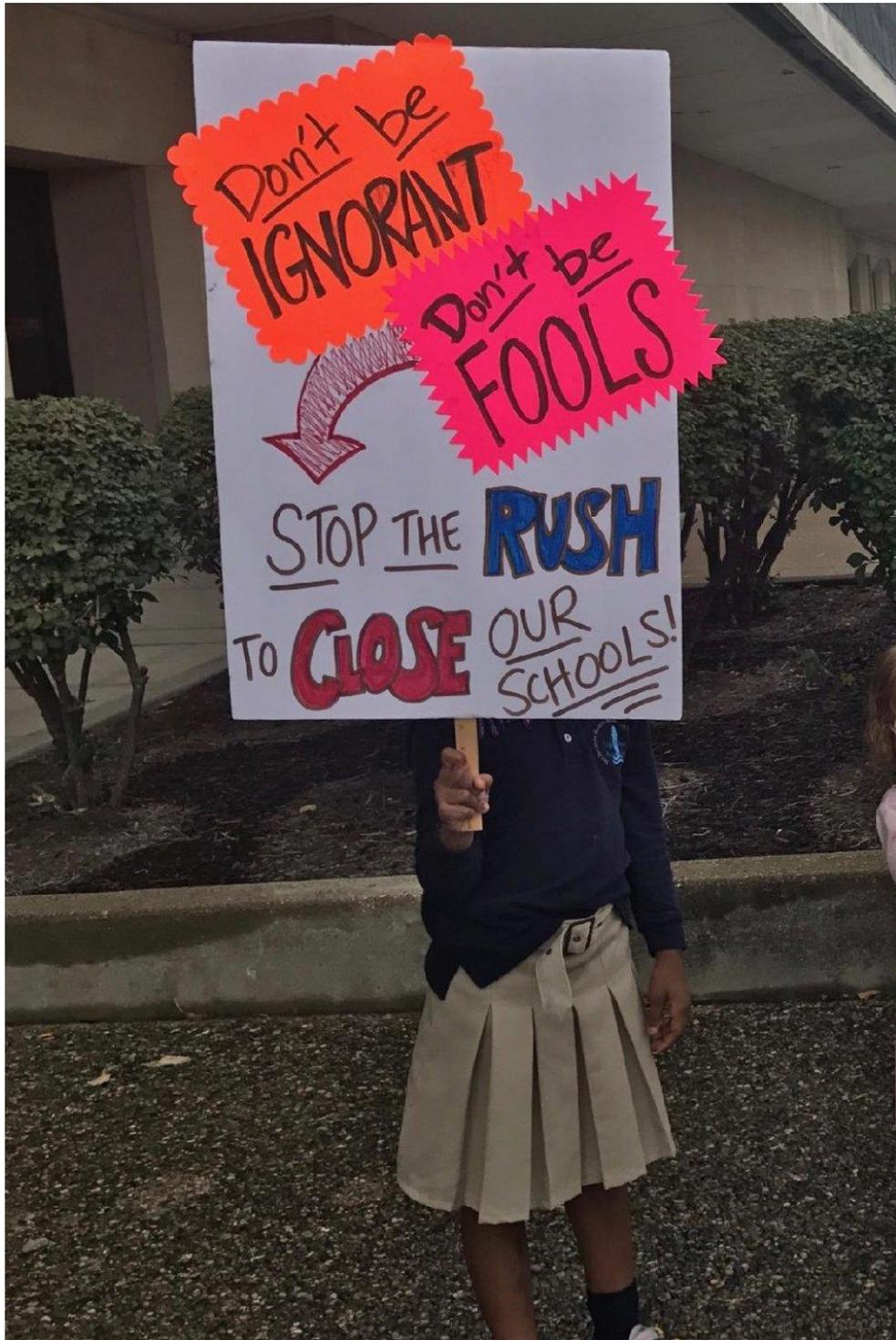


# IPS Board of School Commissioners Approves Plan to Close and Consolidate High Schools

By [Shawnta S. Barnes](#) - September 20, 2017





Protest organized by IPS Community Coalition before board meeting

The Indianapolis Public Schools Board of School Commissioners held a special meeting on Monday, September 18 at 6 p.m. at the John Morton-Finney Center for Educational Services to vote on the high school closure and consolidation plan. Although there was a small protest before the meeting, the plan presented by IPS district administration passed. Two commissioners, Elizabeth Gore and Venita

Moore, voted against the plan; all other commissioners Diane Arnold, Kelly Bentley, Dorene Hoops, Michael O'Connor and Mary Ann Sullivan voted in favor of the plan.

The approved plan includes:

- Consolidating students into four high schools: Arsenal Tech, Crispus Attucks, George Washington and Shortridge and making them choice schools where students would select their high school
- Closing Broad Ripple High School and John Marshall, which was previously a high school but is operating as a middle school for this year, and offering them for sale or lease
- Converting Arlington High School to a middle school, offering evening high school and relocating staff from Forest Manor and some staff from Facilities Maintenance to the building.
- Converting Northwest High School to a middle school and relocating the Newcomer program and some staff from Facilities Maintenance to the building
- Acknowledging Manual High School and Howe High, currently operated by state turnaround partner Charter USA, will not be operated as high schools when they return to the district

Before voting, Commissioner Kelly Bentley, Broad Ripple Alum and former Broad Ripple parent, gave a long statement detailing fond memories which included her attendance at Broad Ripple's Homecoming this year. Then she shared her revelation, "What I realized is that my memories and the memories of others are about the people of Broad Ripple, classmates and teachers; it's not about the actual building."

Audible comments of disagreement could be heard in the packed board room during Bentley comments and during other comments by commissioners who voted in support of the plan.

Commissioner Moore, who voted against the plan, was interrupted by cheers from the audience when she offered an explanation for her decision.

*After careful review and discussion with my fellow commissioners, I will have to vote no. I am concerned that it leaves our four remaining high schools all*

*within four miles of downtown when our district is 75 square miles. I do agree we can't economically support nine high schools and I am committed to finding ways to provide more resources and opportunities at our high schools and I truly support the initiatives to begin reinventing IPS.*

Although Commissioner Arnold voted for the plan, she was concerned about the district's previous track record after a school closing.

*I often refer to the fact that when George Washington was closed several years ago, the dropout rate rose to 80% in our community. Students were sent a letter in the mail that told them to be out on a bus stop at 6 o'clock to travel to Northwest. There was no support, follow up or transition plan to help students and families adjust to this major change in their educational journey. This was unacceptable and must not happen again.*

Although some people felt the community meetings leading up to the vote was just for show, what many people anticipated, the IPS Board of School Commissioners voting to approve the plan has become reality. Now, we wait for more details about the transition plan.