

December 7, 2022 Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Monday, December 5th and Thursday, December 8th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1 Dear Chicago Board of Education:

I reached out to Orlando J. Rivero, Program Manager (Primary Care Services) for CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness (“OSHW”) to get updated information on teacher and staff Covid booster and bivalent rates. Only boosters are effective against severe Omicron but are less effective over time. Two boosters are more effective against hospitalization and death. The updated bivalent booster includes Omicron and is also effective against hospitalization and deaths. Bivalent boosters have also been shown to decrease chances of asymptomatic infections leading to Long Covid, which affects 1 in 5 infected adults, of whom over half can no longer continue working full-time. 80% have difficulty performing daily activities. BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 are Omicron subvariants to be very mindful of, because of their immune escape and have taken dominance over Omicron (BA.5). Previous infection and vaccination will not provide broad protection against BQ.1.1 infection. They are even more transmissible. Evusheld and Bebtelovimab, antibody therapies often given to those who are immunocompromised, can’t take Paxlovid and/or don’t respond to vaccines, are ineffective against BQ.1.1. Since my request, the CPS website has been updated to reflect current data as of November 28, 2022, but bivalent booster data is unavailable. It indicates students, teachers and staff booster rates are very low across the board and especially puts those immunocompromised and/or with comorbidities at high risk of Long Covid, hospitalizations and deaths, particularly during winter surges. (See attached.) Initial and established repeat COVID infections should be avoided as much as possible, because each infection "directly and/or indirectly damages the lining of our blood vessels, also known as endothelial cells. These are really critical in preventing clotting, controlling blood pressure, and regulated oxidative stress. Damage to these vessels can result in blood clots and organ damage, something we've seen in patients with COVID-19 during initial infection and, unfortunately, sometimes even in resulting months...Those who were reinfected with the virus were three times as likely to develop subsequent heart or lung problems." CIDRAP's (“Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy’s”) Michael Osterholm, PhD., MPH. Public health experts are warning about a tridemic collision of Covid, Flu and RSV this winter. Pediatric organizations have called for a national Flu and RSV emergency declaration. Wearing N95s indoors 🧐 would reduce transmission of all three (3) respiratory illnesses. We must protect teachers, staff and students from repeat infections! Please encourage wearing N95s and push for all CPS students, teachers, staff, students and parents to get updated bivalent boosters before the winter surge!

Sincerely,

Joy Bunton

People's Response Network

https://docs.google.com/file/d/1udW4HYihJsYKPhX3VGcNxHKIk_-gqe7K/edit?usp=docslst_api&filetype=msword

2 As another Gocps application season comes to a close, and as the mother of an 8th grader, I just wanted to express my complete and utter antipathy for the cut-throat

competitive nature of getting into a "good" Chicago High School. In an anecdote that I believe exemplifies this madness, my daughter was told by an admin at her school, "it is harder to get into Whitney Young than it is to get into Harvard."

It is unfortunate that the Chicago Public School Board of Education refuses to address the obvious inequities in the system. That instead you chose to continue segregation by keeping up this extremely stressful and harmful practice of "good" Selective Enrollment schools with cut off scores so high that one B in 7th grade would make you ineligible. Segregation may seem harsh, but that is what it is. The majority of students who attend CPS are not white and the major part of the student body at many of the most sought after schools are at about 35% of the student body. Tell me how this isn't a new Jim Crow? The solution of course is simple, by making every high (and elementary) school a desirable high school by funding more than the minimum the schools who do not have Friends of groups that can raise 100, 000+ a year. A secondary benefit of equitable funding and working to make all schools as attractive as Selective Enrollment High Schools would be an increase in enrollment as CPS loses students to the suburbs and private schools. You already know this, but you chose to continue down the same path of those with the most can afford tutoring, test prep and eventual privileged entry into a just a handful of few well-resourced public high schools.

3 Dear Board of Education members,

We are a group of parents of children in the Regional Gifted Center for English Language Learners at Pulaski International Elementary School. In addition to our abbreviated comments at the meeting on December 7, 2022, we wish to provide the following for the Board's consideration.

The RGC-EL program at Pulaski serves gifted Spanish-speaking children, just like CPS's other RGC programs serve gifted English-speaking children. Almost half of CPS students identify as Hispanic and over one-fifth are English learners - yet, **every year our program's existence is threatened due to low testing and enrollment numbers.** This is not due to a lack of interest. The root cause is a lack of access that quickly turns into a dire issue of equity.

We have identified six key areas that need to be addressed in order for CPS to offer an equitable education to Spanish-speaking gifted children, now and in the future:

- **Marketing**

Too few families know that gifted education is available to Spanish-speaking students. Our families spent hours at community events like Fiesta del Sol and the Puerto Rican festival this summer to raise awareness of our program. We have distributed flyers to daycares, non profits, and community health organizations. Our team personally called hundreds of potential student families to raise awareness of our great program. But this should be **CPS's** responsibility, not ours! In addition, CPS denied us access to key marketing materials - flyers, bus ads, and banners - until **one week before the application deadline!** It is impossible for us to mount a successful grassroots effort when CPS delays our materials until they are useless.

- **Application Process**

Some parents (who are often limited English proficient) have difficulties navigating the application process. The application portal was **broken** for **10 days** this year for 1st and

2nd grade applicants. CPS does not offer recorded videos to help parents, only live workshops. Our parents carpeted CPS inboxes with emails and built our own in-house training material to resolve these issues. The entire process could be made much more understandable.

- **Testing**

The testing process is also flawed. There are not enough dates for testing, creating significant burdens for qualified students to even attempt to take the test. The test should be offered at multiple locations accessible by public transit, including in multiple neighborhoods with high concentrations of Spanish-speaking students. Finally, the testing must take into account that many Spanish-speaking students are not exclusively Spanish-speakers, especially outside their homes.

- **Lack of CPS Ownership and Accountability**

No CPS office has ownership over the RGC-EL program. The Office of Access and Enrollment oversees the admission process, while the Office of Language and Cultural Education is responsible for supporting Spanish-language initiatives, while the Department of Magnet, Gifted, IB, and AP Programs (MGIBAP) supports gifted education. But there is no one responsible for **identifying and recruiting qualified Spanish-speaking students**. If zero students were admitted to the RGC-EL this year, it would be **no one's fault**. With no accountability, it's not surprising that CPS is not effective at successfully enrolling students into its own RGC-EL program.

- **LSC and Principal Accountability**

The current LSC model disfavors RGC-EL programs housed in a neighborhood school like Pulaski. Elections are held at the school on a weekday, during working hours. Many RGC-EL families do not live in the neighborhood and many students take a bus to school. Their parents are **disadvantaged** in the election process because it is much harder for them to vote than neighborhood families. This makes it less likely that RGC interests are considered when it comes time to approve the budget - and as explained above, the funding structure pits neighborhood students against RGC-EL students. When an RGC-EL teacher needed to be funded at Pulaski, the LSC considered cutting the position and putting the money elsewhere. That **should not be an option**. The principal should also have some accountability with respect to the success of the RGC-EL, but the revised principal evaluation metrics do not take the RGC into account.

- **Lack of equity in enrollment and funding predictability**

Our children deserve an equitable education that meets their gifted learning needs. But every year, our program faces unpredictable enrollment and is threatened with closure. Our principal must set a budget for the coming year **before** CPS offers spots in the RGC program to applicants. If CPS decides that only 10 students are admitted to kindergarten- a decision **entirely** out of our principal's control - our principal is in a difficult position. We have had threats of closing our kindergarten or combining classrooms. **NO English RGC would be put in this precarious position**. And as you can imagine, this constant insecurity makes it less attractive to potential families - a vicious cycle. It also **pits RGC-EL students against neighborhood students for limited funding**.

CPS needs to fund the RGC-EL programs outside the student-based budgeting process, regardless of enrollment numbers.

These are the brightest and best in our communities. The reason why so many of our families risked everything was to provide a future for these talented Spanish-speaking kids. We, as a district, owe them the best chance at success.

Sincerely,
Kathy Mayorga, President, Pulaski RGC Parent Group
Christina Cedenó
Philip Smedley
Mayra Galvan
Allison Mileo Gorsuch
Aaron Wenzloff

ATTACHMENTS

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[CPS Employee Vaccination and Testing Stats](#)

	Vaccinated	Vaccinated w Booster	Approve Medical/Religious Exemption	Not Vaccinated/ Status Unknown
Totals	61.1%	28.6%	3.6%	6.7%
Teachers	13,134	8,589	722	487
Other CTU Members (subs, PSRPs, nurses)	4,466	1,725	293	704
School-Based Administrators	666	538	41	10
Other Employees (ESP, hourly, misc.)	11,168	2,512	717	2,041
Network Staff, Citywide Employees, Central Office	877	802	47	62

Note: Data last updated November 28, 2022.

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known as endothelial cells. These are really critical in preventing clotting, controlling blood pressure, and regulated oxidative stress. Damage to these vessels can result in blood clots and organ damage, something we've seen in patients with COVID-19 during initial infection and, unfortunately, sometimes even in resulting months...Those who were reinfected with the virus were three times as likely to develop subsequent heart or lung problems." CIDRAP's ("Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy's") [Michael Osterholm, PhD., MPH.](#)

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