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CPS OIG Uncovers Falsified Attendance and Improper Awarding of Credits at School for Jail Detainees

Chicago — A Significant Activity Report released today by the Office of Inspector General for the Chicago Board of Education details the OIG’s findings in an investigation of the CPS high school serving detainees in the Cook County Jail. The OIG found that the school engaged in a practice of reporting falsely inflated enrollment and attendance data and awarding credits that were not earned. The OIG also discovered other improper practices at the school.

Some key takeaways from this investigation are as follows:

- From the 2012–13 school year through the 2015–16 school year, 342 students were kept on the rolls improperly after their release from jail a total of 352 times. On average, those students were listed falsely as being enrolled at the school for 42 days following their release from jail. In 54 instances those students were kept on the rolls for more than 100 days after their release.
- The school also falsified attendance. During the 2015–16 school year alone, 45 students were reported falsely as being present for the full school day a total of 351 times after they were already released from the jail. The attendance of students still in the jail was inflated as well.
- The school frequently awarded students credits when the students had not received enough classroom instruction to qualify for them. One teacher told the OIG the school was a “credit mill.”
- One student was shot to death a week following his release from jail, and on the day he was killed the school was still reporting him on the rolls and present for classes even though the school knew he had been released. After he died, he was given a full course credit (for a semester’s worth of a class) even though the principal had learned of his death and knew that he only had attended classes for a brief period of time prior to his release. The principal

then pressured two of the student's teachers to issue him more credits, but the teachers refused because the student had not received enough classroom instruction. Indeed, the student's records show that he did not receive enough classroom instruction to receive a credit for any course, and according to reports from his teachers his instruction time was even less than what was eventually reported officially. Notably, although he had attended three classes for a short period of time, he never attended the course for which he was given credit.

- The school also employed a questionable blended-class structure whereby teachers were expected to teach multiple courses simultaneously to classrooms comprised of a collection of students enrolled in different courses. For example, students enrolled in chemistry had to share the teacher's time with students enrolled in biology and earth science. Particularly troubling was that teachers reported they often were unaware which subject each individual student was supposed to be learning.

Through these practices, the OIG found that the school inflated its attendance rate and credit-attainment rate. The OIG recommended that CPS terminate the principal's employment and that the school implement new policies to help prevent such improper practices in the future.

A copy of the Significant Activity Report is attached and can be found online at the OIG's website: cpsoig.org/reports.html.

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