

Up to 47,500 kids in school shake-ups

Just how many students will see their lives changed by the proposed Chicago school shake-ups?

Way more than “over 30,000,” the number CPS officials say will be affected by proposed school mergers this summer.

The total could be as high as 47,500, two University of Illinois professors say — 58 percent higher than the CPS number.

CPS counts only school consolidations in its figure. The UIC analysis covers the full scope of proposed school shake-ups, including 108 consolidated schools, about 19 co-locations (two schools in one building) and six “turnarounds” (CPS replaces the staff but the children remain).

Those 133 schools represent 23 percent of all district-run elementary schools.

The UIC estimate is more honest. And that mind-boggling number of students, to be reshuffled over an exceptionally short time, is the main reason we urge CPS to scale back its closures this year or spread them over two years — let’s get this right.

Increasingly, we are convinced that there are schools on the closure list that don’t even belong there. Last week, for example, we profiled Garvey, a beloved Washington Heights school that puts nearly every room

to good use in its supposedly under-used building and, on raw test scores, outperforms the school that is to absorb it. Garvey isn’t the only school that makes a good case for its survival, as some of the closure hearings that began on Saturday are making clear.

Other mistakes are coming to light as more complete pictures of schools emerge — far more complete pictures than what CPS has put out.

First: Those 47,500 students.

Federico R. Waitoller and Josh Radinsky, professors at UIC, simply added up the students in the 133 schools affected by a shake-up. They also found nearly 7,200 impacted special education students, many of whom struggle mightily with transitions. The professors erred by including eighth-graders, who won’t be affected because they are headed to high school, but CPS says there only 1,600 eighth-graders in the 109 consolidated schools. CPS couldn’t give us the total for all school actions. Furthermore, eighth-graders will be replaced by new kindergartners who certainly will be affected by the closing of their local school or their new school absorbing hundreds of new students



Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis speaks against the school closings plan. | CHARLES REX ARBOGAST-AP

all at once.

The professors used slightly outdated numbers from 2011-12, and enrollment has dropped by about 2,000 since then. CPS argues that the impact on students will be less with turnarounds and co-locations. Maybe so, but any school shake-up, well, shakes up a school community.

Second: CPS’ other “sins of omission.”

In its sales pitch for closing specific schools, CPS often deliberately paints an

incomplete picture. CPS is indeed upgrading its “welcoming schools,” for example, but that doesn’t mean the closing schools have nothing to offer.

In our Garvey profile, we noted that CPS played up what parents might find at the designated welcoming school, including pre-school, air conditioning and a computer lab. CPS failed to mention that Garvey has all that, plus higher test scores.

It’s the same pattern on other so-called CPS fact sheets.

The public is told that Chopin, which is absorbing Lafayette in Humboldt Park, has air conditioning, a pre-school and an upgraded computer lab. Well, so does Lafayette,

plus a stellar music program. None of that gets a mention. Ditto for the proposed absorption of M. Jackson into Fort Dearborn in Auburn-Gresham. CPS also fails to say both schools are on probation, though it does fairly note that Fort Dearborn’s scores are considerably higher.

CPS must close some schools, but it would go down easier with the public — and mistakes with real, human consequences would be avoided — if CPS told the full story.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Enact responsible gun laws

On Thursday morning, I and members of my church will join with Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence and countless others to travel to Springfield to lobby and rally for responsible gun legislation that demands background checks, closing loopholes of private sales and lost or stolen guns, as well as demanding a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

It is both disturbing and unacceptable to me that Connecticut legislators had the conscience and courage to respond to the killing of their babies in Newtown by passing strong gun legislation while Illinois legislators have continued to do nothing!

Twenty babies in Connecticut murdered



KARIE ANGELL LUC
SUN-TIMES MEDIA

and the legislators of Connecticut respond. In Chicago, 806 children and young people were murdered in the last six years, and Illinois continues to do nothing. I can’t help but wonder if Illinois’ lack of action is not just the power of the NRA, but because the victims in Illinois are mostly black and brown?

Rev. Michael L. Pfleger,
Faith Community of St. Sabina

We still use the mail

To answer Steve Huntley’s March 26 question: The last time I wrote a letter was just now. The last I time I paid a bill (several) by mail was yesterday. The last time I filed a tax return (two) by mail was last month. The last time I banked by mail was last month. The last time I was “hacked

into” or my identity threatened by mail — never! P.S. I just mailed a birthday card as well.

Robert Bacon, Rogers Park

U.S. is hypocritical on Cuba

The controversy raised by two Republican House representatives over the trip to Cuba by Jay-Z and Beyonce is another example of the hypocrisy of the American government. We have had an embargo against Cuba for over 50 years. China, on the other hand, has a human-rights record worse than Cuba’s. China killed thousands of Americans in the Korean War, yet enjoys a very high trade status with the United States. I guess all the money to be made from the huge Chinese market by the American corporate elite, who always vote Republican, is why we still have an embargo in place against Cuba.

Charles McGhee, University Park

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