

Quality Education for ALL Chicagoans

Chicago needs a Mayor who will be a champion for our students; a Mayor who has a track record of working inclusively and collaboratively; a Mayor who is committed to educational excellence for ALL of our children from birth to graduation. A Mayor who believes that students and families must have postsecondary opportunities and career choices.

To take steps toward real improvement in Chicago's public education and address the inequities currently inherent in the system, I believe there are five major areas to consider:

1. Decline in enrollment
2. The state of school buildings and schools as community anchors
3. Educational policy and the learning gap
4. Collaboration to put our students first by supporting our schools
5. Accountability

Let's look at each in turn.

I. Decline in Enrollment

CPS is experiencing financial and organizational consequences as a result of families leaving. Under my leadership, CPS will create a multiyear projection of enrollment grounded in census data and population trends. We will work with partners within and beyond government, and most critically including families, communities, and teachers to build a multiyear strategy to revitalize CPS enrollment.

To do this, we propose to::

- Simplify and streamline the enrollment process for families.
- Provide Education Navigator services at public libraries
- Create one seamless preschool enrollment system across community-based programs and school-based programs
- Guarantee that every child is able to attend a preschool in their own neighborhood.
- Transform every school into a community hub, with opportunities for community-identified resources like tutoring, health clinics, athletics for students, senior services, and job training..
- Modernize transportation services to ensure every student is guaranteed transportation with reliable, timely transit
- Fund universal and robust after-school and summer programming, ensuring every child has a safe, supportive and enriching programming for out-of-school time

II. State of our Public School Buildings

Central and most basic to a stable learning environment is a safe and healthy facility for every child in every community. As we look at the CPS budget, I will work to include the following essential repairs necessary to start bringing our schools up to 21st Century standards:

Playgrounds. We need to ensure every school has a safe and functioning outdoor play space by updating or replacing dilapidated playgrounds and outdoor spaces.

Safe Water. Lead pipes must be replaced to ensure access to safe drinking water.

Transparent Capital Improvement Plan. I will ask for an assessment of each school building to determine and prioritize the needs for improvement and repair.

Cleanliness. Janitorial services continue to be an issue. As mayor, I will start with an audit of building cleanliness and put in place mechanisms to ensure that school buildings are healthy, clean spaces conducive to learning.

Schools as Community Anchors. Schools need to be integral parts of communities on a year round basis and are critical components of neighborhoods to attract and retain residents. I will create a City-funded, City-wide school improvement program including use of TIF funds to make needed school capital upgrades such as HVAC improvements, funds for staff to allow schools to be open in evenings and in the summer, and to ensure that all schools have libraries, resource centers and librarians and other needed staff .

III. Educational Policy and the Learning Gap

Specific aspects of educational policy will always be a matter of debate. To bring CPS forward, I will work toward agreement on the following essential basics for any school system.

Providing universal Pre-K/Early Childhood Education

- Simplify and streamline enrollment. Parents need a one-stop system where families can go to one place to get all the early learning support needed for their child, from birth through age five. Also, as Mayor, I will work with Governor Pritzker and members of the Illinois General Assembly, in order to provide PreK to all 3- and 4-year old's in Chicago.
- Improve Transportation: I will work to remove transportation barriers for students of all ages to get to school, particularly for the youngest to get to and from preschool. As Mayor, I will support innovative solutions including "Walking School Buses."
- Align pre-school hours with the realities of work-life: I will support a preschool policy that aligns school hours with parents' work schedules. Every child enrolled in our Pre-K program should have access to after-care through community partnerships to minimize disruption to working families.
- Listen to Parents' Voices: My administration will reach out and meet with parents. I will hold to the goal of equitably serving more low-income children in a mixed delivery system through schools and community-based organizations to make sure they are ready for school success.

- Partner with and not compete with community-based programs: To date, CPS' push to increase access to Pre-K has sometimes come at the expense of existing high-quality community-based programs. We will achieve a sustainable balance between community-based and schools-based programs.
- Leveling the playing field for early childhood educators: To achieve high quality pre-school education, I will find a path to pay equity for early childhood teachers and staff measured against the metric of what similarly educated teachers in K-12 get paid..

Supporting and Expanding Special Education; Meeting individual needs

- Every school should be staffed and equipped to support students who have Individual Education Plans (IEP).
- We must streamline the process to provide schools with an adequate number of Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECA) for our IEP students.
- When a child is enrolled in special education services, we need to support not only the child but their family. We cannot expect our families to figure out the process on their own or ask the "right" questions.
- To reach out to the parents, it is essential to hold town halls and listening tours specifically for families with children with IEPs.
- We will rely on community partners to inform us on individual needs: Often these needs are identified by the system's community partners. For example, parents in Black and Brown neighborhoods highlight the ways in which meeting transportation needs would help with enrollment.
- We will improve assistance to students whose facility in English poses challenges.

Closing Schools

The current School Closing Moratorium is in place until 2025. The current system of enrollment-based funding poses a constant threat of school closures and staffing cuts.

- While I work with the Governor and General Assembly to change the funding system, I will do all I can to prevent closures and layoffs by securing additional funding to keep schools open. This is part of my commitment to investing in neighborhoods.
- Should the newly created elected school board see no other alternatives, I will demand a decision process that is transparent, that considers questions of equity, and one that centers community voices.
- I would also consider alternatives to closures including schools as community hubs.

School Discipline and Safety

I believe in conflict resolution based on restorative justice practices in all CPS schools. It must take a trauma-informed approach to disrupt the cycle of self-perpetuating patterns. To accomplish this goal, we need more social workers in our schools.

IV. Collaboration to Put Our Students First: Supporting our Schools

Many of the challenges that face our public education system come down to this: all the stakeholders — CPS, the CTU, the City of Chicago, the parents and students, and school administrators and the State of Illinois — must collaborate on the major issues that each cannot solve alone. I will bring to the office of Mayor my strong record as a negotiator and consensus-builder to bring together differing views that achieve needed change.

CPS faces major financial challenges. It will be a priority of my administration to increase state funding for education in Chicago and all school districts in the State by fully funding the State’s EBFF commitment.

Addressing the fiscal challenges means teamwork. The City and CPS finances have long been entangled. With these historical connections in mind, we must be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

I will work with the Illinois General Assembly on Evidenced Based Funding (EBF) and Pension relief. With school leaders across the state, I will press the Illinois General Assembly to accelerate the timeline to full funding of the EBF. The State of Illinois needs to double its funding commitment to ALL Illinois public schools beginning July 1. This would result in an increase in funding to Chicago of \$350M and it would put the state on a path to fully fund its Evidence-Based Funding formula (EBF).

Beyond the EBF, as mayor I intend to advocate at the state level for full funding of CPS. To achieve this goal, the financial relationship between the city and CPS must be transparent. We will thoroughly review the implications of our financial entanglement as well as provide transparency on decisions on the use of TIF funding and the selection of programs to promote development and growth.

I will clarify the meaning of “full funding” to include nurses and social workers, librarians and a functional library, enrichment classes such as arts and music, school athletics, and after school programs to support working families.

Working with the Chicago Teachers Union. Teachers are essential to the success of our students. Their voices matter. We need to work together to improve our schools. We also need to ensure their professional learning and development as we work collaboratively toward bringing Chicago public education up-to-date.

I will advocate to improve our recruitment, hiring, diversity, and retention efforts. *We must do better in terms of diverse recruitment, hiring and retention.* The power of having teachers who share their students’ identities goes beyond having a role model; kids benefit both academically and emotionally.

Relational trust is a professional imperative. No one benefits from an adversarial relationship. Turning the relationship between CPS, the CTU, and the City of Chicago into a collaborative one will be a test for the new Mayor. I will bring my proven skills in consensus building and negotiation in order to work with all stakeholders in good faith. My commitment to school funding and use of City funds to maintain schools will create some shared ground with the CTU.

Working with School Administrators. I recognize and respect the difficult job of school administrators. To ensure high quality administration of our schools, we must:

- Invest in high quality diverse recruitment, hiring, and retention of principals and assistant principals.
- Support best practices for administrators to interact with the Mayor and share their voice.
- Ensure high leveled professional learning and strategies to improve cultural leadership within the District.
- Make clear the imperative for school administrators to reach out to their school's parents to work toward their common goals for quality education for all students.

Working with Local Stakeholders: My office will reach out to the local communities to set funding priorities. Among the known top priorities are:

- We need more social workers in our schools and expanded mental health services in cooperation with Cook County.
- Our team will lead efforts to bring resources and talent together to provide expansion of Community After School and Break/Summer Programs. We will tap a wide range of programs, from intergovernmental to non-profit partnerships, to ensure every child has a safe place.

V. Accountability

Clearly, public education in Chicago is a multifaceted challenge. To achieve the collaboration needed to drive progress, a keyword will be accountability. I support an elected school board as a part of the initiative for providing accountability.

Elected School Board

- No one really knows what a new elected school board will be like. I have a history of working collaboratively across government lines to get things done. I also have a strong history of supporting unions. I will call on all that experience to help the new school board be successful and continue to push for education excellence.
- Newly elected board members will need solid support in order to succeed. I will ask to develop, perhaps with the aid of a local university, appropriate training for new board of education members.

- Representation matters at the local level. I would support public financing for local school elections
- That said, the reforms as enacted can and should be improved.
 - I believe that the board as planned is larger than it needs to be.
 - The law should allow non-citizen taxpayers and undocumented parents to vote.
 - I will work with legislators in Springfield to address both issues, but, under any circumstance, I remain fully committed to supporting the new school board.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, if elected Mayor, I will be a champion for our students. I will strive to see the bigger picture of the roles and challenges of public education in the context of our Chicago communities. By working inclusively and collaboratively, we can achieve educational excellence for ALL of our children from birth to graduation.