

Why Parents Across America opposes mass school closings

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Mass school closings occur when school districts decide to close large numbers of public schools in a community within a single year, citing a variety of reasons such as “underutilization” or academic failure. These closures go far beyond periodic school closures related to drops in the school-age population or building deterioration. Rather, these mass closures result from policies pushed by the corporate education reform movement and its privatization agenda, which has encouraged the recent spate of large-scale urban school closings.

Studies on mass school closings have been clear*: **in city after city, mass closings have done far more harm than good. They do not lead to improved academic performance and they don’t fix budget deficits.** Schools that receive students rarely receive adequate time or resources to responsibly address school mergers.

As the vast majority of closed schools have high-minority enrollments, **communities of color are disproportionately affected.** In early 2013, parents from 18 cities filed discrimination complaints with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, claiming that recent and proposed school closings are yielding a disparate racial impact. The complaints cite issues of school safety, transportation, and equitable access and service for high need and at-risk student populations.

In city after city, communities have also complained about processes that have been fast-tracked, or that circumvent established policies around school closings. All of this has resulted in **decisions made with little meaningful parent or public input.**

Mass school closings in many cities have been accompanied by the **simultaneous expansion of charter schools and non-public options** – schools heavily promoted by corporate reformers, but whose track records are **often worse than those of comparable public schools.**

The research is clear*.

Overall, school closings:

- don't lead to better academic outcomes for students, and
- don't save significant amounts of money.

School closings may also:

- cause students to feel stigmatized,
- increase the likelihood that affected students will drop out,
- destabilize communities leading to increased school and neighborhood violence,
- disrupt peer and adult relationships,
- leave students with few social and emotional supports to help them adjust to the challenges of their new school,
- lower achievement levels for students in the receiving schools, and
- result in significant neighborhood job loss.

*Please see our background paper at

Parents Across America is a non-partisan, non-profit grassroots organization that connects parents and activists from across the U. S. to share ideas and work together to improve our nation's public schools.