

# The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve

Research-based Proposals To Strengthen  
Elementary And Secondary Education  
In The Chicago Public Schools





WALTER PAYTON COLLEGE PREP HIGH SCHOOL





**The Chicago Teachers Union**

222 Merchandise Mart Plaza  
Suite 400

Chicago, Illinois 60654

Telephone: 312-329-9100

Fax: 312-329-6200

[leadership@ctulocal1.com](mailto:leadership@ctulocal1.com)

[www.ctunet.com](http://www.ctunet.com)

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Elementary And Secondary Education  
In The Chicago Public Schools

*Issued by the Chicago Teachers Union*

*Primary research support from  
Carol R. Caref, Ph.D., Coordinator, CTU Quest Center  
Pavlyn C. Jankov, Researcher, CTU Quest Center*

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*Karen GJ Lewis, President  
Jesse J. Sharkey, Vice President  
Michael E. Brunson, Recording Secretary  
Kristine A. Mayle, Financial Secretary*





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# Executive Summary

The Chicago Teachers Union argues for proven educational reforms to dramatically improve education of more than 400,000 students in a district of 675 schools. These reforms are desperately needed and can head Chicago towards the world-class educational system its students deserve.

The following are essential:

- 1. Recognize That Class Size Matters.** Drastically reduce class size. We currently have one of the largest class sizes in the state. This greatly inhibits the ability of our students to learn and thrive.
- 2. Educate The Whole Child.** Invest to ensure that all schools have recess and physical education equipment, healthy food offerings, and classes in art, theater, dance, and music in every school. Offer world languages and a variety of subject choices. Provide every school with a library and assign the commensurate number of librarians to staff them.
- 3. Create More Robust Wrap-around Services.** The Chicago Public Schools system (CPS) is far behind recommended staffing levels suggested by national professional associations. The number of school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists must increase dramatically to serve Chicago's population of low-income students. Additionally, students who cannot afford transportation costs need free fares.
- 4. Address Inequities In Our System.** Students and their families recognize the apartheid-like system managed by CPS. It denies resources to the neediest schools, uses discipline policies with a disproportionate harm on students of color, and enacts policies that increase the concentrations of students in high poverty and racially segregated schools.
- 5. Help Students Get Off To A Good Start.** We need to provide age-appropriate (not test-driven) education in the early grades. All students should have access to pre-kindergarten and to full day kindergarten.
- 6. Respect And Develop The Professionals.** Teachers need salaries comparable to others with their education and experience. They need time to adequately plan their lessons and collaborate with colleagues, as well as the autonomy and shared decision-making to encourage professional judgment. CPS needs to hire more teaching assistants so that no students fall through the cracks.
- 7. Teach All Students.** We need stronger commitments to address the disparities that exist due to our lack of robust programs for emergent bilingual students and services for students faced with a variety of special needs.
- 8. Provide Quality School Facilities.** No more leaky roofs, asbestos-lined bathrooms, or windows that refuse to shut. Students need to be taught in facilities that are well-maintained and show respect for those who work and go to school there.
- 9. Partner With Parents.** Parents are an integral part of a child's education. They need to be encouraged and helped in that role.
- 10. Fully Fund Education.** A country and city that can afford to take care of its affluent citizens can afford to take care of those on the other end of the income scale. There is no excuse for denying students the essential services they deserve.

# Introduction

Every student in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) deserves to have the same quality education as the children of the wealthy. This can happen, but only if decision-makers commit to providing research-based education that is fully-funded and staffed in an equitable fashion throughout the city. CPS students have suffered from years of experimentation: schools have been closed, turned around, consolidated, broken into small schools and put back together again. Curricula have been unified, redesigned, and reformed. CPS has continuously modified procedures for attendance, lesson planning, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), testing, and grading, causing hours of extra work for teachers with no discernible benefit to students. Economically disadvantaged African American and Latino students have suffered disproportionately from this experimentation. Our children deserve better!

Our students deserve smaller class sizes, a robust, well-rounded curriculum, and in-school services that address their social, emotional, intellectual and health needs. All students deserve culturally-sensitive, non-biased, and equitable education, especially students with IEPs, emergent bilingual students, and early childhood students. They deserve professional teachers who are treated as such, fully resourced school buildings, and a school system that partners with parents.

The schools our students deserve cost money, but the money to fully fund these schools is there. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) proceeds can be channeled into CPS schools. The wealthy residents of Illinois can pay their fair share through the implementation of progressive taxation policies and the ending of corporate subsidies and loopholes. When it comes to fairness in education funding, only two other states rank lower than Illinois!

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the many individuals who shared their expertise, wisdom, and insights towards the development of The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve. These contributors include James Cavallero, special education teacher; Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, CTU Quest Center coordinator; Amy Clark, elementary school teacher; Norine Gutekanst, CTU organizing director and elementary school teacher; Sarah Hains, Chicago Teachers Union researcher; Laurene Heybach, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; Susan Hickey, school social worker; Kevin Kumashiro, University of Illinois at Chicago professor and National Association for Multicultural Education president-elect; Laura Meile, elementary school teacher; Mary Michaels, psychologist; Erica Miensers, University of Illinois at Chicago Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy; Helen Ramirez-O'Dell, retired school nurse; Jill Sontag, elementary school teacher; Sarah Spector, retired librarian; Madeline Talbot, Action NOW Head Organizer; Julie Woestehoff, PURE, executive director.





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# Chicago's Students Deserve Smaller Class Sizes

States and schools that focus on class-size reduction do so because it works. This common-sense notion was confirmed in 1999 when results of Tennessee's Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) found that smaller class sizes (of 13-17) in grades K-3 had positive effects for students in those classes even when students moved back to regular sized classes after third grade. At each grade level, across all school locations (rural, urban, inner city, suburban), and for all subjects (reading, mathematics, science, social science, language, study skills), students in small classes exceeded their peers who started their schooling in regular classes (of 22-25) on every achievement measure.<sup>1</sup>

The study found that students assigned to small classes in early grades graduated on schedule at a higher rate (76%) than students from regular-sized classes (64%). The same students also completed school with an honors diploma more often (45%, compared to 29% for regular) and dropped out of school less often (15% compared to 24% for regular). Class size reductions were most beneficial for low-income students and students of color.<sup>2</sup> Follow-up studies have shown that smaller class sizes also improve students' non-cognitive skills such as engagement and attentiveness and increase the likelihood of attending and graduating college.<sup>3</sup>

In the study just described, the smaller classes were 13-17 instead of 22-25, but other studies have shown benefits from even less dramatic class size reductions.<sup>4</sup> Because research concretely demonstrates the positive differences smaller class sizes make, 32 states currently have class size reduction programs or limit class size by law. Illinois is not one of those states. By 2008, elementary class sizes nationally had steadily decreased to an average size of 20.3.<sup>5</sup> In Florida, for example, a 2002 referendum led to a class size cap of 18 for lower grades, 22 for middle grades, and 25 for high school.<sup>6</sup>

Despite compelling research that reducing current class sizes would benefit CPS students, Chicago class size guidelines are the same today as the maximums set in 1990: 28 in lower grades, 31 in middle grades, and 28 in high school. In fact, actual class sizes have steadily risen. In 2011, Chicago's average kindergarten class size was 24.6.<sup>7</sup> However, averages don't tell the whole story. In kindergartens across Chicago, students spend several months in classes with as many as 40 students, while CPS figures out how to reduce the

class to 28. Chicago's kindergarten class size is larger than 95% of the school districts in Illinois. At the early childhood level, Chicago has the 12<sup>th</sup> highest average class size in Illinois.<sup>8</sup>

Outside of Chicago and within private schools, class size is monitored and small classes are prioritized. For example, in the Matteson School District southwest of Chicago, the average class sizes per grade for elementary and high school are between 16 and 23, with most classes below 20.

*Despite compelling research that reducing current class sizes would benefit CPS students, Chicago class size guidelines are the same today as the maximums set in 1990: 28 in lower grades, 31 in middle grades and 28 in high school.*

*Illinois is not one of the 32 states that currently have class size reduction programs or limit class size by law.*





*Chicago's kindergarten class size (often 40) is larger than 95% of the school districts in Illinois.*

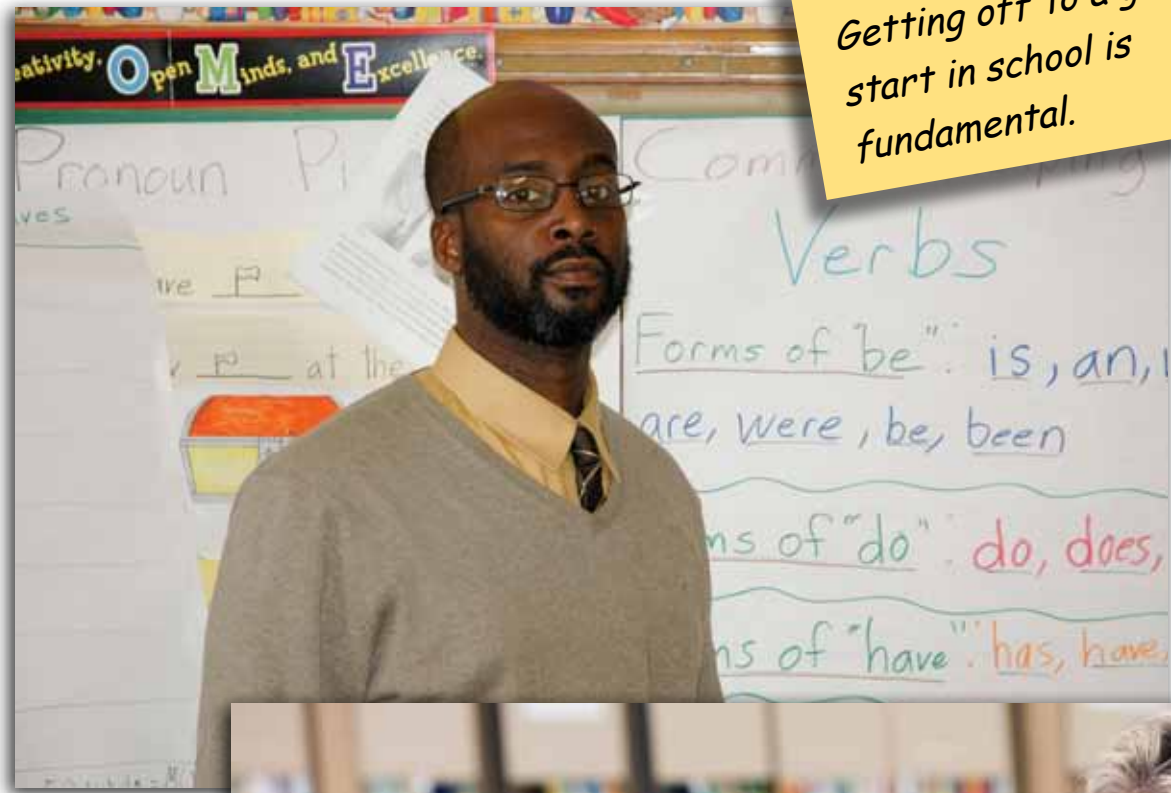
Compared to CPS, 15% more students meet or exceed Illinois standards in Matteson.<sup>9</sup> At Chicago's well-regarded Francis Parker School, class sizes reflect the national private school average of 18 students,<sup>10</sup> but high school classes are often smaller.<sup>11</sup> If smaller classes are good for private and suburban students, why are they not a priority for our children?

*The \$170 million cost for CPS to reduce K-3 class sizes is about half of what CPS budgeted in 2011-2012 to support creating more charter and "turnaround" schools.*

Lower class sizes are beneficial to students in every grade, but they are particularly important in the lower grades. Getting off to a good start in school is fundamental. By making 28 the suggested class size for grades K-3, and allowing classes even larger than that, CPS does a tremendous disservice to young students in their crucial, early years of school. CPS creates the conditions that under-educate young people. It would cost CPS approximately \$170 million to lower class sizes in kindergarten through third grade from 28 to 20.<sup>12</sup> That is about half the amount CPS budgeted this year for the Office of New Schools, which supports the creation of more charter and

“turnaround” schools. Instead of experimenting with new schools, CPS needs to use widely accepted, research-based remedies to create positive changes to struggling schools, such as reducing the size of classes in the lower grades.

*Small class sizes are particularly important in the lower grades. Getting off to a good start in school is fundamental.*







# Chicago's Students Deserve A Well-Rounded Curriculum

At the private and selective-enrollment University of Chicago Laboratory School, elementary students have classes in art, music, physical education and world languages several times a week, as well as language arts, social studies, mathematics and science daily. At private and selective-enrollment Francis Parker School, students from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade participate in a program called "Morning Ex" (for "Exercise") three times a week. This program provides students the opportunity to plan and carry out a variety of activities, including teach-ins, sharing of class projects, dramatic performances, outside speakers, and other enriching activities.<sup>13</sup>

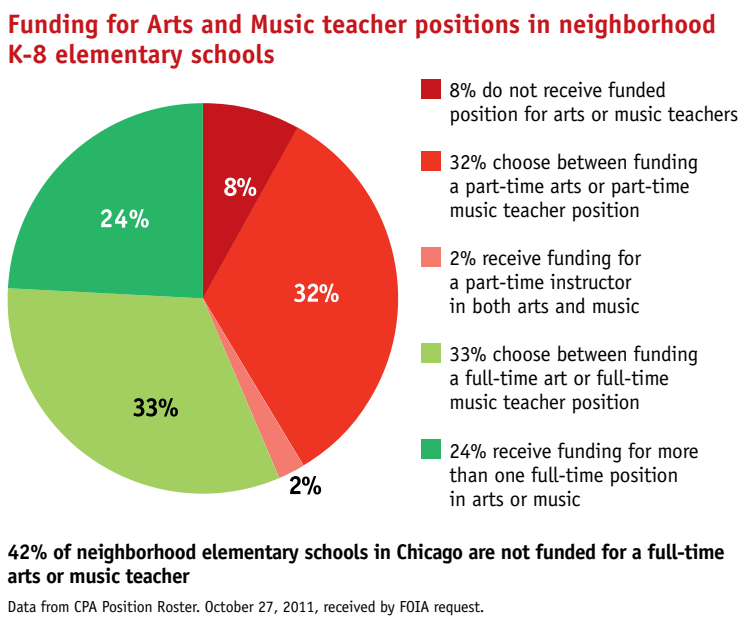
In CPS, on the other hand, many elementary students have limited access to physical education, arts education (music, drama, art, dance, choir, band, etc.), library/media instruction, science laboratories, or computer science. Few CPS schools provide world language classes and 160 CPS elementary schools do not even have libraries.<sup>14</sup> Although access to libraries and books can mitigate the impact of poverty on achievement,<sup>15</sup> CPS denies this vital resource to some of its students who need it most.

*Arts education can be particularly beneficial for students at risk of not succeeding in school.*

## ARTS EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Education, in 2004, encouraged arts education, saying, "[It] can be particularly beneficial for students from economically disadvantaged circumstances and those who are at risk of not succeeding in school."<sup>16</sup> Yet, in 2011, only 25% of CPS neighborhood elementary schools provided instructor positions for both art and music; 40 schools had neither and most schools are forced to choose between the two.<sup>17</sup> Simply providing these subjects is not enough; many schools that do have these subjects often lack appropriate teaching materials for them. Likewise, many CPS schools with low standardized test scores emphasize the tested subjects of reading and mathematics to the exclusion of others, including social studies and science.

Nationally, little more than 25% of African American and Latino youth now have access to arts education, down from 50% in 1982.<sup>18</sup> Unsurprisingly, given the decrease in arts education, the creativity expressed by children has been in decline. Since 1990, children have become less able to produce unique and unusual ideas, are less humorous and less imaginative.<sup>19</sup> Educational psychologist Kyung Hee Kim, who has studied the issue extensively reasoned, "standardized testing forces emphasis on rote learning instead of critical, creative thinking, and diminishes students' natural curiosity and joy



for learning in its own right.”<sup>20</sup> In the past decade, research has demonstrated that arts-based education, in addition to fostering creative thinking, has a variety of positive effects on academic achievement and social development.<sup>21</sup>

A report of international studies on the impact of arts education revealed several benefits from arts programs.<sup>22</sup> Arts education was found to:

- Improve students’ aesthetic development and appreciation of the arts
- Enhance children’s self-awareness, self-confidence and acceptance of others
- Increase class attendance and significantly lower drop-out rates
- Promote enthusiasm, motivation and engagement in learning
- Improve student behaviors in terms of greater motivation to read, awakening of student interest and emotional growth
- Develop interpersonal skills such as teamwork, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity in people and ideas
- Enhance academic attitude and aspiration

The report also identified the specific relationship of arts programs to particular academic advancements:

- Integrating visual and performing arts with other subjects led to significant gains in language arts, math, reading, and social studies.
- Piano and singing instruction provided children better abstract reasoning skills than computer instruction.
- Music contributed to the enhancement of children’s perceptual, spatial, and spatial-temporal skills.
- Participation in a dance program increased fluency, originality and imagination.
- Integrating singing or rhyming into language arts led to increased language mechanics, language expression, total language, and reference skills.
- Drama provided children with increased facility in English as a second language and improved reading comprehension and verbal skills in English speakers.
- Band and orchestra activities increased scores in reading, language and mathematics.
- Keyboard and singing lessons led to improvements in abstract reasoning.
- Drawing, drama, and discussion promoted narrative writing skills.

## **RECESS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Research has shown that recess and free-play time are important. Recreation time improves children’s attention to tasks, social interaction skills, and subsequently, their achievement.<sup>23</sup> In the 2011-2012 school year, more than one-fifth of CPS elementary and middle schools did not have a playground.<sup>24</sup> Less than a one-third of principals reported having playground equipment appropriate for 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, and only 13% had facilities for middle school students.<sup>25</sup> All CPS elementary schools should be adequately staffed and sufficiently equipped to provide students an engaging and safe recess and playground environment so

they can socialize, be physically active, and have unstructured play time. CPS needs to have a capital plan in place so that recess is safe, engaging, and well-resourced, no matter which neighborhood school a child attends.

The CPS high school schedule includes Physical Education for only two years, rather than the state mandated four years. (CPS has annually and unconscionably requested and received state permission to waive the requirement.) In high schools (and some middle grades programs), the four-year Junior Reserve Officer Training Core may replace physical education classes. CPS physical education offerings are very limited. For comparison, at New Trier, a public high school in the wealthy suburb of Winnetka, students can choose from 28 different “Kinetic Wellness” classes, including Athletic Strength and Conditioning, The Fit Female, Lifeguard Training, Outdoor Education, and Dance Lab.<sup>26</sup> The only “Kinetic Wellness” class at most CPS high schools is physical education. Diverse physical education not only directly improves health outcomes for students, but can also benefit cognition and motivation, decrease absenteeism and ultimately improve academic achievement.<sup>27</sup>

*Physical activities increase student focus when they return to academic courses, compared to an otherwise largely sedentary curriculum.*

For students who struggle academically, socially, and/or emotionally, physical and arts education courses serve an important role by developing self-esteem, enabling different learning modes, motivating school attendance and graduation, and opening up career paths that would not be obvious otherwise. Physical and kinesthetic activities, especially for students with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities, increase student focus when they return to academic courses compared to a curriculum that is otherwise largely sedentary.

## **ADDITIONAL CURRICULAR NEEDS**

At the high school level, CPS students have been locked into an inflexible schedule since the 1997 “Redesign” was implemented. At high schools around the country, and in CPS before the “Redesign,” students are offered a variety of courses from which to choose. For example, New Trier seniors have their choice of 15 English electives, including Literature and Film, Great Books, Creative Writing, and Advanced Journalism,<sup>28</sup> whereas most CPS seniors can choose only Journalism or Drama.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, access to high-quality computer literacy instruction should be universal. For many students, these skills provide the key to various career choices. Computer classes in school are particularly important for Chicago students, because many students’ homes do not have computer or Internet access. Yet, adequate access to functioning, up-to-date computers is missing from many CPS schools. Also missing from most elementary schools is instruction in world languages. At the high school level, only two years are required. CPS is not preparing students for life in a multi-lingual, global society, and is depriving students of the benefits of learning a world language, which include improved cognitive and reading abilities.<sup>29</sup>

A well-rounded, full curriculum is an essential part of the education all of our children deserve. Physical activity, appreciating and creating art or music, learning a new language, learning how things work by creating science experiments, solving mathematics problems with multiple approaches, reading and analyzing fiction and non-fiction books—all of these and more contribute to the development of a student who knows how to learn and how to think. It would cost CPS approximately \$200 million to hire enough new music, art, physical education, computer technology, and world language teachers so that every elementary student would have at least two such classes daily.<sup>30</sup>





# Chicago's Students Deserve Appropriate Support Services

In CPS, 86% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The relationship between poverty and academics is well documented,<sup>31</sup> but CPS pays little attention to ameliorating poverty's effects. Poverty is rising in the city, and the percentage of students who are lunch-eligible does not capture the fact that many who were poor before are now even poorer.<sup>32</sup> While CPS has a well-developed program to identify schools to be put on probation, closed, consolidated or turned-around, it does not have an equally robust program for supporting schools in trouble.

## SCHOOL NURSES

One reason many economically disadvantaged students struggle in school is poor health.<sup>33</sup> CPS students come to school with untreated asthma, hearing or vision problems, nutritional deficiencies, or other issues that affect their school performance. Because poor families often lack health insurance, they have to rely on free or low cost services, such as the Cook County medical system, for their primary health care.

Additionally, students often lack knowledge of or access to preventive strategies like a healthy diet, exercise, dental hygiene, stress reduction techniques, violence de-escalation, and a good night's sleep. Some students need medications or injections to treat chronic illnesses.

The recurring cutbacks to affordable health care and the ongoing health needs of many children make the presence of at least one on-site nurse in every school critical. In addition, important health service providers such as speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists must be available to students needing their services. The National Association of School Nurses recommends that schools have at least one Registered Nurse for 125–775 students, depending on the student population's health issues.<sup>34</sup>

Currently, school nurses are assigned almost exclusively to schools with large populations of special education students. A nurse may have six or more schools, each with thousands of students, or she may serve a school with hundreds of severely disabled children with major health problems. CPS nurses also have to serve charter schools. Few schools have the services of a school nurse daily. This year, Chicago's 684 schools are served by only 202 CPS school nurses.<sup>35</sup> Given the number of CPS schools, there should be at minimum 684 nurses.

*While CPS has a program to identify schools to be put on probation, closed, consolidated or turned-around, it does not have an equally robust program to support schools in trouble.*

## **SOCIAL WORKERS**

At the end of the 2011 school year there were 15,580 homeless students attending CPS schools.<sup>36</sup> If all of the 370 social workers currently employed by CPS only provided services for homeless students, each would have a caseload of 42.<sup>37</sup> This would give social workers just a few hours a month to meet the ongoing needs of each homeless student. Of course, school social workers provide services for students with homes as well. They work with students who are abused, involved with gangs, neglected, pregnant, or have substance abuse or anger management issues, among other needs.

Social workers also are charged with helping students and their families access social services and working closely with special needs students and their families. The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) recommends a ratio of one social worker with a master's degree for every 400 students.<sup>38</sup> Using that ratio, CPS needs 1,023 social workers for normal services and at least 250 more to give schools on probation additional support.

## **COUNSELORS**

In Chicago, all elementary schools receive one counselor, regardless of enrollment, so schools with up to 1,200 students still have just one counselor.<sup>39</sup> That caseload is almost five times the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) recommendation of 250.<sup>40</sup> At the high school level, one counselor is assigned for every 360 students,<sup>41</sup> about 1-1/2 times the recommendation. Much of a counselor's workday consists of coordinating test administration and paperwork, leaving her little time to actually counsel individual students or even small groups. No additional counselors are provided schools in high poverty, high need areas; students' counseling needs have no impact on the number of counselors assigned to a school. There are currently 731 counselors working in CPS schools.<sup>42</sup> Using the ASCA recommendation, there should be about 1,600.

## **PSYCHOLOGISTS**

School psychologists work with social workers to provide evaluations, consultation, individual/group counseling, crisis response, and behavioral interventions. Psychologists, social workers, and counselors help students cope with problems, including those brought on by family stress associated with low-paying jobs, unemployment, and the variety of other issues associated with life in poverty. If social services are unavailable, students may suffer in silence, keeping them from functioning effectively in the classroom. Economically disadvantaged children are least likely to have access to the resources they need to deal with their challenges. Using the National Association of School Psychologists guidelines,<sup>43</sup> CPS needs to more than double their current number of psychologists to at least 585.<sup>44</sup>

Struggling schools, those that are often slated for closure or turn around by CPS, would benefit from additional service providers as they typically serve populations in great need of social services. For example, schools on probation are three times less likely than others to have a crisis intervention team,<sup>45</sup> even though students in these schools are more likely to encounter crises. Bringing the number of social workers, counselors, nurses, and psychologists up to the numbers recommended by professional organizations in these schools would be a logical first step for CPS and would also go a long way toward making sure all students have equitable and appropriate access to the services they need.

## TRANSPORTATION

Many people are surprised to hear that, unlike New York City, Chicago does not offer free public transportation to students, except students who qualify through their IEP or attend certain Options for Knowledge (magnet school) programs. Students are eligible to buy reduced fare cards at \$1 per ride, but that is an added expense that strains the budgets of low-income families. Although CPS does not keep records of how many days of school are lost due to lack of transportation funds, teachers are quite familiar with this attendance problem.

Wells High School created a program which uses discretionary funds to provide free bus transportation for students who need it, resulting in positive attendance trends.<sup>46</sup> Extrapolating from the Wells numbers, it would cost about \$10 million to provide free bus cards to students in need. Students must be provided with the basics so that they can get to school. Just as the free and reduced lunch program provides needed nutrition to those students who otherwise might go hungry, CPS should provide free bus transportation to those who otherwise could not get to school.

Family income and wealth play a major role in students' educational development. CTU recognizes that CPS cannot tackle all the housing, health, transportation, and employment inequities that intersect school issues and shape student's performance in schools. However, as CPS students are 86% low-income and 87% African American or Latino, CPS has a moral and ethical responsibility to put school-level policies in place to mitigate racial and economic inequities.

In addition, CPS must recognize that these factors shape student lives. Responsible public stewardship requires acting and advocating for change in the fiscal and legislative boundaries that keep CPS students from obtaining the education they deserve. To staff schools to the level suggested by professional organizations, CPS should hire an additional 847 counselors, 468 school nurses, 903 social workers, and 362 school psychologists. To do this and also provide free bus cards to students in need, the cost would be approximately \$268 million.





BOARD  
OF TRADE



Make  
Kids a  
Priority!

Make  
Kids a  
Priority!

GRASSROOTS  
COLLABORATIVE  
BUILD A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS  
FOR EVERY CHILD  
NUESTRO DINERO  
NUESTRAS  
ESCUELAS!

School  
Sports Hurt  
Students!



# Chicago's Students Deserve Social Justice

## SEGREGATED SCHOOLING

CPS schools operate in an environment of intense segregation, a culmination of decades of racist public policies and market forces that have segregated Chicago's communities and neighborhoods. Within CPS, 69% of all African American students (and 42% of Latinos) go to schools that are "intensely segregated" — schools that have more than 90% of their student body composed of the same ethnicity. Chicago Public Schools remains one of the urban school systems that "only a few percentage points from an experience of total apartheid."<sup>47</sup>

More than three-fourths of CPS students come from families who are eligible for free lunch, which for a family of four means earning less than \$30,000 a year. Nearly half of all African American students (71,500) and one-third of all Latino students (58,700) go to a school where more than 90% of the students qualify for free lunch. Only 3.3% of white students go to such schools. White students typically attend schools where fewer than 25% of students are free-lunch eligible. This is the case in more than two-thirds of schools with a majority of white students.

Homeless students attend schools where, on average, 88% of the student body is eligible for free lunch. Students who attend densely high poverty schools are likely to suffer academically. Conversely, students who attend schools with low rates of poverty receive an academic advantage from their school composition.<sup>48</sup> Homeless CPS students, in addition to coping with problems caused by lack of housing, have to attend schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students.

*Within CPS, 69% of African American and 42% of Latino students go to schools that are intensely segregated.*

## RACIST PROBATIONARY POLICIES

The governing bodies and corporate interests that steer policy in our public schools have further enabled segregation, creating a two-tier education system based on racial and class status. Standardized testing is the primary "policy lever" responsible for apartheid in Chicago schools. It has come to define the policies, operation, curricula, pedagogy, and survival of urban schools serving low-income students. Although the evidence is clear that control and initiative by school staffs and communities improve outcomes,<sup>49</sup> low test scores lead to disempowerment, diminished local control, and silencing of community voices as schools are put on probation, closed or "turned around."

Some schools are given a certain amount of independence from central office policies. Schools designated as Autonomous Management and Performance Schools (AMPS) are allowed to opt out of district-wide curricula, allocate additional funds to after-school programs, and design attendance plans and professional development days in addition to other privileges.<sup>50</sup> These autonomies are only granted to schools that meet select performance management criteria.

The student demographics of these schools are not representative of CPS. In 2012, only 18% of AMPS students were African American, although 43% of all CPS students are African American. White students were 19% of the AMPs population, but only 8.5% of the district is white. This disproportionality is even more extreme when looked at another way: 40% of all the white students in CPS go to an AMPS school. On the other hand, the annual “hit lists” of schools that are targeted for disruptive interventions, experimentation and closure are typically composed of 100% students of color living in segregated and economically devastated neighborhoods.<sup>51</sup>

## THE PEDAGOGY OF POVERTY

Standardized testing as a tool to segregate educational opportunities is not new. Standardized testing grew out of the American tradition of using ‘intelligence quotient’ (IQ) as a pretext for racist and exclusionary policies.<sup>52</sup> Today’s standardized and norm referenced tests still discriminate and they,

together with inequities in housing, employment, education, and health care, contribute to the “achievement gap.”<sup>53</sup> In CPS schools, the emphasis has increasingly been on test scores and other student data, despite lip service to the need for authentic learning.

It is no exaggeration to say that in most CPS schools, particularly struggling ones, teachers meetings are dominated by looking at data, analyzing data, and talking about how to “improve (data) outcomes,” when it should also be a time for professional collaboration and/or learning. Time at teacher meetings is then not spent on planning

inter-disciplinary projects, professional learning, discussing how to improve instruction for particular students or groups of students, collaboration on curriculum design, sharing classroom activities that inspire deep thinking among students, or discussing other ways to implement a more robust pedagogy.

The basic routines, practices and duties related to an education based on standardized testing are commonly referred to as the “pedagogy of poverty.”<sup>54</sup> Such teaching and student engagement becomes further entrenched by teacher evaluation systems that determine the parameters of teacher ‘effectiveness’ chiefly by student test scores. What is sorely missing is a system that supports the development of ‘culturally responsive pedagogy,’ where teachers are encouraged to draw on students’ cultural repertoire to span the bridge between students’ past experiences and the learning of new concepts.<sup>55</sup>

## FAMILIES ARE NOT CUSTOMERS, STUDENTS ARE NOT SEATS

What is called the “pedagogy of poverty” is demonstrated not only by the type of instruction CPS policies emphasize and reinforce but by the interactions CPS and the Board of Education have with parents, community and the staff who do the work of educating children. They view families as customers. They view students as “seats.”

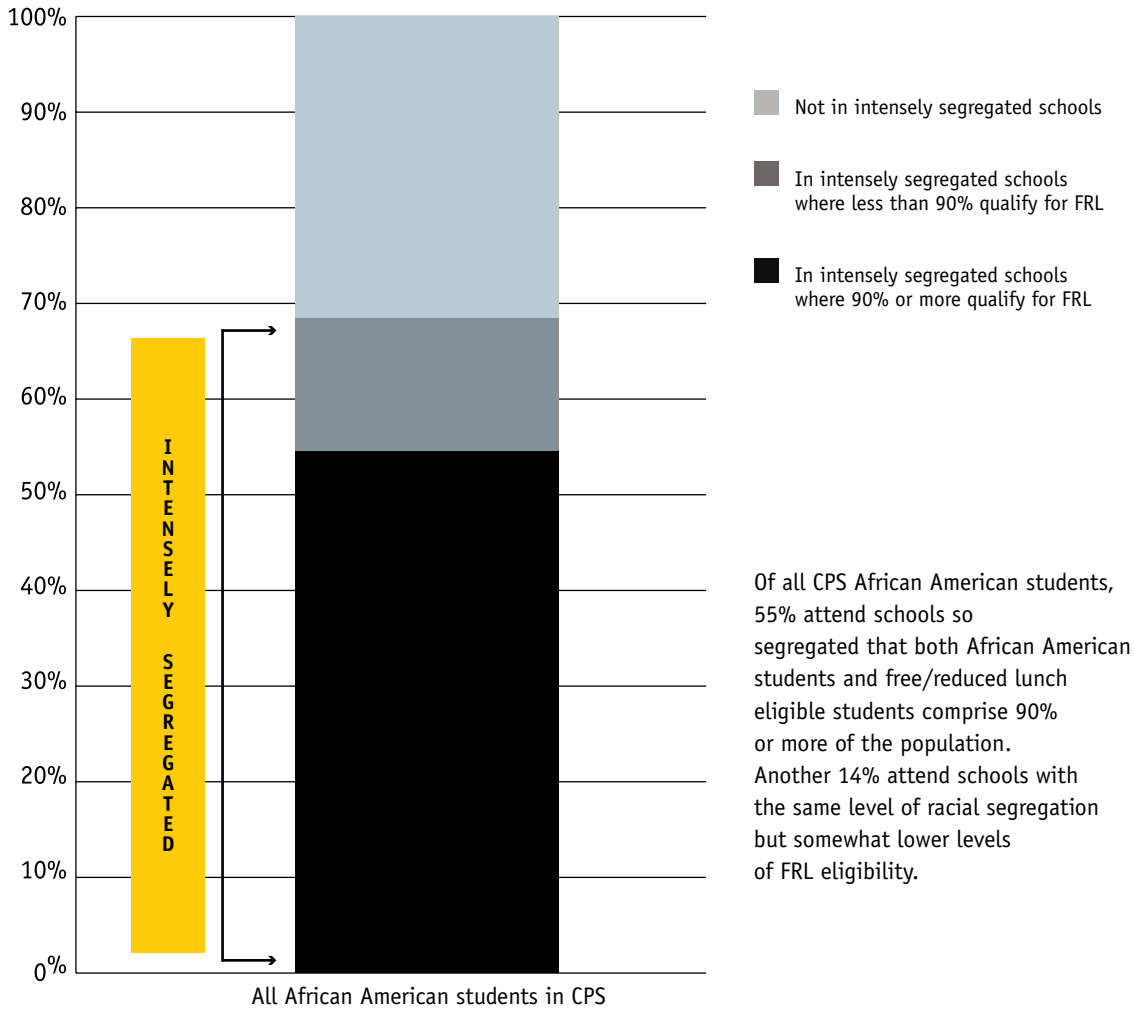
Parents with resources are able to access the full spread of educational choices: private schools, selective enrollment schools, and neighborhood schools in their communities.

For parents without options, CPS prescribes the expectations and educational qualities they should seek in an education system for their children. CPS communication to parents is framed by school report cards that focus principally on relative rankings based on criteria and tests unproven to have association with real learning.

*Governing bodies and corporate interests have enabled a two-tier education system based on racial and class status.*



## Intense segregation of African American students in CPS by both race and class



Data based on CPS FY 2012 Racial Ethnic Survey and FY 2012 Limited English Proficiency / Special Ed / Low Income Enrollment Data

*Nearly 60 years since the famous **Brown vs. Board of Education** decision to end racist inequities in education, schools are becoming more segregated and education less equitable.*

Only after disinvesting in neighborhood schools and shutting them down does CPS approach the community and offer a “choice” of charters or other schools outside the immediate community. Often these schools offer their students no better environment than the school CPS closed. Charters and other private management organizations are subject to the same (and due to the profits involved often more heightened) pressures to emphasize standardized test performance, which illuminates the false nature of this choice.

## **THE CRIMINALIZATION OF STUDENTS**

These pressures for test results manifest not only in instructional and managerial practices but often in punitive measures directed against students and teachers. Nationwide, minorities are suspended at substantially higher rates than white students, and this discipline gap has increased over time.<sup>56</sup> CPS had the highest suspension rate of all big-city school districts in 2008, with 13% of students suspended. One out of every four Black male students was suspended. Black males comprised nearly the majority of suspensions despite being only a quarter of the CPS student population.<sup>57</sup>

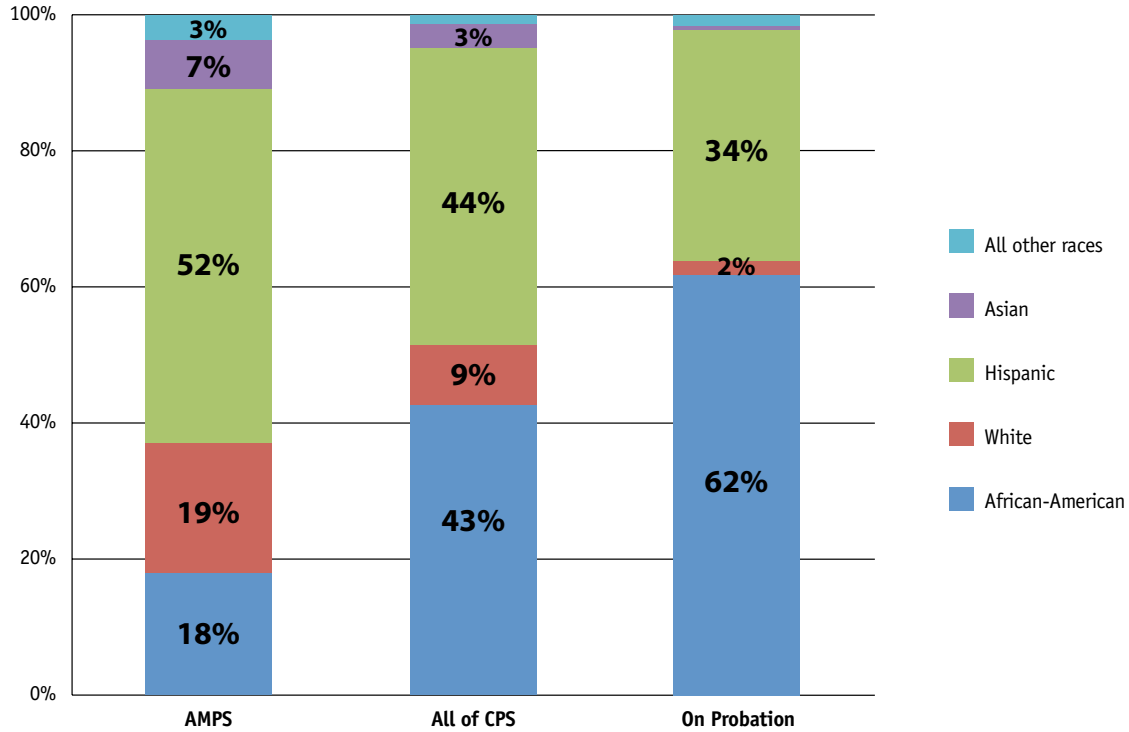
Police involvement in CPS also disproportionately impacts black students. Of the 5,574 juveniles arrested on CPS grounds in 2010, 74% were African American.<sup>58</sup> These issues are prevalent at charter schools as well. Unwarranted punitive measures, expulsions and “counseling out” of disruptive students are common at schools run by private management organizations.<sup>59</sup> When standardized testing results determine the relative value of students, and schools run by private operators are unaccountable to the public, these schools push out troubled low-performing students.

Punitive policies against the most disadvantaged students, standards of education prescribed for others by those in power, and segregated educational opportunities are symptomatic of corporate-run public education, whose agenda is disempowering working-class communities.<sup>60</sup> This strategy of educating students is inequitable and does not improve learning. An oft-referenced model of school improvement is Finland, yet policymakers fail to grasp the fundamental goal of Finland’s educational reforms: to establish educational equity for all students.<sup>61</sup>

What would it cost to have equitable treatment of our children? In our society students segregated by socio-economic status do not have equal access to education. Merely equalizing resources between the children of the haves and have-nots is insufficient. Students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds require additional support services to supplement their learning and emotional growth. Yet CPS does not even attempt this ‘nominal’ equity. Bringing real equity into the education system will require a depth of commitment and resources that is totally outside the scope of CPS’ current “reform” agenda.

Nearly 60 years since the famous Brown vs. Board of Education decision to end racist inequities in education, CPS and other public school systems are moving in the opposite direction. Schools are becoming more segregated and education less equitable, often under the guise of “closing the achievement gap.” Our students do not deserve this!

**Student demographics at Autonomous Management and Performance Schools (AMPS), all CPS schools, and schools on probation in 2011-2012**



African American students are sorely under-represented, and white students over-represented, among schools with autonomy over certain policies, known as AMPS schools. On the other hand, African American students are over-represented and white students under-represented in CPS probation schools, where autonomy is severely limited.

Data from CPS FY2012 Racial Ethnic Survey





# Chicago's Students Deserve Equitable Education in All Instructional Settings

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

There is substantial evidence that pre-kindergarten education can have lasting positive effects on achievement, social skills, and even employment.<sup>62</sup> Evidence also supports full-day kindergarten, which is strongly associated with increases in children's cognitive learning and subsequent academic achievement, social skills, and emotional development.<sup>63</sup> This effect is especially strong for children who start kindergarten with fewer skills and Emergent Bilinguals.<sup>64</sup> Full-day kindergarten is crucial to ensuring the continuity of cognitive, social and emotional development that starts in pre-K.<sup>65</sup>

*Pre-K education can have lasting positive effects on achievement, social skills and even employment.*

The full value of early childhood education is realized when children are engaged in guided play and immersive activities. Kindergarten is increasingly dominated by teacher-led instruction centered on math and literacy, to the detriment of child-initiated play centered on imagination and creativity.<sup>66</sup> Both theory and research have demonstrated that play-oriented activities and hands-on-learning have long-term benefits over a day dominated by direct instruction.<sup>67</sup> CPS funding for early childhood education needs to be focused around resources for children and classrooms, not on assessments, as it has been over the past 15 years.

All schools should provide full-day kindergarten and optional free pre-kindergarten for working class and low-income families. Although CPS has increased full-day kindergarten programming, a majority of schools still must finance it through their discretionary funds, making future program availability tenuous.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, funding for pre-school for all is in perpetual jeopardy due to state-level budget cutbacks in early childhood education. CPS has indicated that future budget cuts may restrict free pre-school to families qualifying for subsidized school lunch.<sup>69</sup> The 2011 poverty threshold for receiving free lunch for a family of four is an annual income of less than \$30,000.<sup>70</sup> Free early childhood education should be guaranteed to all working-class families, including the unemployed. It will cost approximately \$75 million to ensure full-day kindergarten in every CPS elementary school.<sup>71</sup>

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

In Chicago Public Schools, 12% of students require special education supports. In some schools as many as a third of students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Special education teachers are often overburdened with paper work, given classes that are too large without special education resource teacher support, or given inadequate time to serve their students properly. CPS needs high-quality early intervention so that services for students with disabilities can be implemented earlier and in a more timely way. Early intervention also gives students who have complex needs other than those best served through special education services the opportunity for appropriate support from school staff.



Currently, CPS teachers of special needs students are not given the time to adequately plan and prepare lessons. A workload plan for special education teachers would ensure that valuable time for preparation does not have to be used for IEP paperwork and administrative requirements. CPS needs to put policies in place that prioritize meeting the needs of special education students, whether integrated in a general education classroom or taught exclusively by special education teachers.

*CPS needs to begin high-quality early intervention to implement services for students with disabilities earlier.*

CPS makes it extremely difficult to get one-on-one assistants for students with special needs. Even if an IEP team determines that paraprofessional support is needed for a student, CPS will usually deny the request. The reasons given typically are lack of funds or challenges to the professional judgment of the team. One-on-one assistants are needed for teaching students study skills, re-teaching/practicing key concepts already introduced by the teacher, teaching and managing behavioral expectations, student safety (for example, for students with autism who are “runners”), and for feeding and toileting needs for the most severely disabled students.

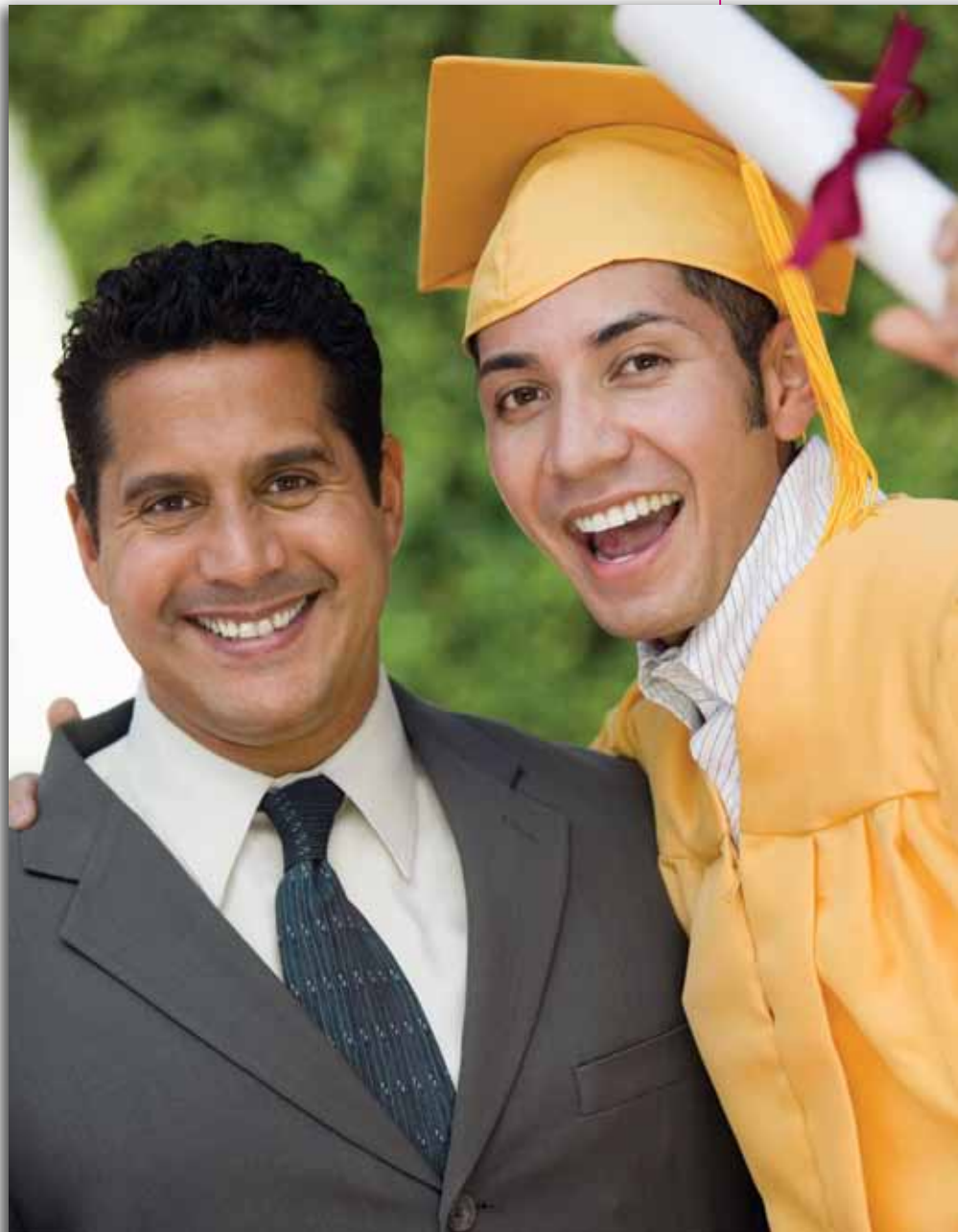


## EMERGENT BILINGUAL EDUCATION

In some CPS schools, 70% of students are emergent bilinguals. On the whole, 16% of CPS students require English language learning supports. Students who are emergent bilinguals deserve bilingual education that enables them to achieve academically while developing high levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in their first language as well as in English. Schools need to nurture students' bilingualism and inter-cultural flexibility and encourage them to evaluate critically the world in which they live.

Research shows that non-native speakers in a quality bilingual program develop academic proficiency in 4–7 years, much faster than the 7–10 years it takes for non-native speakers instructed in an all-English program.<sup>72</sup> Teachers as well as administrators need regular and ongoing high quality professional development to address the needs of and build on the strengths specific to emerging bilingual students. Emergent bilingual students deserve teachers who have the support of an English as a Second Language (ESL) resource teacher and whose workday includes adequate planning time to design thoughtful, challenging lessons and units that address both academic and language development.

*Schools should nurture students' bilingualism and inter-cultural flexibility.*





# Chicago's Students Deserve Professional Teachers Who are Treated as Such

Research-based strategies and proven models for improving the teaching profession should guide the maintenance and growth of a dedicated, experienced, and multi-racial teaching staff in CPS. In Finland, a country known for high-performing students, teaching is a respected, top career choice; teachers have autonomy in their classrooms, work collectively to develop the school curriculum, and participate in shared governance of the school. They receive a free college education and teacher preparation program, and they are unionized. They receive strong professional support throughout their careers and ample time for collaboration with colleagues built into their workday. They are not rated; they are trusted.<sup>73</sup>

## STABLE AND DIVERSE TEACHING WORKFORCE

CPS policies fail to support stable work environments in the most struggling schools. In CPS, teacher turnover is highest in low income African American schools, with many losing a quarter of their teaching staff each year.<sup>74</sup> Student achievement suffers from teacher turnover, and the impact is especially harmful to low-income students of color.<sup>75</sup> Teachers sometimes take other positions in the middle of the school year, causing classrooms to be filled with substitute teachers for months. These are often the schools that fill positions by recruiting short-term teachers – those earning experience so they can go back to the suburbs to teach or teachers from Teach for America and other short-term alternative certification programs.

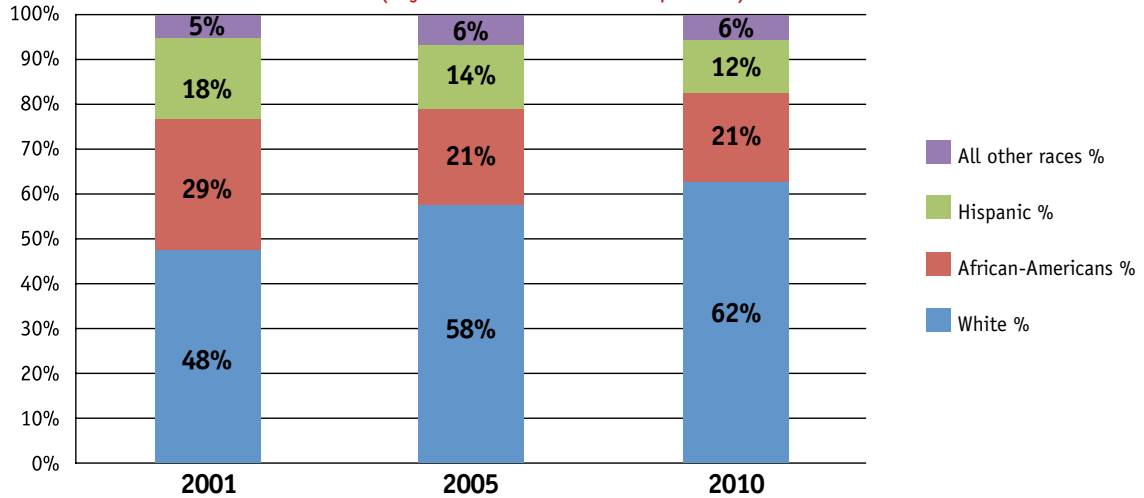
*A decade of school closings has thinned the ranks of veteran educators of color in CPS.*

Despite the availability of displaced experienced teachers, CPS fills vacancies with newer and younger teachers. Younger teachers have universally higher attrition rates from their schools and the profession, so such recruitment only worsens the problem of turnover. Teacher turnover can be addressed by policy changes such as recruiting teachers from the communities where the hard-to-staff schools are located, as in the Grow Your Own Teacher program, or developing paraprofessionals in the hard-to-staff schools to become fully certified teachers.

A decade of school closings has thinned the ranks of veteran educators of color in CPS. Since 2000, African American teachers have declined from 40% to only 30% of CPS teachers. Despite the uptick in their percentage, Latino teachers are still sorely underrepresented in a school system that now has 44% Latino students. In the schools identified by CPS for closure this year, 65% of teachers are African American. Such discrimination is also mirrored in CPS annual layoffs. Last year over 40% of the tenured teachers laid off were African American, despite their being fewer than 30% of the population of tenured teachers in CPS.

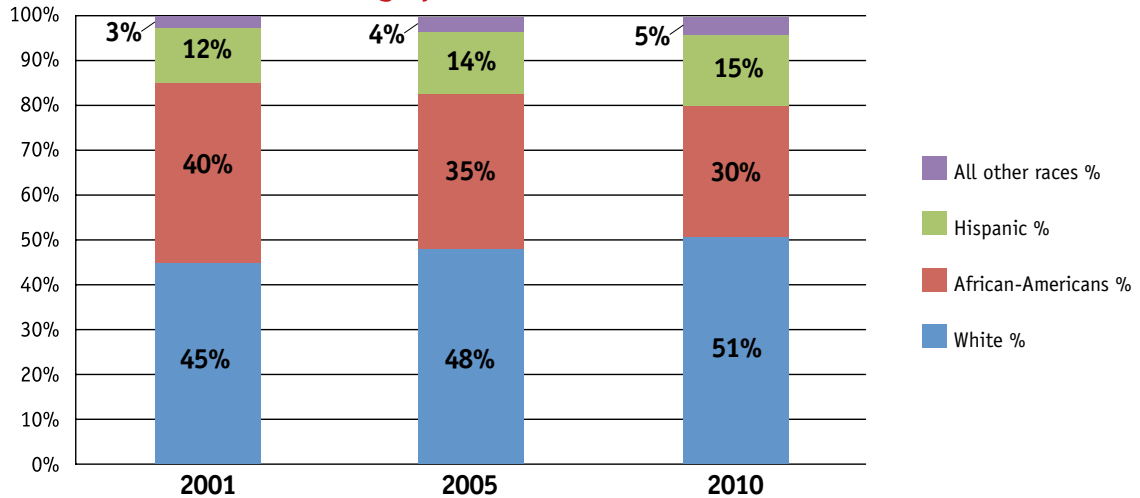
Simultaneously, new teachers hired into CPS have been increasingly non-minorities. The percentage of new (five or fewer years of experience) teachers who are white has increased from 48% in 2000 to 62% in 2010.<sup>76</sup> Having teachers who live in the community, speak the same language, know the families and are

### Demographics of new CPS teachers (5 years or less district experience)



Data from ISBE Teacher Service Records

### Demographics of all CPS teachers



Data from ISBE Teacher Service Records

In just 10 years, the overall percentage of CPS African American teachers dropped from 40% to 30%. During the same time period the percentage of new white teachers increased from 48% to 62%.

*In 2011, African Americans represented 65% of teachers in schools tapped for closure and 40% of tenured teachers laid off. The percentage of less experienced white teachers hired has steadily increased.*

comfortable with the children goes a long way towards establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect and enhancing learning.<sup>77</sup>

### COMPETITIVE SALARIES AND BENEFITS

Public school teacher salaries for experienced and educated professionals have been declining relative to other professions for over a decade.<sup>78</sup> Public school teachers now earn 12% less than comparable workers.<sup>79</sup> A competitive salary base and experience- and education-based salary schedules award longevity and the commitment to attaining skills for improved teaching practices.



Teacher turnover is greatly influenced by working conditions and teacher salaries. Districts with higher average teacher salaries, in addition to having lower turnover rates, also have higher proportions of credentialed and experienced teachers.<sup>80</sup> Retirement plan benefits have also been found to impact turnover rates across a variety of professions, and teaching is no exception. Defined benefit pension plans help reduce turnover and attract professionals who plan to be long-term teachers.<sup>81</sup>

## **COLLABORATION, PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Internationally, teachers in high performing countries have equal amounts of teaching and preparation time in their day. This is also true for the unionized teachers who work at the private University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. In Japan, teachers work together on lessons, observe the teaching of the collaboratively created lesson and discuss those lessons as a regular part of their routine. Teachers in Japan spend less than 40% of their working hours over the school year teaching.<sup>82</sup>

In Chicago Public Schools, elementary teachers have a paltry 4.5 hours a week for planning, and not necessarily in collaboration with colleagues. High school teachers have relatively more, but still less than necessary, at 7.5 hours a week. Rather than having to plan in isolation, teachers should have adequate time for collaborative preparation and professional development. Joint planning time and collaborative teamwork are associated with student achievement, teacher motivation, better parent communication and improved school culture.<sup>83</sup>

## **AUTONOMY AND DECISION-SHARING**

Research on teacher retention has consistently shown that working conditions are a major determinant of teacher turnover.<sup>84</sup> Working conditions are especially difficult in high-poverty schools, where teachers are far more likely to report inadequate classroom and instructional supplies, a lack of classroom autonomy and a lack of administrative support. Poor working conditions compound the issue of recruitment of teachers of color to work in these schools, since faculty input into decision-making and individual instructional autonomy are factors most salient for these teachers.<sup>85</sup> CPS' policy of diminishing local control for the most struggling schools is counterproductive and damaging to the profession.

## **TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

Teacher assistants and instructional assistants are being cut instead of increased. If there were more of these professionals in our classrooms, teachers would be able to do additional small group instruction and focus on individual students more. Assistant positions should not only be used in special education classrooms, as CPS typically does, but spread around the schools to assist teachers and students who need extra attention and help.

When CPS also fulfills the need for professional development, teacher leadership opportunities, and a supportive, collaborative, and stable work environment, the profession will attract candidates interested in teaching as a long-term career. Career teachers continuously hone their skills and develop greater facility for designing lessons, motivating students, and in other ways mastering the intricacies of excellent teaching. Students deserve to have professional teachers.



# Chicago's Students Deserve Quality School Facilities

The following conditions are among those identified in North Side schools by staff and parents, as reported in transcripts of the 2009, 2008, and 2007 facilities hearings.<sup>86</sup>

*Schools planned for conversion to charters see millions of dollars funneled into their buildings only on the eve of their closure.*

*"A brown liquid from the air conditioning cooling tower leaks through classroom ceilings on hot days. Puddles of this liquid form on the floors within the building. These puddles pass through the classroom and library ceilings. This brown liquid has destroyed books, supplies, and computer equipment."*

*"The bathroom for our pre-kindergartners, which they must use every day, has exposed asbestos insulation."*

*"The roof has leaked profusely for the past 15 years. This has resulted in wide cracks in walls, which required reinforcement. Children must be relocated from classrooms, because of peeling paint, falling plaster, and buckling floors."*

*"Our windows have not been replaced since the 1970s. If you can look at the pictures, when it rains, the windows don't close, so the water comes straight into the classrooms, soaking the children's backpacks, their coats, and anything near the windows."*

*It's also horrible in winter because the snow comes right in. Not only that, but once the elements start coming in, it's extremely cold in the building in the winter and extremely warm in the summer."*

*We have many leaks in the school. These leaks, when not addressed, start to ruin the floors. We have a beautiful gymnasium, but the floor is now warped."*

*"Falling plaster has been a serious problem in the past three months. We had a huge 6-foot by 3 foot chunk of plaster fall. Plaster is falling in areas that are normally occupied by children."*

Students deserve school facilities that have adequate lighting, clean, pollution-free air, comfortable heating and cooling, properly-insulated windows that open and close, roofs that don't leak, classrooms large enough to move around in (for projects and group work), cafeterias, library media centers, functioning plumbing, bathrooms, and electricity, computer labs, science labs, auditoriums with chairs, and fresh paint.

*CPS schools across the district have been begging for basic and fundamentally urgent repairs for decades.*



*Some \$25 million in capital funds have been allotted to the six turnaround schools CPS plans to turn over to AU SL next school year.*

Numerous research studies have shown that the physical condition of the school building affects student academic achievement.<sup>87</sup> It is not fair to expect our students to succeed when their classrooms are freezing or boiling, when leaky pipes are dripping scary liquids down the walls, when blown fuses kick them off their computers in the middle of a test or a project, when there are roaches in the cafeteria – or even lack of a proper cafeteria to eat in, when the stairs are crumbling and the paint is peeling, when mold in the ventilation system aggravates their asthma.

CPS schools across the district have been begging for basic repairs and fundamentally urgent repairs for decades while the city builds brand-new, state-of-the-art facilities elsewhere. While CPS claims to use a facility repair rating system to help it prioritize the facility needs of the nearly 700 buildings it owns, students, teachers, principals and parents know all too well that their needs — some involving dangerous health hazards — get ignored year after year.



This practice has been solidified with the new CPS administration. Chief Operating Officer Tim Cawley stated twice — once at a Facilities Task Force hearing and once to the press — that CPS will not invest in schools it expects to close in 5 or 10 years. Instead, schools planned for conversion into charters and management by private operators see millions of dollars funneled into the building only at the eve of their closure. Some \$25 million in capital funds have been allotted to the six turnaround schools that CPS plans to turn over to AUSL next school year.<sup>88</sup> CPS does not consider struggling schools, students and communities worthy of investment on their own merits.

*CPS does not consider struggling schools, students and communities worthy of investment on their own merits.*





# Chicago's Students Deserve A School System That Partners with Parents

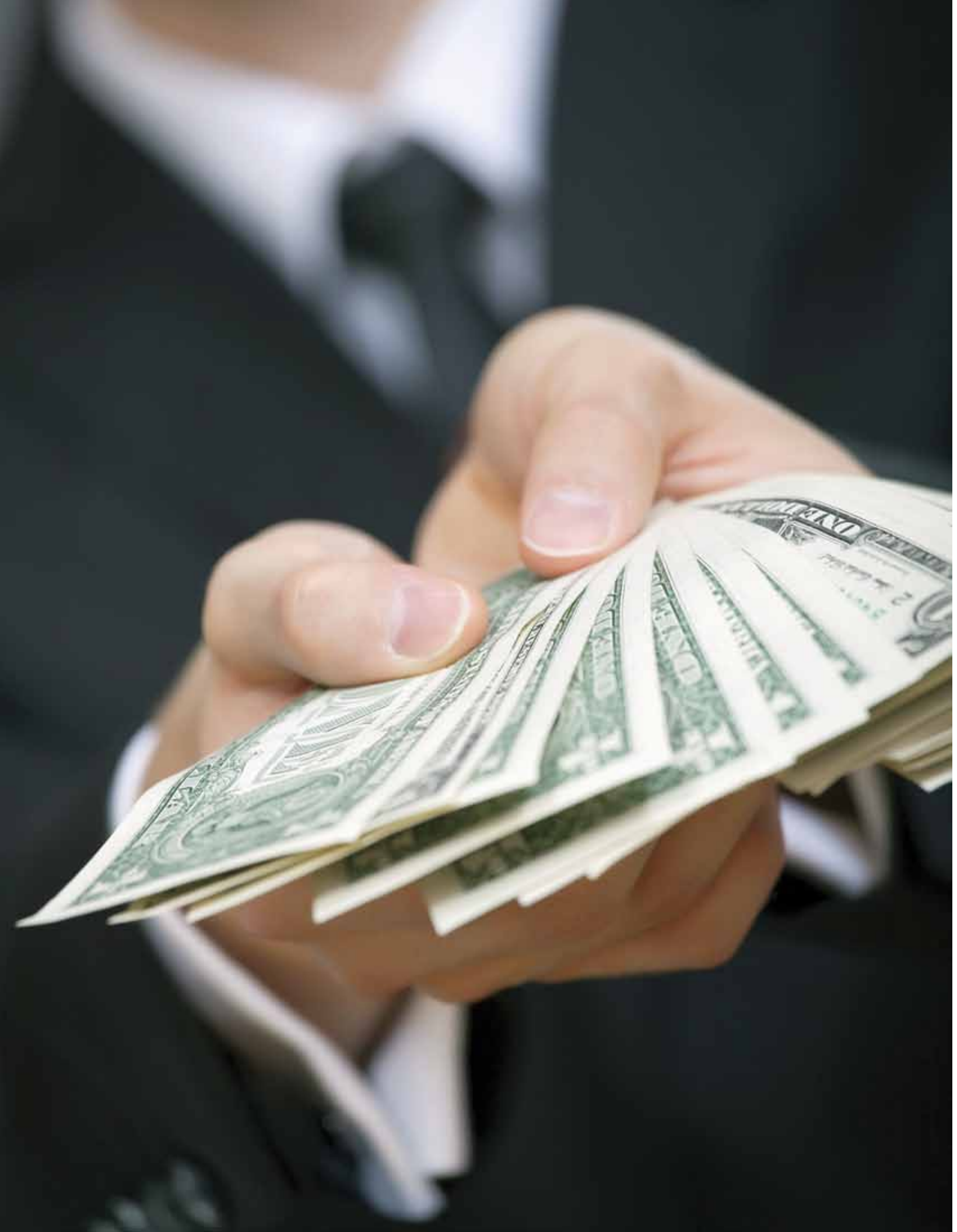
Some parents face significant barriers to involvement in their school community: language barriers, transportation and scheduling difficulties, and practical constraints to providing educational materials and supports. The socio-economic strain faced by families living in or near poverty compounds these barriers.<sup>89</sup> In 2006, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) published an in-depth survey of parent involvement in the Chicago Public Schools. They surveyed 4,320 elementary and high school parents in 92 CPS schools. They concluded that CPS needed to “work to create a culture from the top down that clearly and intentionally demonstrates respect and value for the active involvement of all parents and the importance of trust and collaboration among parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community in our common goal of providing a high-quality education for all students.”<sup>90</sup>

In order to facilitate healthy school, family and community partnerships CPS needs to support parenting, enable clear communication both to the households and from the households, help create meaningful and accessible volunteer opportunities, support learning at home, involve parents in decision-making and collaborate with the community to draw on resources and strengthen school programs.<sup>91</sup> These include practices such as providing: renewed support and respect for the role of Local School Councils, coursework and training for parents, family health and nutrition programs, language translation, a dedicated family room at each school, clear communication of learning goals, empowered parent organizations, as well as coordinating services to benefit the community by school staff, students, and families. CPS needs to fund all schools to have a sufficient number of dedicated staff members to coordinate this involvement.

Family and community ties are among the five essential supports present in the most improved CPS elementary schools. This support has been identified as integral to school improvement in separate studies by both the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) and Designs for Change.<sup>92</sup> Parents from all backgrounds want to be involved, and when outreach efforts are successful, children from low-income and poverty backgrounds can benefit even more than children from more advantaged families.<sup>93</sup>









# Chicago's Students Deserve Fully Funded Education

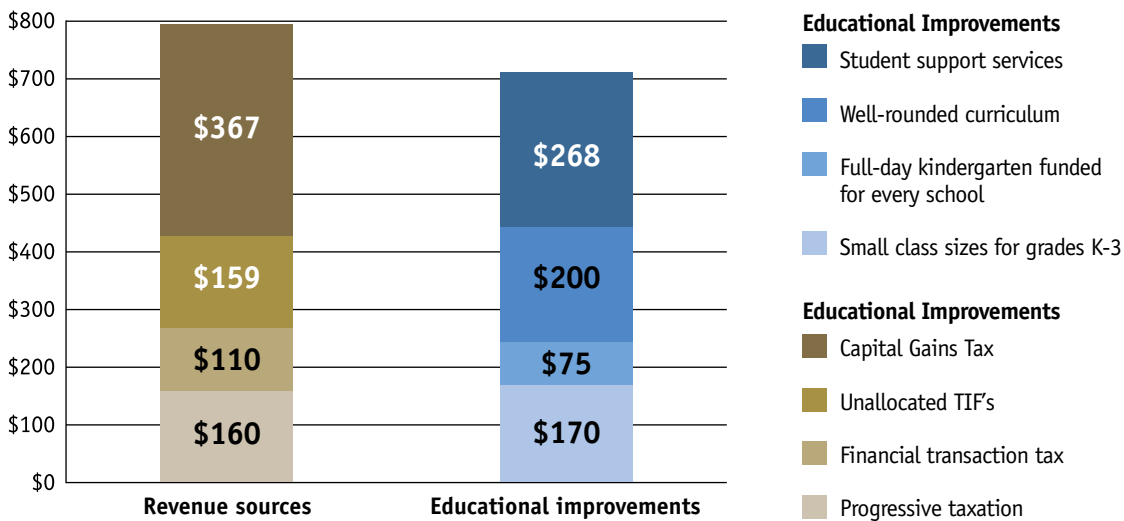
Those who agree that Chicago's children deserve the schools described above may wonder how we can afford them. A better question might be: how can we afford not to have these schools? Where else is public money being spent? We must invest in our children. The people of the city of Chicago have contributed nearly \$6 billion towards this year's Pentagon budget. If less than 5% of that \$6 billion were spent on Chicago schools instead, every student would have access to a well-rounded curriculum and full-day kindergarten.

In 2007, Illinois spent over \$1 billion on prisons; in 2010, it cut \$32 million from pre-kindergarten programs.<sup>94</sup> The priorities here are clearly misplaced! As the highly-regarded Perry Pre-School research shows, participation in pre-kindergarten dramatically reduces participation in juvenile and adult crime.<sup>95</sup> Fully funding war and prisons in lieu of education is utterly irrational to parents, communities and the larger public who care about a future for our children. What follows is a list of suggestions for changing the allocation of resources to benefit children.

## FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING

Illinois is among the bottom three states when it comes to fairness in funding for education. Illinois school funding — collected largely through local property taxes — is regressive, with communities suffering concentrated poverty receiving less in school funding. Despite having the fifth largest state economy in the U.S., Illinois ranks 33rd in the country in the percent of state Gross Domestic Product (GDP) spent on public education.<sup>96</sup> This regressive school funding system furthers racial disparities. In Illinois, African American and Latino students receive little more than 90% of the per pupil expenditure that white students receive, 93 cents and 91 cents for every dollar, respectively.<sup>97</sup>

### Identified sources of revenue and program costs (in millions)



Tapping into these potential revenue sources would be more than enough to provide Chicago students with the schools they deserve.

Progressive school funding structures such as those found in New Jersey lessen these inequities. In New Jersey, adequate funding for high-poverty districts has been a prolonged judicial and legislative battle. The Abbott decisions are a series of court rulings since the 1980s which made funding in high poverty districts nearly equivalent to the funding in their high-income suburban schools.<sup>98</sup> The most disadvantaged communities in Chicago and Illinois ought to receive as much educational funding as the wealthiest; any less should be unconstitutional.

## **RETURN TIF MONEY TO SUPPORT OUR CHILDREN**

Tax schemes like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) are supposed to boost private investment in blighted neighborhoods and produce jobs. The reality is that the majority of TIF funds in Chicago go to our downtown neighborhoods. One just went to a pizza restaurant! TIFs are deemed successful by developers and investors because they've increased private investment (sometimes in wealthy neighborhoods) and produced profits for businesses and real estate, all while helping create bathrooms for financial giants, like Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) and relocating corporations from one place to another, like United Airlines. Much like the income gains of the top 1% in the past decades, there is no 'trickle-down' effect of TIFs when they are controlled by highly profitable corporations.

Taking public tax-money back from TIFs and into the service of school children must be a top priority. At the end of 2011, there was \$831 million in unallocated TIF money. The Responsible Budget Ordinance, introduced October 12th to the City Council by The Grassroots Collaborative and Alderman Scott Waguespack, proposes to return to the taxing bodies 50% of all unallocated funds in TIFs with more than \$5 million in unallocated funds. This can bring up to \$159 million in revenue for schools.<sup>99</sup> Put TIF money to use for our children through schools, libraries, parks, and social services.

## **END CORPORATE SUBSIDIES AND LOOPHOLES**

Corporations do not pay their fair share of taxes. They use loopholes and their multinational reach to dramatically reduce their effective federal tax rates from the nominal 35% rate. General Electric paid no income tax in 2011, and Google had a 2.4% tax rate.<sup>100</sup> Taxes paid by the drug industry are only 5.6% of its profits.<sup>101</sup> Abbott Laboratories has received millions in tax breaks from Illinois yet demands that workers sacrifice their contractual pension benefits. Corporations profit from goods and services they sell to the public and many of their workers were educated at the public's expense. It is only right that a portion of their profits be returned in the form of taxes, to be used to benefit the public good.

## **PROGRESSIVE TAXATION**

Working families need to be supported. Median wages have remained stagnant for decades, and working families have struggled while the country's economic gains have been siphoned off by the top 1% of the population. One hundred percent of the past decade's growth in incomes was captured by those in the top 10%.<sup>102</sup> The top 1% have tripled their take of national income since the '70s, now taking home one out of every four dollars earned nationally.<sup>103</sup> The very wealthy are now not only in control of the greatest proportion of wealth in our nation's history but are also facing record low tax rates. The top marginal income tax rate was above 90% in the 1950s, it is now at just 35%.<sup>104</sup>

The total tax burden falls disproportionately on the working-class. This is especially true in the state of Illinois which has one of the most regressive tax structures in the nation.<sup>105</sup>

In Illinois, while the poor and working-class pay an effective tax rate of more than 10%, the top 5% are systematically advantaged by the tax code, paying a mere 4.1% to 6.5% effective tax rate.<sup>106</sup> If the tax rates for the top 5% wage-earners in Chicago were equalized, at least another \$160 million in revenue would be made available for children's education.<sup>107, 108</sup>

The wealthiest Americans also control most of the financial markets, with the top 1% owning more than half of all stocks, bonds and mutual funds and the top 10% owning more than 80%.<sup>109</sup> A Financial Transaction Tax takes either a small portion of the purchase price of a stock as a tax or implements a flat fee on each transaction. This tax not only brings in revenue from Wall Street but can also improve the long-term allocation of capital by reducing the volume of purely speculative trading.<sup>110</sup> Instituting a Financial Transaction Tax of just six-cents per transaction can generate as much as \$110 million a year for CPS.<sup>111</sup>

Illinois should also implement a progressive capital gains tax to target the high-earners. More than 80% of the annual profits gained from investment returns go to taxpayers earning over \$200,000 in aggregate annual income.<sup>112</sup> Research shows that dividends and capital gains are the main contributors to increased income inequality. While dividends and capital gains represent less than 1% of the annual income of the bottom 80%, they represent 30% of the top 5%, and over 50% of the richest 0.1% of Americans.<sup>113</sup> The federal capital gains tax is now only 15%, down from a high of 39% in 1978.<sup>114</sup> If Illinois taxed capital gains for the top 5%, as much as \$367 million can be generated for Chicago Public Schools.<sup>115, 116</sup>

By implementing these taxes on the wealthy, we can reign in reckless speculation, encourage longer-term productive investment, and decrease income inequality while bringing needed revenue to services for children and working families.



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together

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# Conclusion

The education children receive should not depend on zip code, family income, or racial background. Children from all communities deserve a high-quality education with equitable learning experiences and resources tailored to children's success. Educational research has firmly established the need for age-appropriate pre-kindergarten programs, full-day kindergarten, and a robust curriculum including the arts and physical education. Students need to be taught by professional teachers, who are paid and treated as such, in appropriately-sized classrooms housed in physically-sound buildings. The schools children attend must support emotional needs and physical health, foster creativity, and motivation, offer intimate learning environments for social and cognitive growth, and provide deep learning experiences.

Continuing CPS policies and budgetary priorities that disinvest in neighborhood schools have failed to serve most students and need to be discontinued. Shift the focus to research-based policies and new resources for public education! Aggressive progressive taxation, including a tax on financial transactions, and an end to corporate subsidies could more than fund the schools Chicago children deserve.

This report has identified \$796 million potentially available to further fund education in Chicago, which would more than take care of the \$713 million of improvements the paper advocates.<sup>17</sup> CPS needs to do what's right for the students, parents, and education workers of the city by aggressively going after the funding needed to provide the education Chicago students deserve.



Chicago  
TEACHERS  
UNION

Cutting Libraries  
HURTS  
children

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Save  
Our  
Schools!

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Schools!



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can be generated for the city. Half the revenue from property taxes goes to CPS. Applying this rate to the revenue from taxing the rich, \$160 million can be generated for our schools.

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## Conclusion

117. Applying the CPS tax rate to each of the revenue sources noted above we can generate \$160 million by equalizing effective tax rates between the top 5% and the poor, \$110 million from a financial transaction tax, \$159 million from unallocated TIF funds and \$367 million from a capital gains tax. We have identified \$170 million in class size reduction, \$200 million to fund a well-rounded curriculum, \$268 in support services, and an additional \$75 million for full-day kindergarten in every school.