



NEWS RELEASE

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New University of Chicago Report Shows Disconnect Between Data-Driven District and Realities of Life for CPS Families

CHICAGO—The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) today responded to “School Closings in Chicago: Understanding Families’ Choices and Constraints for New School Enrollment,” a new report by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) that addresses the impact of Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s mass school closings on thousands of Chicago children. The report finds that while the majority of students from closing schools enrolled in higher-rated schools—but not the highest-rated schools that prove most beneficial for students—there is a significant gap in the number of students enrolling in district-designated receiving schools and the number enrolling in a school of parents’ choosing.

“Among those students who reenrolled in a CPS school, 66 percent attended their designated welcoming school,” according to the report, as parents generally chose the school closest to their homes. Child safety, transportation and schedule challenges mattered far more to parents than the district’s school-quality rating, highlighting the growing disconnection between the city’s decision-makers and the lives of every day Chicagoans and their families. Many parents’ definition of school quality is different than the district’s view of school quality, which is based primarily on test scores. Parents, on the other hand, looked for qualitative indicators of a school’s success, such as “after-school programs, certain curricula and courses, small class sizes, positive and welcoming school environments, and/or one-on-one attention from teachers in classes,” according to the CCSR.

Such decisions by parents demonstrate that test scores are a minor consideration compared to more important day-to-day relationships and school activities. Parents demanded that their schools stay open to maintain small class sizes, relationships with staff and strong environments. The mayor’s decision to close schools obliterated these important social bonds, put student safety at risk and created unnecessary transportation and scheduling challenges for families. The mayor’s plan also did not save any money or lead to major improvements in student performance—which were among parent and community claims that fell on deaf ears throughout the closing process.

“The district’s claims of a failing system weren’t strong enough to justify closing 50 schools, and the promise of enrollment in a higher-rated school is no guarantee of success, especially when that school performs only marginally better,” said CTU Vice President Jesse Sharkey. “The mayor and his handpicked Board of Education are trying to spin the fact that school closings actually hurt students, and parents’ desire to enroll students in a school of their own choosing shows that community concerns are much different than what is coming out of the 5th floor of city hall.”

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The Chicago Teachers Union represents 30,000 teachers and educational support personnel working in the Chicago Public Schools, and by extension, the more than 400,000 students and families they serve. The CTU is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers and is the third largest teachers local in the United States and the largest local union in Illinois. For more information please visit CTU’s website at www.ctunet.com.

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