

Minutes of Special Board Meeting for the Purpose of Conducting a Public Hearing on Building Closures for the Purpose of District Consolidation

The Board of Education Harlem Consolidated School District # 122

A Special Board Meeting for the Purpose of Conducting a Public Hearing on Building Closures for the Purpose of District Consolidation of the Board of Education of Harlem Consolidated School District was held Monday, December 8, 2025, beginning at 5:00 PM in the Harlem High School, Auditorium, One Huskie Circle, Machesney Park, IL 61115

1. Call to Order of Public Hearing at 5:00 p.m. by Michael Sterling
2. Roll Call- Michael Sterling, Kurt Thompson, Aaron McKnight, Diane McKinney, Rebecca Carlson, Diana Johnson, Evelyn Meeks
Other Attendees: Pam Cook- Recording Secretary, Dr. Terrell Yarbrough-Superintendent, Dr. Shelley Wagner-Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. Michelle Erb-Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Jason Blume-Assistant Superintendent for Communications & Community Relations, Josh Aurand-Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations
3. Pledge of Allegiance led by Dr. Terrell Yarbrough, Superintendent
4. Statement from Board President- Mike Sterling introduced the hearing and Section 10-22.13 of the Illinois School Code for this meeting. Guidelines for public comments were outlined: each speaker will have three minutes to share their comment, Spanish interpretation will have an extended time limit of six minutes, comments should be directed to the board as a whole not individually, shouting and personal attacks will not be tolerated. Mike then introduced Dr. Yarbrough for a statement from administration.
5. Statement from Administration -Dr. Yarbrough explained the rationale behind the proposed changes, highlighting declining enrollment and the need to balance building capacities, noting several buildings are below 60% utilization. He also clarified that the district is not “broke” but faces an operational deficit.
Dr. Jason Blume provided a visual representation of enrollment trends and capacity limits, showing the district’s decline in enrollment.
Josh Aurand clarified that the district isn’t broke, with a fund balance over \$34 million in FY25, and outlines the different funds (education, tort, operations and maintenance, transportation, capital projects and life safety), and their expenditures.
Dr. Michelle Erb discussed the rising costs of early childhood staffing and the flat funding from 2019-2025. She noted that grant limitations and the district’s additional costs for special education, social workers, ESL teachers, materials and transportation. Dr. Erb continues to explain the district’s efforts to secure additional funding and the impact of the Early Childhood Preschool for All grant which does not allow to charge families for the required supplies.
6. Input and Comments from the Community on the Consolidation Proposal
Comment were heard from 17 members of the public
Ms. Jury expressed concerns of the consolidation plan and financial management

Ms. Smith expressed concerns of the grade bands, EC, teachers and transportation
Ms. Ghinazzi-Ritter expressed concerned with the proposed changes, scenario 7
Mr. Doherty rejects scenario 7 and advocating for scenario 2
Ms. Schulz expressed concerned with closing schools and cutting the EC program
Ms. Rhyner noted the needed for space and resources for specialized programs
Mr. Sloggett questioned the rationale behind the proposed changes
Ms. Delaluz concerned of the emotional impact with proposed changes on students/families
Ms. Hartmann expressed concern of the impact of the proposed changes to students' needs
Ms. Carstens expressed concerns of the cuts to the EC program
Ms. Schutt raised concerned for specialized programs and the resources to support students
Ms. Chadwick expressed concerns of the transitions of students in specialized program
Ms. Bragg expressed concerns over the district budget
Ms. Read expressed concern on appropriate space and resources for specialized staff/programs
Mr. Hoffman noted the need for evaluating financials and academic issues
Mr. Youngblood questioned the rationale behind scenario 7; addressing financial challenges
Ms. Littlefield criticized the district's financial management
Ms. Bruner expressed concerns on transitions, programs, start and end times of schools

Additional public comments were made in concern with
Average class sizes
Advance Learners Program
Closing neighborhood schools
Negative impact on special need students
Challenges the proposal will have on working parents

Board President Mike Sterling commented that the importance of the community input in the decision-making process. The Board is taking the concerns seriously and will consider all the feedback. Mike Sterling continued to emphasize the Boards commitment to make informed decisions.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:03PM
1st McKnight 2nd Thompson
All Aye: Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted,
Pam Cook

ATTEST:

President

Date

Secretary