



August 23, 2020

Chairman DeValle and the CPS Board of Education,

I am chair of the Kellogg LSC, and I know you have heard from my fellow Kellogg parents about our capital investment needs and concerns. Kellogg has a building approaching 85 years old with a 20-year-old deteriorating modular.

In support of effective advocacy, we have been trying for several years to understand how the CPS capital allocation process works. CEO Jackson during her citywide meetings with LSC representatives called attention to the need for parental partnership, CPS transparency, and building trust with communities. Mayor Lightfoot ran on a platform of reform and, in particular, of restricting aldermanic power so that it was no longer concentrated and so that aldermen no longer served as the primary gatekeepers of desperately needed resources.

However, at Kellogg, it feels like Groundhog's day. In 2016 the 19<sup>th</sup> ward alderman proposed a plan to CPS to close Kellogg. To address overcrowding at Mt. Greenwood, Alderman Matt O' Shea wanted to remove neighborhood students from the school building and turn it over to Keller, a selective enrollment school. We were able to prevent that from happening, but it appears that CPS continues to value the relationship with the alderman over transparency, community trust, and meeting the needs of our children. We don't understand why this is happening to us once *again*.

We launched Mission Addition, our LSC subcommittee, to address our decades-long unmet capital needs. Our students and parents attended countless meetings, secured office hours with board members (present and former), and shared a proposal for capital planning. We have not heard from CPS on the status of our proposal. Instead, we learned of a \$3 million capital investment to Kellogg from press releases from Alderman O'Shea. We were utterly confused and extremely disappointed that three of our proposal priorities (demolishing the modular, building an addition, and fixing the boiler) were not addressed, but the alderman highlighted as his priority the demolition of our functioning playlot, an investment that we did not propose.

Equally disconcerting was that, in his printed ward newsletter, the alderman is quoted as saying that he has been working "for the past *several years*" with CEO Jackson and Chief Education Officer McDade to bring investment to Kellogg. That statement was jarring given that the alderman tried to close our school, but it also begs the question as to what is preventing the investment we need from happening.

Please see the attached 2016 email from Matt O'Shea to Keller's LSC acknowledging the age of the building, the challenges with the present school infrastructure, and how it hampers the learning environment. The email promises substantial investment to bring the Kellogg building up to par to secure a quality learning environment. Please see the following excerpts:

*CPS has discussed spending \$20 million to alleviate overcrowding at Mt. Greenwood Elementary School. Should the reorganization proposal move forward, that \$20 million would be reallocated to badly needed improvements at other area schools. Any improvements needed at Kellogg to create a comparable learning environment for Keller students would be paid for through these funds.*

Keller parents had grave concerns that our small gym met the multiple purpose of the gym, the lunchroom cafeteria, kitchen, and school auditorium. The alderman went on to say that CPS *agreed* that funds would be spent to improve Kellogg *only if* the reorganization proposal moved forward.

*Facilities upgrades to Kellogg would need to happen before any move occurs. When a thorough facilities analysis is complete I would hope to schedule a follow up meeting.*

He said in the email and at community meetings that his proposal was based upon his strategic planning and his partnership with CPS and secured CPS enrollment projection data for Kellogg:

*Both Cassell and Mt. Greenwood are experiencing climbing enrollment, which is projected to continue. Given those trends, it is not feasible to address this problem through such a boundary shift. Also, such a shift would not address the fact that Kellogg and Sutherland continue to face declining enrollment. **Kellogg Elementary is projected to drop to 151 students by 2021.** That is not sustainable.*

It is now four years later. *Four years later* the same structural deficiencies identified continue to go unaddressed. We successfully beat back the alderman's ill-conceived proposal, but *true to his word* it resulted in Kellogg not receiving the badly needed capital investment that was a deal breaker for Keller parents. The noted concern about having the small gym being the only room available for the cafeteria, kitchen, and auditorium has played out for our students on many occasions, precluding the school from providing students with gym class when the room was needed for cafeteria use.

Given that CPS was on the cusp of addressing our structural deficiencies, can someone help us understand why capital funding was contingent upon a deeply flawed, ill-conceived and mean-spirited plan?

While the alderman does not value our school or our students, we take pride in being a neighborhood school that meets *all* children where they are, preparing them for success, and moving them forward to being the leaders we know they will be. We are a predominantly African American school: 89% Black, 5.7% White, 35.5% low income, and 16.2% diverse learners. Our school has demonstrated such significant growth for our students and diverse learners that the Archdiocese visited to meet with our principal and teachers, and to observe our classrooms. Kellogg has an award-winning Garden Club and is the first recipient of back to back Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards. It has been highlighted in *Crains* as a draw for young families and was noted in Chicago Magazine as one of the top 25 neighborhood schools in Chicago. **Our enrollment is 265 students**, and over the past four years we have rated as a Level 1+ school every year, with an average enrollment of over 250 and a waiting list of over 600 hundred students. Our students matriculate into high performing high schools including Brooks, Jones, Kenwood, Payton, and Lindbloom, as if Kellogg was a feeder school. We have achieved these accomplishments while having to address worsening environmental conditions with our boiler, erratic classroom temperatures, inadequate bathrooms, insufficient school spacing, a crumbling modular detached from our main building, and a main building that isn't ADA accessible.

What is extremely frustrating is that while our well-known needs have yet to be addressed, it is clear what type of investment a school receives when CPS and Alderman O'Shea actively work to address identified needs, such as has been the case at Mt. Greenwood Elementary:

- 2011 The Chicago School Board approved \$8 million annex for Mt. Greenwood with a warming kitchen, standard size dining facility, linked connection to the existing building, 25 percent green roof, and parking lot upgrades.
- 2015 The Chicago School Board approved \$2.28 million for Mt. Greenwood for the fabrication and installation of a six-classroom modular.
- 2017 The Chicago School Board approved \$20 million for a two-story annex at Mt. Greenwood. It includes 13 standard classrooms, a science lab, administrative space, restrooms, and an elevator. Inside the existing school building, two classrooms were converted into lunchroom space to expand dining capacity. Site improvements included the removal of the 2015 modular classroom building and the installation of a new parking lot and playground.

Unlike the alderman, we would never pit schools against each other for much-needed capital dollars. What the allocations above underscore for us is that CPS and the alderman demonstrated an ability to meet Mt. Greenwood's overcrowding needs and simultaneously enhance its educational environment. While we appreciate the CPS investment announced by the alderman takes into consideration our bathrooms and ADA compliance needs, we would like to have a conversation about our longstanding capital priorities and most

pressing needs. We are deeply concerned that the proposed solutions not only fail to meet our immediate concerns but will further reduce our foot print, exacerbating our needs.

Matt O'Shea recently reached out to meet in response to the letter that we sent last week. His e-mail indicates that he has also reached out to CPS and is seeking to arrange a meeting with a CPS representative. We look forward to meeting with CPS to see if and when our capital needs will ever be met. We respectfully ask that politics be removed from this capital allocation process and that the relationship that CPS seeks to build and restore be demonstrated by working with us to finally address our pressing needs.

Sincerely,

Margaret LaRaviere  
Chair, Kellogg LSC