

Dec 18, 2025, Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Tuesday, Dec 16th and Friday, Dec 19th Submitted via
Written Comments Form

1	<p>Dear Members of the Chicago Board of Education,</p> <p>I am writing to urge an urgent re-examination of the Space Utilization formula as it is currently being applied to Haugan Elementary. Following a recent Chicago Tribune report, education researcher Jeanne Marie Olson—an expert who has analyzed the inequities of the CPS formula since 2012—has published a case study on Haugan's specific situation.</p> <p>Her research, available at cpsapples2apples.com, highlights three systemic flaws in the current "Portfolio" math that are directly penalizing our school:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Inefficient Class Distribution: The formula assumes students arrive in perfect cohorts of 28. In reality, fluctuating enrollment by grade level creates "ghost" capacity that does not exist, as split classes are detrimental to student learning.2. Bilingual Programming Penalty: As a heavily bilingual neighborhood school, Haugan must maintain separate tracks. The CPS formula fails to account for the necessary classroom splits required to provide mandated bilingual and monolingual programs.3. Special Education Omission: The current math does not account for the specific classroom requirements and services mandated by the CTU contract and federal law for students with disabilities. <p>The Discrepancy in Capacity Data: The information currently being provided to the Board by the Portfolio team is inaccurate. While the official report claims Haugan is at 93% capacity, our internal audit and current enrollment trends show we are at 100% capacity, on track to reach 110% within a year.</p> <p>Furthermore, the proposed "cost" of co-location should not include deferred maintenance for the North River building. Necessary roofing repairs are a baseline facility requirement that should be addressed regardless of co-location status; roofing costs should not be used as a financial leverage point against our school.</p> <p>Call to Action: Does the Board of Education value strong, growing neighborhood schools? We ask that you look beyond the flawed Portfolio metrics and investigate how the current formula is penalizing schools that prioritize bilingual and special education services.</p> <p>We welcome the opportunity to discuss these discrepancies and show you the reality of space utilization at Haugan firsthand.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
2	<p>I am a preschool teacher and a parent to a 4th grade student at Haugan Elementary. The recent denial for co-location has made many wondering what the solution can be to help with the space constraints we have at Haugan. Haugans preschool is a robust program that is thriving. Community families are choosing Haugan preschool so that all their children can be together in one building. Preschool is the beginning to many childrens education foundation and keeping preschool at Haugan is a very important part of that. I ask that the board take time to reconsider the co location or consider an adding an addition onto the current Haugan building. Haugan is such a thriving community school that is continuing to grow. Many parents choose Haugan because they truly love the school. I urge you to help find a solution that will allow Haugan to grow but not loose its amazing programs.</p>

3	<p>I am writing as a parent and neighbor of Haugan Elementary School.</p> <p>Over 20 years ago, CPS leadership had the forethought to invest in Haugan by building an addition because they understood that our neighborhood would grow and that our children would need space. That decision showed planning, responsibility, and a commitment to the community.</p> <p>Today, that same level of leadership is missing.</p> <p>Despite overcrowding at Haugan and the availability of the former Aspira Haugan building, CPS has chosen to deny colocation. This decision ignores the realities faced by our students and families and dismisses reasonable, child-centered solutions brought forward by those closest to the school.</p> <p>What is happening now feels like a theft from our community—of space, of opportunity, and of trust. This is not equity. This is not about what is best for children. This is politics and bureaucracy overriding common sense.</p> <p>If CPS truly refuses to consider temporary colocation, then you must commit to building Haugan an annex with no fewer than 14 classrooms. Anything less continues to place the burden of CPS's decisions on the children and families of this neighborhood.</p> <p>We are taxpayers, residents, and active participants in civic life. We expect CPS to listen and to act with integrity, foresight, and fairness.</p>
4	<p>I am a parent of an 8th grader at Haugan Elementary. My daughter will graduate at the end of this school year, but as a neighbor and taxpayer with an interest in our community, I am compelled to comment on the rejection of our request to co-locate Haugan's middle school students into the former Aspira Haugan Building, which ironically was originally built for that very purpose.</p> <p>It is astonishing that the board's portfolio team can summarily reject the plain truth that Haugan Elementary is strained by its significant overcrowding. This finding, I understand, was based on the application of a flawed formula that fails to account for all relevant factors to measure the true needs and utilization of the school's facilities.</p> <p>A very recent detailed analysis of Haugan's situation and the insufficiency of the space utilization formula can be found at https://cpsapples2apples.com/2025/12/12/updated-space-utilization-formula-does-it-fix-problems/</p> <p>The bottom line is that Haugan has higher than average IEP and bilingual needs that bring with them space requirements that can't be met in Haugan's facilities without sacrificing things like the school library and using hallways and closets for instructional purposes. This is unacceptable.</p> <p>I urge the board to overrule the portfolio team's denial. Even assuming the best of intentions, the effect of this ruling is discrimination against those with little power or economic means. I know that CPS wants the best for its students. Using the former Aspira Haugan building to relieve the overwhelming pressure on the students, teachers and administrators of Haugan Elementary is an obvious and available solution.</p>
5	<p>I am submitting this comment today as a community member near Haugan Elementary School. The lack of space in our neighborhood school is deeply concern, but so is the continued lack of collaboration and support around using the former Aspira Haugan building to temporarily solve the issue. We believe that CPS's "formula" is discriminating against our school population and there is research to prove it: https://cpsapples2apples.com/2025/12/12/updated-space-utilization-formula-does-it-fix-problems/.</p>

I am urging the board to reconsider the Portfolio team denial of our colocation request. Using that space would help us temporarily solve the issue while a long-term solution is developed and implemented.

As a tax/payer, resident encouraged to participate in civic life, and a neighbor, I want what is best for the children of our community and we need you to listen. These solutions have been created by leaders who are directly impacted and who are invested in the education of our Haugan children. They have presented a strong, wise, and just case for colocation and we find it unacceptable that it was denied. If this solution is something that won't be considered by CPS, we urge you to build Haugan an annex with a minimum of 14 classrooms.

While I may not be a parent, I still believe that the children in our community and their livelihood is a shared responsibility. We need you to act now because they cannot wait.

6 To whom it may concern,

I am a parent of a Haugan student. As a member of both Haugan Elementary and the wonderful Albany Park, and I am deeply concerned by the lack of space that is evident in Haugan. I am also deeply concerned by the lack of collaboration and willingness to support our students by allowing a colocation in the former Aspira Haugan Building. We have seen strong research that CPS's formula discriminates against our school population. I strongly urge the Board to reconsider the Portfolio team denial of our colocation request. This is in the interest of our students, our teachers, and our community. I want not what is only the best for my children, but all of the children who attend Haugan and live in Albany Park. If the request for colocation is denied, I strongly urge you to build Haugan and annex with a minimum of 14 classrooms.

7 Dear Members of the Chicago Board of Education,

My name is Kathryn Wheatley Koentopp, and I have had the distinct honor of serving as a preschool teacher at Haugan Elementary School for the past 19 years. Throughout nearly two decades, I have seen firsthand how early childhood education transforms the lives of our youngest learners and strengthens the fabric of our community.

I am writing today to express my profound concern regarding the potential unavailability of preschool at Haugan. For our community, this is not merely a change in programming; it is a significant barrier to education.

If preschool is no longer offered at Haugan, many of our families will be forced to keep their children home until they are eligible for Kindergarten. The reality for our families is that they often lack the financial resources or the flexibility in their work schedules to transport their children to a separate, potentially more distant preschool location. Haugan serves as a vital hub for these families, many of whom already have older children enrolled at our school.

Removing this program will have a devastating impact on our school community:

Educational Gap: Our students will lose critical years of foundational development, starting Kindergarten significantly behind their peers.

Family Hardship: Forcing parents to choose a preschool that is farther away, potentially with limited space for former Haugan students

Community Stability: Local schools thrive when they can support families from the very beginning of their educational journey.

I urge the Board to consider the unique needs of the Haugan community. Please ensure that our youngest learners continue to have access to the high-quality preschool education they deserve right here at their neighborhood school.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the students of Chicago.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Wheatley Koentopp, Preschool Teacher, Haugan Elementary School

8 I stand before you today with my heart wide open. I am a proud ASPIRA alumna from the class of 2009, and this school did not just educate me—it saved me. ASPIRA saw my potential when the world was quiet about it. It gave me confidence, purpose, and a future I could believe in.

Today, that same future is sitting in these classrooms. My son is now a freshman at ASPIRA Early College. My godson is a freshman too. And I stand here not only as an alumna—but as a mother and a godmother, fighting with everything in me for the children I love.

I am here alongside my godson's mother because this fight is not mine alone. This is about all of our children. Their dreams, their safety, their education, and their right to a school that believes in them. ASPIRA is not just a building—it is a refuge, a foundation, and a promise that our kids can rise higher than their circumstances.

We are asking you—please, from the deepest place in our hearts—help our children's school financially. Do not let lack of funding silence their potential. Do not let opportunity slip away from children who are ready to work, to learn, and to lead. When you fund ASPIRA, you fund hope. You fund futures. You fund generations.

I also know Ms. Emma Lozano, a board member here, and I believe in the power of leadership standing shoulder to shoulder with families. When educators, parents, and community leaders come together, we become unstoppable.

So today, I ask you to stand with us. Stand for our children. Stand for their education. Stand for a future where no child is left behind because of finances.

Because this school once stood for me—and now I will always stand for it.

Once an Aspirante, always an Aspirante.

9 My name is Esther Pereira and I am a proud Bilingual coordinator (ELPT) at Haugan Elementary. I am also a proud CPS alumnus. When I was a student at Saucedo Acamy and Curie High school I told my teachers I wanted to be a CPS teacher just like them. 14 years later, I am here writing to you in hopes of using my voice to advocate for those who are scared of speaking up. Although I was not selected to speak today 12/18, I write in hopes that someone gets this letter. No hay espacio, there is no space here at the school. The CPS formula which claims there IS space does not reflect our needs as a school. Por favor les pido que nos escuchen... Please I urge you to listen to us. I love Haugan and I love the community. Our community has been through so much and this is another obstacle that is very difficult for our students and their families. We service over 1,000 students and 773 are them EL students. We have a lot of bilingual classes, a lot of resource classrooms that help support our students who need both BIL and SPED services. A lot of parents have been echoing their concerns and feel that this is not equitable. Please consider visiting our school and listen to our students,families and staff. Espero que puedan venir a vernos, and I hope you can use your power to also advocate for us.

10 I am writing in favor of Haugan's request to temporarily co-locate with North River school in the space vacated by Aspira in the school building at 3729 W. Leland until a permanent solution to Haugan's space constraints is achieved.

I am also writing in opposition to North River's request to double its citywide, lottery-based program to occupy the entire Leland building. We reiterate that a temporary co-location of part of our student body is not subject to the same requirements as a permanent co-location of our entire school with another and thus CPS can and should consider temporary co-location for the 2026-2027 school year now.

We ask that you deny North River's request for expansion because if it is granted this will permanently remove the only good option Haugan has to accommodate its current student population comfortably AND account for reasonably expected future growth from strong word of mouth, the new CPS right-to-stay policy, and our expected addition of a dual language program which will attract new learners.

We bear no ill will to North River but want to be crystal clear that it is offensive, maddening, and in clear violation of CPS policy that North River's desire to grow, is, and has been over the last

year, treated as equivalent to Haugan's need to accommodate its current and projected future students. North River's and Haugan's requests, and needs, are NOT equivalent.

Critically, North River, a school with citywide, lottery-based admissions, has full control over its class size and can simply eliminate crowding by not admitting new students outside its entry level grade and by natural attrition. If North River is crowded, this is a situation of its own making and choice. North River does not NEED to expand it only WANTS to expand. Haugan however, is the zoned neighborhood school and MUST enroll all attendance area students who wish to attend.

If North River wishes to expand it should move entirely to a less crowded part of the city. It should not be allowed to permanently deprive the Haugan and Albany Park communities of the \$20,000,000 resource that was built to provide a long term solution to Haugan's crowding.

This situation - that Haugan's co-location request was summarily dismissed without any explanation to our LSC or school community to date and that North River's expansion request is receiving much greater consideration - is especially maddening because we are not, supposedly, in the bad old days of Renaissance 2010 anymore. Instead, CPS's Strategic Plan, "Together we Rise" states the opposite, specifically that "every student can rely on their neighborhood school as a strong option for their education journey," and that CPS will "prioritize investments in neighborhood schools and communities most harmed by structural racism and disinvestment." See <https://www.cps.edu/sites/five-year-plan/> Page 50.

BUT. As we have repeatedly told you, unless our space issues are resolved, and unless WE ARE GIVEN ROOM TO GROW, and despite the heroic efforts of Haugan's staff, our vulnerable children will NOT realize the promise of the strategic plan and will continue to be harmed, ignored, and marginalized. Those in a position to choose may avoid Haugan - solving our overcrowding by disinvestment by our community.

As CPS's strategic plan recognizes, a magnet or charter school down the street is no substitute whatsoever for an adequately resourced neighborhood school. There are tremendous benefits to neighborhood schools and we maintain - as does your own strategic plan - that while choice is all well and good, choice schools like North River should never again - including NOW - be prioritized to the detriment of neighborhood schools. Denying Haugan's request entirely and granting North Rivers does exactly that. Please follow your own strategic plan and prioritize Haugan's needs, not North River's wants. Thank you.

****ATTACHMENTS****

ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

December 16, 2025

To Chicago Public Schools Board Members:

On behalf of Advancement Project, a national nonprofit committed to ending the policing, surveillance, and criminalization of Black and brown youth in schools, we urge you to **cancel the contract with Hazel Health** and instead commit to providing holistic healing and expanded mental health supports for all Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students. Specifically, CPS should not allow tech billionaires to exploit the personal and health data of minors to enrich themselves and potentially develop technology for military and federal immigration contractors. Young people in Chicago and throughout the country are going through a mental health crisis. What they need is healing-centered and culturally responsive mental health support that relies on community partnerships and expanded behavioral health teams—not a gimmick used to train artificial intelligence (AI) systems and that requires parents to waive student privacy protections.

We applaud CPS's effort to provide mental health support for students in the district, but the harms of outsourcing this vital service to Hazel Health outweighs any benefits. As a private for-profit company, Hazel Health inherently prioritizes its financial bottom line over the wellbeing of children. There is no way for families to hold Hazel Health accountable for choosing profit over students' wellbeing and no incentive for Hazel Health to be transparent about its priorities. Furthermore, as other advocates have highlighted,¹ we are especially concerned by Hazel Health's recent merger with Little Otter, an AI-based platform with ties to Palantir, which is working with the Trump Administration to build a surveillance platform for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).² Because Hazel Health uses students' information to develop their products,³ the merger and connection to Palantir presents serious concerns about student information being used to target and terrorize immigrant and other communities of color. Moreover, Hazel Health has not disclosed how much student data it retains or whether any students have experienced any negative consequences from using its services.

Instead of renewing the contract with Hazel Health, CPS should implement the demands of the Youth Healing Chi campaign,⁴ a coalition of young people and local community organizations who are demanding life-affirming mental health resources, not technology and more surveillance. After the successful #CopsOutCPS campaign that led the way in pushing CPS to work towards removing policing practices from the district and instead provide the supports young

¹ Illinois Families for Public Schools, "CPS, keep ICE's Big Tech partners out of our kids' counseling services," (Oct. 13, 2025), https://www.ilfps.org/keep_ice_big_tech_partners_out_of_counseling_services.

² Steven Hubbard, "ICE to Use ImmigrationOS by Palantir, a New AI System, to Track Immigrants' Movements," American Immigration Council (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-immigrationos-palantir-ai-track-immigrants/>.

³ Illinois Families for Public Schools, et.al, "Oct 8 2025 Letter to Chicago Board of Ed re Hazel Health," (Oct. 8, 2025),

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/ilfps/pages/1970/attachments/original/1759978100/Oct_8_2025_Letter_to_Chicago_Board_of_Ed_re_Hazel_Health.pdf.

⁴ Youth Healing Chi campaign, <https://www.instagram.com/youthch1>.

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people need to thrive, the CPS Board again has the opportunity to courageously engage in the complicated but necessary work of addressing the root causes of harm and violence that have fueled the mental health crisis in young people we are seeing. To provide the safe, welcoming, and nurturing educational environment that all students in CPS deserve, we urge the Board to end the contract with Hazel Health, and instead invest in holistic healing programming and expanded mental health support staff with supportive adults in whom young people can confide in and trust. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please reach out to us.