

RECAP — COMMUNITY FORUM ON NEW CPS SINGLE APPLICATION FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

JULY 24, 2017

"HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HEARING ABOUT THE GOCPS APPLICATION FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THIS FORUM?"



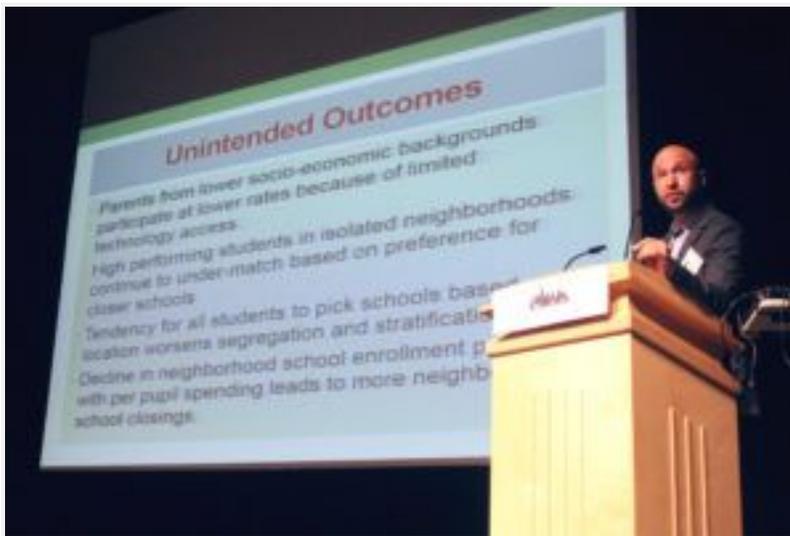
A significant number of hands rose into the air in response to this opening question at a community forum held at Benito Juarez Community Academy on July 20th. Over 100 parents, teachers, students, counselors, and community members turned out to the forum hosted by Generation All, Raise Your Hand, Chicago Teachers Union, and Brighton Park Neighborhood Council to learn and ask questions about the new “common enrollment” high school application process called [GoCPS](#). Generation All’s executive director Beatriz Ponce de León introduced the goals and format of the forum before giving the stage to the first speaker of the night, Tony Howard.



Howard, the executive director of CPS' Department of Education Policy and Procedures, presented an informational overview of the single app, remarking that it simplifies the application process and will allow more students to utilize available seats in schools. He then explained how the application will prioritize neighborhood high schools, talked about CPS' upcoming awareness campaign, and fielded a few questions from the audience.

Alexios Moore, a PhD candidate in Education Policy at UIC, presented pertinent findings about other cities that have implemented common enrollment procedures.

"Access to higher quality schools is predicated on geography and who you are, which tends to be based on socioeconomic and ethnic background."



Moore revealed that while common enrollment can streamline and simplify the application process, there are unintended consequences. Students living in areas with better neighborhood schools have an advantage, since they can apply to high achieving selective schools while knowing they have a good neighborhood school to fall back on. High achieving students living in isolated neighborhoods tend to under-match with higher performing schools due to their preference for closer schools, furthering segregation and stratification. Additionally, families from lower socio-economic backgrounds participate in this type of application process at lower rates due to inadequate access to technology. Finally, he warned that a decline in neighborhood school enrollment paired with per-pupil spending encourages the closing of neighborhood schools. Moore's final takeaway was clear:

"Districts should adjust the application system to purposefully integrate higher performing schools, but to solve the fundamental supply problem districts have to nurture high quality neighborhood schools in every district."



Next, a panel consisting of a parent, a student, a teacher and a counselor took the stage to share their concerns with the new process.

Shoneice Reynolds, a CPS parent, expressed frustration with the quick roll-out of the new application and the lack of information provided by CPS about the details of the process. John Casey, an elementary school counselor, echoed Reynolds' worries. "This has been an abrupt process. We need explanations on how this works. Families don't understand. They're in the dark. I have a hard time explaining how it works to students and parents." Karina Martinez, the student panelist, emphasized her concern with the inequity of the system. "CPS needs to prioritize neighborhood schools because they accept all students regardless of background, disability, economic status," Martinez stated.

The mic was passed through the crowd for audience members to voice their own questions about the application process.



“Will this application be available in other languages than just Spanish?”

“Some programs require essays, auditions, recommendation letters. How will that play into this process?”

“How do you account for our special needs students in this process?”

“How is CPS helping schools, especially those that don’t have the resources to compete with charter schools’ advertising, market themselves?”

With little time left, audience members were instructed to write down further questions on index cards, which were then collected by Generation All to pass on to CPS. As informal discussions between CPS officials, presenters, and audience members continued on the auditorium floor, Joy Clendenning of Raise Your Hand Illinois finished off the forum with some final words.

“We’d like CPS to really look at this process’s inclusivity. Be more transparent. We need more equity.”



Read through all of the questions collected at the event on our [Single App FAQ page](#).

[Click here to view the complete slides presented at the forum.](#)

If you share any of the concerns about inclusivity, transparency, and equity voiced at this forum, please read and sign this open letter to CPS [here](#).

[Check out Raise Your Hand's Facebook live coverage of the event!](#)

Flip through our **Storify** recap to read some more poignant quotes from the forum.

For further information on the single application, read our issue brief: **[Will a Single Application for High Schools Help Expand Equity in Chicago Public Schools?](#)**