

**January 17, 2024, Agenda Review Committee Meeting Written Comments  
Received between Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup> Submitted via  
Written Comments Form**

1 My name is Melissa, and I am the Dean of Student and Family Engagement and a school social worker at Great Lakes Academy. I relocated from Minnesota to South Chicago three years ago, specifically to work at GLA. I was looking for a neighborhood school that prioritizes the holistic development of students and takes a proactive approach toward their welfare. We are doing that at GLA.

All students at GLA receive Tier 1 MTSS Support in academics, behavior, social and emotional (SEL) skills, and attendance. They participate in daily SEL advisory lessons in their homerooms. GLA follows the evidence-based model of Leader in Me®, which empowers students with leadership and life skills, enabling them to become self-reliant, take initiative, manage their emotions, and resolve conflicts. Teachers and support staff analyze behavior and attendance data and select students to implement Tier 2 interventions, with the data being tracked on 8-week cycles.

Structurally, we saw the need to increase counseling (Tier 2 and 3) support through social work. Last year, we hired an additional full-time social worker, and this year, we added a part- supports 20% of the student body, 110 students. All interventions and supports are

for the safety of others, we were not pleased with being an outlier and saw it as a cause to reevaluate staffing and programming related to student culture.

We have made changes we have been implementing since last year and are now seeing -being. As a result of our changes, we are on track to see a 50% decrease in the number of out-of-school suspensions this school year compared to last year, which should put us well within the 75th percentile baseline that was set for this renewal cohort. More importantly, this is directly tied to a decrease in the number of incidents that have led to such disciplinary responses.

We have heard lots of feedback from families of transfer students who note the difference in how safe their child feels at our school and how that is positively impacting their school experience. Our teaching approach to conflict resolution is a major part of it. Parents appreciate how we teach students to interact with each other and handle challenging situations. They also appreciate how we listen to students when they report they are having an issue and immediately take action to help them resolve the situation with other parties. We communicate with parents liberally and involve them in the process.

Ultimately, those feelings of safety from family and students are what matter the most.

