

November 13, 2024, Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting
Written Comments
Received between Monday, November 11th and Thursday, November 14th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1 In light of the political climate right now and the rumors and speculation related to the lack of federal funding and the dismantling of public education in America, can the board provide any insight into what the next four years will look like for families with disabilities?

2 ****Statement on Acero Schools Closure Impact on Chicago's Latine Community****
My name is Sandra Santiago, and I am an ELPT, English Program Teacher, and Multilingual Coordinator. Today, I write as a representative of Acero Cruz, a K-12 school in Rogers Park, which mirrors the rich diversity of our community. We proudly serve students from over 17 language backgrounds and 15 different countries, creating a unique and inclusive environment for immigrant, refugee, and mul 2 3(i)2.6 (r)6 (an)7() 1.3 (rg3a) 1.2 (c12

Our performing arts program is another pillar of pride. With experienced, dedicated teachers who actively seek grants, we have been able to introduce theater and the arts as powerful tools for expression and language development. Productions like 12 Angry Men, Chicago, Shrek, and Beauty and the Beast have given our multilingual students an opportunity to practice English, break social and cultural barriers, and truly become part of a community. Acero Cruz is not just a school; it is a family and a safe space where students can grow, learn, and belong. I urge you to reconsider this closure and recognize the profound impact it would have on our community and the futures of these resilient young people.

The impending closure of our school as well as the other 6 Acero schools in Chicago threatens 2,000 students, predominantly black and Latine, and leaves many Multilingual learners with students with special needs, English language learners, and newcomers / SLIFE (student with Limited Interrupted Education) without clear future options. With CPS funding and oversight already in place, CPS has the capability to take action, just as they did in response to potential Urban Prep charter school closures, where the district intervened to avoid harm to students and communities.

Acero's decision, made without community consultation, ignores its renewed charter commitment to CPS and its families through 2026. Prioritizing investor assurances over student needs, Acero approved new land purchases while announcing closures, even though many schools maintain strong enrollment. Acero's claim that closures are due to lower enrollment and rent costs neglects efforts to explore more sustainable alternatives, such as renegotiating leases with the Archdiocese.

marginalized, to celebrating the resilience of Latino communities, to affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every individual.

The decision to close our schools is a betrayal of the very principles that Sandra Cisneros embodies. It is a betrayal of the trust we have placed in our leaders, in our community. But most of all, it is a betrayal to our students, who have poured our hearts and souls into creating a sense of belonging within those walls. So I beg the cps board of education to step in and stop ACERO from making this decision. See us, hear us, believe in us. Recognize that our schools are not just institutions, but living, breathing communities that nurture the minds, hearts, and spirits of Latino students.

6	If you decide to close our schools not only will you break our students heart, but you will also crush their dreams and hopes. Our students do not deserve this. Please I beg you that you do not close our schools. These schools are a safe haven for our students.
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