

March 24, 2009

Attorney General Lisa Madigan
500 S. Second Street
Springfield, IL 62705
sent by facsimile

Dear Attorney General Madigan:

We are writing to request assistance from your office in obtaining information from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) which should be available under the Freedom of Information Act but which CPS has denied us.

Specifically, on January 6, 2009, we requested copies of any report or reports created pursuant to the "Closings of Schools Policy," Chicago Board of Education Board Report 07-0523-PO2, section V, Implementation of School Closings and Annual Review, which states, "The CEO shall review the school closing process annually and report to the Board on the impact school closures have on CPS students. The report shall be made publicly available." This policy was approved by the Chicago Board of Education on May 23, 2007.

In response to our January 6 letter, we received a request for an additional fourteen days from the CPS FOIA officer, Elizabeth Calhoun. After the fourteen days had passed, we stopped by her office (January 28), called her office (February 4), called again and sent a follow-up letter (February 6), and sent an e-mail (March 18) requesting the same information. This lack of response constitutes a denial.

The policy itself requires public disclosure of the reports, and disclosure is clearly in the public interest. We know that students who are moved from school to school can lose academic ground. There may also be emotional and social repercussions from such moves. We need to know what has been happening to our children, some of whom have been subjected to multiple school moves under Mayor Daley's Renaissance 2010 program. Parents, the general public, and the Board itself should have objective information about how school closings have affected children. This is especially pertinent in light of the Board's vote last month to close another eight schools.

If these reports do not exist, the public has a right to know that the Board of Education is making decisions without having any information about the impact those decisions have on children, information that they themselves requested.

Any help you could give us in accessing this information would be greatly appreciated.
Thank you.

Julie Woestehoff
Executive Director

enclosures

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