

Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School

September 2, 2015

Secretary Arne Duncan
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Sec. Duncan:

We call on you to act swiftly to avert the further harm that can befall the twelve parents and community leaders from Bronzeville and allies from communities across Chicago who have been on a hunger strike for **17 days** to call out the injustice suffered at the hands of CPS and the appointed Board of Education and to demand the adoption of the Global Leadership and Green Technology plan for Dyett. Call Mayor Emanuel today to help recognize the need to listen to the community - not politically-connected operatives. Stall tactics and patronage politics from CPS have driven everyday people to use their bodies to stand in the way of further injustice. Instead of honoring their commitment to the process they outlined, CPS and the new education chair for Chicago's City Council, Ald. Will Burns, have subverted the rules to "grease the rails" for an underperforming contract operator to acquire Dyett High School.

The sabotage of and fight for Dyett has raged since CPS decided to convert a highly-successful middle school to a high school over a 3-month period in 1999. Horrified by the inability of the first graduating senior class in 2003 to experience college prep or advanced placement classes or a full-time librarian; community members began to invest in the school through the local school council to infuse critical programs and neighborhood partnerships into the building. The fruits of that labor yielded the highest increase in students attending post-secondary institutions in 2008, and the highest decrease in out-of-school suspensions and arrests in 2009. Despite steady significant gains, the Mayoral-appointed Board of Education members voted to phase-out the school in 2012; and the mass erosion of investment to prepare those students for success.

Galvanized by this injustice and emboldened by their record of success, parents and concerned residents began to work with educational experts within Chicago and around the country to develop an academic plan based on the community wishes. Through a series of focus groups, town hall meetings, and extensive consultation with community and educational institutions, the Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology academic plan was developed. Some of the same experts who have developed Level 1 high schools in Chicago led the design team that created this plan in direct consultation with the community over a 4-year period. Neither of the competing proposals for Dyett come close to this level of community engagement or expertise. Bronzeville has spoken. We have engaged over 3000 Bronzeville residents who see the need for Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology High School.

Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School

Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, Black Metropolis Convention & Tourism Council, Blacks in Green, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Jazz Society, Chicago Teacher's Union, Du Sable Museum of African American History, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Teachers for Social Justice, The Plant, University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education



Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School

In light of recent statements from Mayor Emanuel, CPS CEO Forrest Claypool and others, it is painfully obvious they are out of touch with the needs of their constituents and institutions; and habitually ignore community wisdom as they make critical policy decisions. Mayor Emanuel recently released a statement saying there are 10 or 12 high schools in a 3-mile radius (including King College Prep) where students can attend, which is a misrepresentation of the truth. We share the following facts:

1. Martin Luther King College Prep, located at 4445 S. Drexel Avenue, is a selective enrollment high school. Children in the neighborhood do not have the right to attend. Fewer than 10% of its student body are Bronzeville residents.
2. Kenwood Academy, on 51st and Blackstone is over-crowded and is not in Dyett's attendance area. Its over-crowding was the reason Alderman Will Burns brokered the deal to make the shuttered Canter Middle School the 7th and 8th grade academy for Kenwood.
3. Phillips High School, located on 39th and Giles is not a traditional neighborhood school. It is ran by the troubled contract school operator, the Academy of Urban School Leadership and since the school takeover, its enrollment has plummeted by over 50%. This is due to both safety issues (as students in Dyett's attendance area have to cross several gang territories to get to Phillips) and AUSL's notorious zero tolerance discipline policies, which have pushed out literally hundreds of former students.

Attached, is a map that outlines Dyett's attendance boundaries, the number of 8th grade students in several of its feeder schools, and the potential number of students who would comprise its new freshman class; without cannibalizing any existing high school. A quick scan of the numbers justifies the need for Dyett High School to serve the students in that community. If this newly-introduced formula were applied in determining where charter schools went, there wouldn't be Noble Street Charters surrounding traditional public schools like Prosser or Wells.

The 12 men and women who are now on the 17th day of a hunger strike, developed the academic plan for the Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology High School in order to have a high quality open enrollment neighborhood school in their community. The schools Mayor Emanuel have pointed to as options for their children are outside the neighborhood and existing attendance boundaries, across gang lines, militarized, selective enrollment, and/or operated by a private contractor. The parents and community leaders have been explicitly clear in their intention to have a high school in their community that reflects their vision.

When Englewood High School was closed in 2009, and those students were parceled out to Dyett, Hyde Park, Robeson and Hirsch High Schools; community wisdom was ignored and the result was the destabilizing of all those schools. Hyde Park, once one of our better high schools, has never recovered. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. We need you to intervene to do something different here.

In Earnest,
The 12 Hunger Strikers for Dyett
Coalition to Revitalize Dyett

Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School

Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, Black Metropolis Convention & Tourism Council, Blacks in Green, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Jazz Society, Chicago Teacher's Union, Du Sable Museum of African American History, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Teachers for Social Justice, The Plant, University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education

