



DYETT HIGH SCHOOL & THE 3 DS OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM: DESTABILIZATION | DISINVESTMENT | DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Walter H. Dyett High School sits in leafy Washington Park on Chicago's south side African American Bronzeville neighborhood. In February 2012, Chicago's mayor-appointed Board of Education voted to phase out Dyett for poor performance and send students to Phillips High School, an Academy of Urban School Leadership turnaround school 2 ½ miles away. However, Phillips is doing no better than Dyett on district performance measures. Dyett's story has been repeated in almost 100 public schools in Chicago's African American and Latino communities and in cities across the country where an increasing number of mainly urban school districts are using this new shock treatment on schools serving low-income students of color.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS, PHASE-OUTS, TURNAROUNDS, AND CONVERSIONS TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Neighborhood public schools are closed or phased out, handed over to "turnaround" operators, or restarted as privately-run charter schools with selective admissions. School staff are displaced, children are sent to other schools, and already distressed communities face school churning. Chicago's African American and Latino students have been the test case for "school improvement."

These drastic actions have not created the sea change in low-performing schools that they have promised. Instead, the consequences have often been disastrous for African American, Latino, and other students of color with increases in violence, disruption of neighborhood schools and communities, loss of veteran teachers, and little academic improvement. Ninety-eight of the 100 school closings and phase-outs in Chicago since 2001 (documented by *Chicago Catalyst*) have been in schools with predominantly African American and Latino students.

Instead of supporting these schools with rich curriculum, smaller classes, equitable resources, and programs that work, *prior to closing them or turning them around*, Chicago Public Schools has actually sabotaged them. There is a history of CPS **destabilizing** and **disinvesting** in African American and Latino schools and **disenfranchising** the students, parents, and teachers – despite the energy parents and communities have put in to improve their schools and to propose research-based solutions. Meanwhile, CPS put a lot of resources into magnet schools (disproportionately white and middle class), turnarounds and charters.

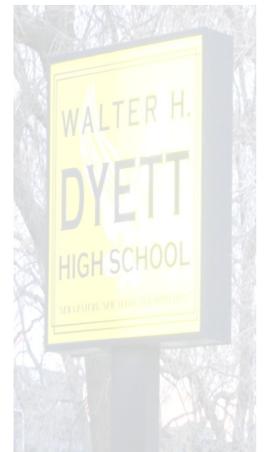
DYETT AND THE 3 DS OF CHICAGO REFORM

Since Arne Duncan, former CEO of Chicago Public Schools, was appointed to head the U.S. Department of Education in 2009, the Chicago model for top-down school reform has gone viral. An examination of CPS actions on Dyett over the years re-

veals an African American school under attack. Dyett's story is now a familiar one across many urban school districts of color and indicates what may be in store for others.

Destabilization Dyett has been in the center of a whirlwind of school churning. Since 2001, CPS has closed, turned around or converted to charter or selective enrollment 20 area schools near Dyett. Between 2005 and 2010, four high schools on the South Side near Dyett were closed. Students were sent from school to school, and schools that were community anchors closed, further destabilizing a community destabilized by destruction of public housing and gentrification. In 2006, Dyett was a receiving school for closed Englewood HS students, but received no additional resources for the influx of students. That year there was a spike in school violence. In its 12-year history as a high school, Dyett has had a revolving door of leaders, including 4 principals.

Disinvestment Dyett was set up for failure from the beginning. In 1999, CPS converted Dyett from a middle to high school but provided no high school resources. On opening day, there were just seven books in the library and unequipped science labs, yet the school was expected to meet district performance standards. In the same year, CPS invested \$24 million to convert nearby King High School into a selective-enrollment magnet school. Dyett has 25.6% special needs students, but has not received adequate resources to serve them. Especially in the last three years, CPS has starved Dyett of resources and forced cuts in crucial programs that help students graduate and attend college. In a school with low graduation and college attendance rates, CPS cut the important AVID college preparatory program and refused to fund Dyett's model Restorative Justice and *Education to Success* programs that doubled graduation



Dyett students protesting their school's phase-out at a CPS board meeting.

rates and raised college attendance by 41 percent. Due to CPS cuts, Dyett lost a counselor and assistant principal, a truancy prevention program that provided mentoring and a Saturday school, and an effective reading program. In 2011, Dyett had just one honors class, no AP classes, no art teacher—senior art was taught on-line.

Disenfranchisement Dyett’s students, parents, and community members have been stripped of their right to participate in decisions about their school. Like other African American and Latino schools closed by CPS, Dyett was subjected to a sham CPS hearing in which participants were restricted to two minutes to speak, decisions were made behind closed doors by an unelected school board, and paid protesters, recruited by pastors allied with the mayor, appeared to support Dyett closing. Throughout, CPS ignored the community-developed plan for school transformation. CPS dismissed it at Dyett’s phase-out hearing, and CPS CEO Brizard did not respond to it. Dyett supporters held a 4-day sit-in at Mayor Emanuel’s office, but he refused to meet with them about the plan and ordered police to remove chairs from senior citizens, forcing them to sit on the cement floor.

INVESTMENT BY THE DYETT COMMUNITY

In the face of CPS neglect, the Dyett school-community has worked tirelessly to enrich the students’ education and improve Dyett. They fought for a school library and building improvements, including finding external funders to renovate the athletic facilities. They have helped Dyett youth become leaders in Voices of Youth in Community Education (VOYCE), a youth organizing collaborative for education justice led by Chicago students of color. Community organizations and Dyett’s elected Local School Council developed an acclaimed Restorative Justice Program and *Education to Success* both hailed as models by CPS CEO Arne Duncan. A community collaboration created the Dyett-Washington Park Green Youth Farm that provides youth summer employment, after-school programs, and a community garden. In 2010, parents, teachers and the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization began developing the Bronzeville Global Village Achievers plan to transform Dyett and five feeder schools. CPS’s response to the community’s initiative was school abandonment and sabotage.

References available upon request.

Figure 1 Chicago Public School Actions and Community Investments Affecting Dyett High School

year	Destabilization	Disinvestment	Dyett Community Investment
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Einstein Elementary closed due to public housing teardown; students reassigned to Donoghue Public School Transition Center closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPS converts Dyett from middle to high school; no honors or AP classes 1999-2005 leaking roof, dysfunctional heating, no air conditioning 1999-2011 inadequate athletic equipment 	
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrell Elementary closed, converted to charter 		
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coleman Elementary closed Telsa Alternative School closed, becomes magnet 		
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donoghue Elementary closed; students reassigned to Fuller Elementary Doolittle West Elementary closed, becomes selective enrollment 		
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Englewood HS closed, violence spikes at Dyett DuSable HS closed, becomes 3 small selective enrollment schools Farren Elementary consolidated Lindblom HS closed, becomes magnet Dyett principal change 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school-community led campaign for capital improvements
2006			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSC initiated IYMOD and LOVE student empowerment programs
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Johns Elementary closed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyett students become youth leaders in VOYCE LSC initiated <i>Life After Dyett</i> program—career and college prep class
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harper HS, CPS turnaround Princeton Elementary closed South Chicago Community Elementary closed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model Restorative Justice Program: Dyett Youth Justice Interns train schools nationally; <i>Education to Success</i> program
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abbot Elementary closed/consolidated McCorkle Elementary closed Dyett principal change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOVE girls mentoring program and teacher cut drama club cut <i>Life After Dyett</i> program cut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyett-Washington Park Green Youth Farm, with Chicago Botanical Garden & Chicago Park District
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillips HS AUSL turnaround 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AVID, college prep program cut IYMOD male empowerment program cut CPS cut Dyett funding for Restorative Justice and <i>Education to Success</i> programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronzeville Global Village Achievers started
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodson South Elementary closed/CPS turnaround 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assistant principal, counselor, and art teacher cut Dyett had only one honors class, AP teacher cut <i>Read 180 Program</i> and truancy program cut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronzeville Global Village Achievers developed ESPN <i>Rise Up</i> & Chicago Bulls sponsor athletic facilities renovation
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuller Elementary becomes AUSL turnaround Dyett principal change (interim appointed) 		