



Stephen K. Hayt Elementary School  
*Together We Make A Difference*

Daniel Gomez  
Principal

Chris Twomey  
Assistant Principal

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To Chicago Public Schools,

We are the Local School Council of Stephen K. Hayt Elementary in Edgewater. We are your elected stakeholders composed of parents, teachers, staff, and community members. We were elected to decide and oversee the critical business of our local neighborhood school.

Since March of 2020, we have all learned how to best exist in this pandemic; how to survive it and how to best avoid contracting COVID-19. Many of us have family or friends who are essential workers. Many of us are unable to work remotely. Likewise, many of our students' families do not have that luxury. Many of our students live in multi-generational homes. Many families face the difficult decision whether to go to work and return as safely as possible or risk not having money for food and shelter.

We have all made sacrifices as well as changes to our lives to protect ourselves and each other. When school reopened in the fall online, we hoped it was temporary. It was the right choice, but a hard one. Although this decision probably spared lives, it shed a bright light on the inequities that exist in this city and country.

To address these inequities, the district has ordered staff to return to its buildings. They claim teachers, staff and students can return safely to in-person learning, but our teachers and staff are not yet prepared, parents still have outstanding questions yet to be answered, and our school has not yet developed a comprehensive reopening plan. That is not to say our school administrators and those assisting aren't trying. This is nearly an impossible task for any school community given the framework by the district.

CPS has asked our teachers, staff, students and families to risk themselves to reopen our schools in 2 waves; on January 11th Pre-K students will return to class followed by K-8 students on February 1. On January 4th, our Pre-K and enrichment teachers returned. Based on the data the district has shared, there are a total of 299 students at our school that intend to return within the month.

All this is being asked while trusted health officials are publicly advising the darkest days are still ahead of us. The current positivity rate has increased to over 10%, dramatically exceeding the 5% benchmark that our city's public health leaders pointed to warrant concern.

We should not minimize or dismiss the families that want this or need this, however we know 66% asked to stay online, including 69% of families of color. How can we provide both in-person learning and remote learning to accommodate the needs of so many? Safely and effectively? We do feel it's nearly impossible to effectively educate a portion of students in the classroom and at home at the same time. More planning should take place at a school level. We are told it is.

The current guidance from the district will dilute the quality of education. We are told this will bring us together, start closing the gaps and meet the social emotional needs of our children. However, this unrealistic reopening plan only further widens the existing inequalities.

The reopening is not one to be made from the seat of a CEO or bureaucrat, but a collaborative group of health officials and science-based data. We reject this plan to reopen our schools for in-person learning because we do not believe it is safe to bring students, teachers and staff back into a dangerous situation. We further reject this reopening because the plan proposed



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at the district level is full of holes and the plan proposed at the school level has yet to materialize.

We all need more time, proper district guidance, and adequate resources in addition to appropriated funding to reopen safely. We do want to return. So many of us, for so many reasons love our school and the people that teach, support, administrate, and operate. We all want to return. The caveat for that return should be the conditions of safety to the public returns. We just aren't there yet as a nation or a city. When the darkest days have passed us, planning is in place, and resources are available, then we can be confident in returning...students, teachers, staff alike.

We are so close to the end. As much as it hurts our hearts, we should stay apart, protect our school community, and provide resources where we can for those that need it the most. Only then should we return together in celebration and in mourning.

Thank you,

The Local School Council of Stephen K. Hayt Elementary

Yordanka Brunet (Parent Representative)

Adeline Canez (Chair, Parent Representative)

Lori Garcia (Parent Representative)

Emma Healey (Parent Representative)

Tareeq Rasheed (Teacher Representative)

Laura Reimers (Community Representative)

Cheryl Reiner (Parent Representative)

Gabriela Reyes (Secretary, Non-Teacher Staff Representative)

Carl Sannito (Teacher Representative)

Mark Smirl (Vice Chair, Parent Representative)