is what was done in this case. The ITBS was but one of several factors considered in selecting Dodge School to be closed.
21. There has been stability in leadership at Dodge School during the period evaluated in determining whether a school should be closed. Dr. Linda Langhart was Principal at Dodge from 1997 until February 2002.
22. Teacher turnover at Dodge is extremely high: 11 of the 24 teachers currently at Dodge were hired in 2001.
23. **GENERAL CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:**

The evidence received at the hearing clearly 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 Dodge on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test is in the lowest academic performance category. Fewer than 14% 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 13, 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 Mapes Dodge 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

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**FINANCIAL:** None

**PERSONNEL  
IMPLICATIONS:** None

**Approved for Consideration:**



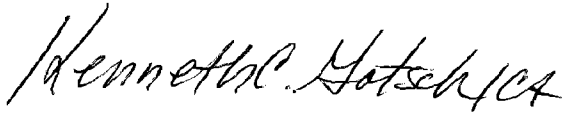
BARBARA J. EASON-WATKINS  
Chief Education Officer

**Approved:**



ARNE DUNCAN  
Chief Executive Officer

**Noted:**



KENNETH C. GOTSCH  
Chief Fiscal Officer

**Approved as to Legal Form:**



MARILYN F. JOHNSON  
General Counsel