



## HYDE PARK-KENWOOD COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

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To: The Chicago Public Schools Board of Education

Barbara Byrd Bennett, Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools

David Vitale, President of the CPS Board of Education

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Leslie Hairston, Alderman, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor of Chicago

Barbara Flynn Currie, Illinois State Representative, 25<sup>th</sup> District

Ryan O'Leary, Office of Barbara Flynn Currie

John Price, Burnham Park Network

Michael McGehee, Burnham Park Network

Kwame Raoul, Illinois State Senator

Re: HPKCC's Schools Committee Support for keeping Canter Middle School Open

April 10, 2013

As a follow-up to the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference's general resolution (see attached) to keep all the Chicago Public Schools open, we write to support keeping, in particular, Canter Middle School, as an ongoing school.

We write with the backing and firm determination of parents, students, teachers and residents in the Hyde Park neighborhood as witnessed at the CPS community hearing of April 8, 2013, at Kenwood Academy. The testimony of all those people was profoundly moving and convinced the HPKCC to speak out.

We argue in favor of keeping the Canter Middle School open for the following reasons:

1. The Canter Middle School has been successful at providing students with a solid curriculum organized departmentally that prepares students for high school.
2. The school is not under-performing: The faculty is first-class and highly prized by its students.
3. Middle school students need this kind of transitional preparatory experience and the community fought very hard to secure a middle school in the area.
4. Capital contributions were made to the school via TIF funds.
5. A number of families are moving into Hyde Park expecting to send their children there, and a number of families outside the neighborhood count on Canter to provide a safe environment for their children.
6. The school, said to be "underutilized" by CPS, could be expanded by adding a sixth grade, thus making it conform to standard middle schools throughout the country. For example, Shoemith School, which goes to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and feeds into Canter School, is overcrowded, having two trailers used as classrooms.
7. The students at Canter, their teachers and their administrators, have formed a community and a bond that has transformed the lives of many students as they move through their school years.

8. The children going into the fall 2013 seventh grade receiving schools may not have the structural and curricular support that is as strong as that now provided by Canter. Students from outside the area may have to attend schools that have no additional supports. For example, it isn't enough providing algebra without the preparation leading up to it, and success in algebra is critical to success in high school and eventually college. Specialized teachers in math are essential to this success, not teachers specialized in another area but doubling as math teachers (and say, language arts).
9. To designate the space vacated by Canter to a parent university, while that may be a good thing to have, is a poor substitute for using the building as a school.
10. The University of Chicago has a strong presence in the Canter School program. This presence should continue as it may not work as well in an elementary environment.
11. The students who now attend seventh grade who might have gone to Kenwood Academy may well decide to leave Hyde Park or its schools, thus weakening the student body at Kenwood Academy.
12. There may be other adverse effects in the larger community or certainly a sense of loss in a community that is trying to move ahead.

Please keep Canter open.

Regards,



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Anita R. Hollins  
President, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference