

**November 3, 2023 Special Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Wednesday, November 1st and Monday, November 6th
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

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ATTACHMENTS

Thank you to the Board of Education for taking the time to review concerns regarding the 2023 HSAT exam. As you know, the vendor CPS hired to administer the 2023 HSAT for District 299 experienced technical difficulties that prohibited a minority of students from taking the exam on the originally scheduled date of 10/11/2023. As you might imagine, having 8th grade students take a test that impacts their high school education is, by nature, extremely stressful. This year's change in format and the decision to allow less time for test completion only served to add to this stress. When you add to the scenario a complete failure of a testing platform, the result is a group of students was unequivocally disenfranchised. Our daughter is in this group and the "solution" provided and responses we have received are at best unacceptable.

We soon learned that most CPS students were able to complete the exam, and others were able to complete ½ of the exam. Understandably, we had questions about how and when CPS would rectify the situation. Prolonging the test indefinitely made an already nerve-racking experience more trying, and our CPS student had to wait a week to learn when CPS would administer an exam that she had prepared to take on 10/11. The fact that CPS allowed the majority of students a second opportunity to take the exam on 10/25, while **not** allowing a minority of students negatively impacted, the same opportunity is simply unfair and discriminatory. Included below is the email correspondence between myself and Paul Leonard, Executive Director of Student Assessment & MTSS. These emails clearly illustrate our frustrations with CPS' decision to offer one group of students two opportunities to take the high school entrance exam while prohibiting another group the same testing experience. CPS's decision to allow some student's two chances to take this test provided a distinct advantage, not only to become more familiar with the testing format, but to consider how they felt about their performance on the first exam and decide whether they would like a second opportunity to improve their score. This entire debacle could have been avoided had CPS been prepared with an appropriate back up plan. That stated, our expectation is that all students be treated equitably, and that CPS creates a solution that gives all students the same opportunity.

From: Leonard, Peter
Sent: Monday, October 16, 2023 2:29 PM
To: Kip McCabe
Subject: CPS HS Admissions Test Inquiry

Good afternoon,

I hope you're having a great day. I received your inquiry regarding the CPS HS Admissions Test -- thank you for reaching out to share you and your child's questions, concerns, and

experience with the CPS HS Admissions Test administration on 10/11/23. Our team apologizes for the challenging testing experience Wednesday. Wednesday's issue is not in line with the level of service we expect. Unfortunately, what our students experienced was caused by a vendor platform issue. We understand your frustration and are fully committed to supporting students, families, and school teams through the testing process. We will follow up with school leaders and families with the next steps in our responsive action plan.

Thank you for your patience,
Peter

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Peter Leonard
ED of Student Assessment & MTSS
Chicago Public Schools

Kip McCabe

To: Leonard, Peter; anya mccabe

Mon 10/16/2023 4:29 PM

Thank you for getting back to me Peter. Unfortunately, at present, there appears to be absolutely *zero* support for my student who still has this exam hanging over her head indefinitely. She has been dreading taking this exam since last year and now is being forced to wait because those trusted with administering this test were not prepared to do so.

My student did not have a choice but to arrive last Wednesday prepared to take this test, which she was. Now, she is being forced to maintain that knowledge indefinitely and prepare all over again whenever CPS and "un-named vendor" decide to actually *offer* the test. It was bad enough that for some unknown reason CPS decided to make this, already extremely stressful test, more stressful by shortening the time making it nearly impossible to complete. Last year students had TWO AND A HALF HOURS to finish the exam if I'm not mistaken? It defies logic that in one year the test would change that drastically making it so much more difficult than it was for students the year before. I just couldn't be more disappointed with the entire process.

The emotional toll this puts on a child of this age is real and shameful. There is no excuse for such a complete failure. Further, it has come to our attention that some of my student's peers were able to take ½ the test last Wednesday. Will those students have to take the test over again in its entirety? If not, my student also deserves the opportunity to take it piece meal as well. Otherwise, it cannot be considered standardized.

Finally, it does really seem like this whole debacle could have been avoided if CPS had prepared for this scenario. How about have the test on paper as a back-up plan? At least the students would have had the opportunity to take it at the scheduled time and date as opposed to having the rug pulled out from beneath them on the day of exam.

Kip McCabe

On Fri, Oct 27, 2023 at 4:21 PM Kip McCabe wrote:

Hello Peter,

I spoke with Iliana Haydee R zodkiewicz, the principal of my daughter [REDACTED]'s school, Disney II High School, earlier today.

I had emailed her the following inquiry the day before:

I'm writing to inquire about whether or not the students who were only given *one* opportunity to take the high school entrance exam will be given a second opportunity to do so like many other CPS students were?

I was pretty upset at the answer I received. I'm curious, how does CPS justify allowing some students the opportunity to take the high school entrance exam two times, and others are only afforded one attempt? Clearly, those students who were afforded the opportunity to take the test two times had a distinct advantage over those only given the one opportunity.

Clearly, those students able to have the "pre-test" were given an advantage being able to go through the experience before being allowed to give it another try. I believe CPS needs to give *EVERY* student the same opportunity, right? Asking kids to answer 38 math questions in 30 minutes is not only unreasonable, but giving *some* the chance to feel what attempting to do so *felt* like before offering it again is simply not equitable. I'm assuming I'm not the only parent who's livid about CPS' inability to offer fair and standardized testing for ALL of its students, not just some. Likewise, I assume I'm not the only parent considering legal counsel on a class action lawsuit in order to have my student get the same opportunity that CPS offered many, but not all of its students.

I would very much appreciate an explanation as to why this would be the case. I'm concerned that it likely comes down to money, which is shameful and wrong.

Kip McCabe

From: Leonard, Peter

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 8:37 AM

To: Kip McCabe

Subject: Re: CPS HS Admissions Test Inquiry

Good morning, thank you for your follow up question. Again we apologize for the stress and frustration this has caused you, your child, and your family.

As you know, given the challenges that students faced on the October 11 test day, CPS gave all 8th-graders the chance to retest. The retest was a different, comparable test form with different test questions than the one used on October 11th. The practice of using different forms across different testing dates that measure the same knowledge and skills is a standard test administration practice. This is how we've implemented the HSAT in previous years, as well.

We also know that there were variable test experiences across the district on 10/11, and we provided parents/families the option to opt out of retesting and keep the student's 10/11 score by completing a form. In that instance, the student's 10/11 score would be used for GoCPS, and they would not retest.

Familiarity with the testing experience from prior exposure does not present issues of fairness. The parallel test form used in the retest included different questions than those included on the 10/11 test. Additionally, all students engage with a Getting Started Tutorial that allows them to see sample questions and test directions prior to taking the exam. This provides the opportunity for each student to be familiar with the tasks, functions, and types of questions before answering operational items.

We wish you and your family all the best through this process and again apologize for any challenges this has caused.

Thank you,
Peter

On Tue, Oct 31, 2023 at 2:51 PM Kip McCabe wrote:
Mr. Leonard,

Please explain to me how one student getting the opportunity to take the test in its entirety and then getting an opportunity to either keep that score or take it again, is equitable to another student only getting one chance with no option of dropping that score and taking it again?

You wrote:

Familiarity with the testing experience from prior exposure does not present issues of fairness.

How could familiarity with the test experience AND the opportunity for a do over be fair if others weren't given the same opportunity? *It's literally the definition of unfair.* How many students took the test on 10/11 and then decided to take it again because they didn't feel good

about their initial performance? CPS gave them that opportunity. For some illogical reason, however, CPS won't provide the same to others. Please explain to me the fairness in that.

You brought up the tutorial at the beginning. The tutorial is not representative of the experience of taking the entire test and then being given the option of dropping the results of the first test and getting a veritable mulligan.

You also wrote:

The practice of using different forms across different testing dates that measure the same knowledge and skills is a standard test administration practice. This is how we've implemented the HSAT in previous years, as well.

You bring up the practice of using different forms across different testing dates to measure the same knowledge and skill as being standard test administration practice and this is how CPS has implemented the HSAT in previous years. Please provide me with an example of a year in which CPS offered some students the chance to take the HSAT twice, while preventing other students the same chance? I don't believe you can. This year's deviation from a standardized experience for ALL CPS students is unprecedented and indefensible. The situation CPS created this year has blatantly disenfranchised a group of students. This is patently unfair, and there are a lot of other parents of CPS students who feel similarly.

Additionally, the horrible decision CPS made to drastically reduce the time students had to complete the 2023 HSAT versus previous years, only served to highlight the inequity created by offering retakes to select students. Getting two chances to experience this test when time played a crucial role more so than previous years also provides an advantage to those who were fortunate enough to take advantage of a second test. This is entirely due to CPS' failure to administer the test properly on 10/11. I know many families whose students jumped at the chance to take it again for obvious reasons. Reasons you don't seem willing to acknowledge or even consider.

My expectation that you and others tasked with the responsibility for making decisions that impact a child's educational development and academic opportunities, can revisit this issue objectively and arrive at a fairer and reasonable conclusion to this year's test debacle. This terrible mess could have been avoided if CPS was better prepared for this type of failure.

I look forward to your reply.

Good morning,

I acknowledge that not everyone will be satisfied with all aspects of the path forward. A disruption like the one experienced on 10/11 forces many complex decisions -- and I respect the differences in opinion others may have. The team developed an action plan that prioritized access and fairness, and we believe we are implementing the best path forward.

I wish you and your family all the best through this process. Thanks for your partnership and candor.

Peter