

**RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CLOSING OF  
DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
DUE TO CHRONIC ACADEMIC FAILURE**

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:**

That the Chicago Board of Education close Daniel Hale Williams 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 Daniel Hale Williams Elementary School should be closed due to chronic academic failure. The CEO made that determination after a public hearing convened on May 8, 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 Williams Elementary School. Those findings included the following:

1. At Williams School, student results on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test ("ISAT") are in the lowest academic performance category. The following percentages of students tested at Williams 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	17.1
2000-2001	16.9

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

1995-1996	13.8
1996-1997	12.2
1997-1998	18.8
1998-1999	17.7
1999-2000	21.1
2000-2001	12.9

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3. Williams School has a history of chronic probation status. Williams was placed on probation in October 1996, when CPS schools were first subjected to probation. Williams was removed from probation after exceeding the then applicable goal of 20% of its students reading at grade level on the ITBS for the 1999-2000 school years. Williams was placed back on probation at the end of the 2000-2001 school year when its ITBS scores declined dramatically. Accordingly, Williams School has been on probation five (5) out of the past six (6) school years. Using this original standard there are currently only five (5) schools that would qualify for probation and Williams School is one.

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

5. Students at Williams live in close proximity to "higher performing schools" as defined in the Policy. Specifically, students at Williams Elementary School live in close proximity to the following higher performing schools: Douglas Community Academy; Drake Elementary School; and James Ward Elementary School.

6. At Douglas Academy, 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	35.6
2000-2001	34.9

7. At Douglas Academy, 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	25.4
1996-1997	23.9
1997-1998	27.3
1998-1999	53.2
1999-2000	28.9
2000-2001	33.1

8. At Drake 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	34.9
2000-2001	38.1

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

1995-1996	19.1
1996-1997	21.4
1997-1998	24.5
1998-1999	35.8
1999-2000	39.2
2000-2001	33.1

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10. At Ward 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	48.3

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

1995-1996	28.4
1996-1997	37.0
1997-1998	50.9
1998-1999	53.1
1999-2000	50.3
2000-2001	57.2

Ward is above the 50% level--the State's goal for the ISAT--and has consistently had gain scores in excess of one year.

12. The system-wide elementary school attendance rate in 2000-2001 was approximately 93.2%, and at Williams it was 90.4%.
13. The system-wide mobility rate for 2000-2001 was 25.2%, and at Williams it was 28.9%.
14. The city-wide truancy rate for elementary schools in 2000-2001 was 3.9%, and at Williams it was 6.9%.
15. Fewer than 17% of the children at Williams met or exceeded Illinois Standards for Reading in 2001. The evidence demonstrated that the students at Williams are not only failing to make progress, but are in fact trending in the wrong direction. Almost 58% of Williams students tested gained less than one (1) year on the ITBS, and only one in ten was above 50%. Almost nine (9) out of every ten students tested at Williams was in the bottom half of the students tested nation-wide. Astonishingly, almost 25% of the students tested at Williams appear to have lost knowledge learned during the previous school year, according to the evidence presented by the Academic Accountability Council.
16. Contrary to the position taken by some of the opponents of Williams 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.
17. Opponents of Williams being closed argued that Williams was selected for closing because it was in an impoverished community. There was ample evidence presented at the hearing that even poor children can learn. 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. The argument that CPS is out to close this school because it is in a poor neighborhood is rejected.

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18. Contrary to the allegations made at the hearing that the selection of Williams School for closure was based upon illegitimate considerations such as the socioeconomic condition of the community in which Williams is located and the racial composition of its student population, the testimony revealed that a six-step analysis, set forth in Section V of the Board's Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools, was utilized to select schools for closing. Williams was one of only three schools satisfying all of the criteria utilized in that analysis.
19. There has been stability in leadership at Williams School during the period evaluated in determining whether a school should be closed. The current principal, Roy C. White, has been at Williams since 1997.
20. The school has had a 50% turnover rate among its staff in the last year.
21. **GENERAL CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:**

The evidence received at the hearing clearly establishes that each of the criteria set forth in Section V of the Board's Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools (Board Report 02-0424-P02) has been satisfied, including the criteria incorporated by reference from Section I. D. of said policy, which provides that students in schools selected for closing must have "higher performing schools" in close proximity to them. Student achievement at Williams on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test is in the lowest academic performance category. Fewer than 13% 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, having been on probation five (5) out of the past six (6) years. 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 17, 2002.)

Based upon the hearing officer's above-referenced findings, the Chief Executive Officer concludes that ample evidence exists to support the closing of Daniel Hale Williams 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

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PERSONNEL  
IMPLICATIONS:       None

Approved for Consideration:



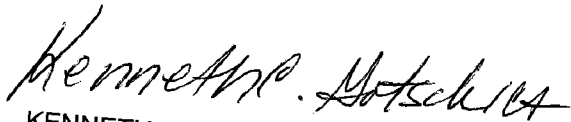
BARBARA J. EASON-WATKINS  
Chief Education Officer

Approved:



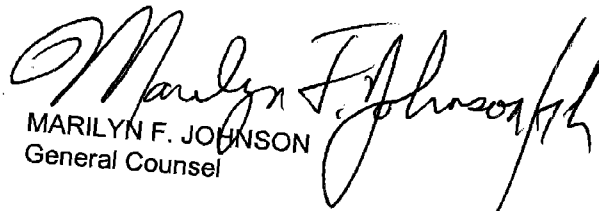
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Noted:



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