

August 26, 2020 Board of Education Meeting
Written Comments Received Monday, August 24nd through Thursday, August 27th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

- 1 I am urging you to end the remaining contract with CPD in CPS. Beyond the common sense of not wanting to police CHILDREN, there are countless reports showing that children of color are much more likely to have negative interactions with police in schools. Black and brown children are much more likely to end up in jail or prison or with some type of record. This type of event in a child's life is traumatizing and so damaging to future educational and vocational opportunities. There is no evidence to show that police in schools make children or teachers safer! The money flowing to the already bloated budget for CPD could be used for sorely needed basics like social work, mental health resources and jobs training. If you really want our children to succeed do you think having police in schools is going to accomplish that?!

- 2 I urge the Board members to vote to end CPS's contract with CPD. As an alumna of 2 CPS schools and a lifelong Chicago resident I stand with CPS youth and alumni in calling for police free schools. Police do not make schools safer, they promote the school-to-prison pipeline and they enact violence on Black and brown students through harassment and excessive force. The 15 million dollars used on the police contract would be better spent in a myriad of ways including on counselors, nurses, transformative justice practitioners, trauma-informed response training for teachers, and so much more. Invest in youth, in their wellbeing and safety. Remove the state's agents of violence from CPS hallways.

- 3 The remote learning plan that was put out last week had me in tears. As a part time working parent with our other household parent working full time, this plan is completely unworkable. My children (1st grader and 4 years old) need to be in outside care 2.5 days per week in order for me to maintain my employment. By making attendance mandatory I wonder if my bright, school loving, curious, and successful 6.5 year old will fail out of 1st grade. I worry about her feeling she will be behind because she is unable to engage in all the lessons.
That brings me to the next point, the requirements for remote learning (both synchronous and asynchronous) are not only unmanageable for working parents who are unable to afford a 'pod teacher' or a nanny, they are completely developmentally inappropriate. As someone with a masters in early childhood development who is currently undergoing a PhD in the same topic I know that this schedule is not only wrong for my daughter but wrong for most young children. Our school has done a great job with what they were given, but they were given something awful to work with. By making attendance mandatory and by having such inappropriate screen time requirements, this directly contradicts the social and emotional learning that the plan touts as so important. It makes it really clear to me that that language was included as just that- language with zero action behind it. Families are stressed, we are still in the middle of a pandemic, and by making work and attendance mandatory families will be leaving CPS in droves (I already know of several who have pulled their children, and more who are bracing for failing out). The solution is not to put the children back in the classroom during the middle of coronavirus, but to have grace, empathy, and caring for families that will not be able to make this plan work. There are so many ways to get this right, with the engagement of teachers (many of whom are also parents that will have no way to make this work), working parents, students, and schools.

4 As a mom to an incoming Kindergartener, I am very concerned about the amount of minutes required for the youngest learners to sit in front of a computer for "live instruction" in the CPS remote learning plan. The 3-hour requirement is not developmentally appropriate and goes against guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education that suggests Kindergarteners receive weekly learning packets and learning activities that promote social interaction and multi-modal learning, and to limit the use of technology for that age. Please reconsider the remote learning minutes requirements for the youngest learners so we can keep them truly engaged in learning. It's also important to ensure flexibility so all families, no matter their work schedules, are able to support their students. Thank you.

5 Yes

6 I am writing to demand that the Chicago Board of Education cut its remaining \$18 million contract with CPD. Given their record of violence towards residents of color, having CPD in school is endangering the city's youth.

7 As a pediatrician practicing in Chicago, it's my job to respond to young people's needs. I listen and see them as the experts of their own lives. Yet even in my field of medicine, I see the needs of Black people systematically ignored. Black physical pain is both under-recognized and under-treated, and youth are not exempt. In a study of appendicitis management, for instance, Black youth were less likely to receive appropriate pain medication despite reporting the same pain scores as white youth. Emotional pain is even less visible and can be harder to recognize. Adults caring for youths need to trust them when they report anxiety or not feeling safe. Yet when Black students demand an end to ongoing trauma from police, their voices are dismissed in favor of traditional notions of safety. 18th ward Alderman Kendrick Curtis, for instance, says, "I cannot imagine what it would be like to not have a law enforcement officer" in the schools.

Black students in Chicago have four times as many police interactions in school as white students. The persistence of this disparity, despite overall decreases in policing, demonstrates that the School Resource Officer program is inherently unfair for Black youth. As Chicago Board of Education member Elizabeth Todd-Breland stated before her motion to remove police from schools did not pass, "this is a civil rights issue." For years, Black and Brown youth activists have called for police-free schools, citing extreme punishment for minor offenses, sexual harassment, and students' anxiety in the presence of police. The key to the police-free school debate is acknowledging that society at large has been conditioned not to believe Black youth.

Adolescence is a critical time. The human brain continues to develop through age 25, and the pre-frontal cortex, responsible for executive functioning and decision-making, is the last to fully form. This science helps adults working with youth to understand how risk-taking and mistakes are a normal part of adolescent development. Despite these findings, Black youth are not given the same grace as white youth, because authority figures typically see them as more mature than they are. According to a Georgetown Law School study, this means that "a white girl's mistakes may be met with sympathy and understanding, but time after time, Black girls are punished instead because they are held to a more adult standard of behavior." This leads to criminalization of age-appropriate misbehavior and higher rates of police referrals for Black youth. In Chicago public schools, Black girls experience seven times as many police interactions as white girls.

Some think Black youth are just “bad”; if they only acted “right”, they would have fewer interactions with police. Their experiences show otherwise. Tamir Rice was playing with a toy gun, an age-appropriate activity, when he was murdered by police at the age of 12. Trayvon Martin was 17, wearing a hoodie on his walk home, when George Zimmerman approached him unprovoked and murdered him. This pattern continues in the Chicago Public Schools, where a Black boy was arrested for six hours by a school resource officer for simply forgetting his ID card. Their appearance alone is seen as a threat, and normal behavior is treated as criminal. Police presence in schools increases the opportunities for Black youth to be seen as threats and increases their risk of incarceration.

As early as 10 years old, Black youth are no longer viewed as innocent. With the loss of innocence, they are no longer seen as worthy of protection. I’ve watched Black moms bring their sons with autism to the Emergency Department, desperate for behavioral support, only to watch their sons wrestled and restrained for over-activity by security and police. Their quest for help becomes a traumatic experience. Diverse learners are also involved in police incidents at school at higher rates than the general population. Students with individualized education programs, plans to support learning differences, make up only 15 percent of the Chicago public school population and 34 percent of police interactions. In both healthcare and schools, the needs of youth are met with police violence, not developmentally appropriate de-escalation.

We need to believe Black youth. Believe their hurt. Believe that they deserve to learn from their mistakes without a criminal record. Believe in their innocence. The demand for schools without police is an effort to make learning environments truly safe for Black youth, to equip them with resources that address the root causes of trauma, and free them from the harm of over-policing. Black youth, like all youth, deserve to be seen, loved, and treated as youth.

Rebekah Fenton, MD, is a pediatrician and adolescent health advocate in the Chicago area.

8 As a CPS parent, I am urge you to listen to Black CPS students and remove all SROs from our schools.

- we know that police in Chicago schools disproportionately harm Black & Brown students.
- reforms that the mayor has proposed do not go far enough, and are provisions that were already outlined in the consent decree (and deadlines were not met)
- students deserve a district-wide policy, where the proposed \$15 million is equitably distributed for counselors, social workers, and restorative practice coaches and training for teachers, nurses, and other vital services.

Thank you for your attention.

9 Numerous research studies show that the presence of police in schools (this includes SROs) brings imminent physical danger to students, hinders their academic achievement, fuels the school-to-prison pipeline, and more. Our youth deserve a prosperous future that is not impeded by routine sexual harassment by SROs (disturbingly frequent), being arrested for childhood mischief, and being physically assaulted while in school. The \$33 million dollar contract that funds cops in schools comes at the expense of crucial resources that teachers and students alike are desperately begging for. Redirect that money to trauma-informed social workers and

counselors, new technology, full-time librarians, academic mentorship, extracurricular activities, and more. Listen to students, listen to data, listen to research. Get cops out out of CPS NOW!

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- 10 I am writing in advance of tomorrow's meeting to approve CPS' budget for the upcoming school year and demanding you not allocate any money to the Chicago Police Department.

I am excited that you have already cut the funds allocated to CPD, but any funds protecting police presence in schools is a gross misallocation of public resources. Police in schools do not make students safe and even jeopardize the learning and wellbeing of students, especially Black students and other students of color. Instead, invest these funds in social workers, additional ESL teachers, and health services. Prioritize students, not cops.

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- 11 It is long past time that we remove the police from our schools. The presence of school resource officers does not keep our students safe and targets our black and brown youth, perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline. It is unconscionable that in a district that does not have a mental health provider in every school, we have allocated millions of dollars to line the pockets of the CPD while neglecting the most pressing needs of our students. Study after study has shown that the presence of police does not make students safer and that investing in mental health and support programs DOES make our students safer. I ask that you think long and hard about the message that you're sending to the youth of Chicago - are they scholars, or are they criminals? Budgets are, at their core, a moral contract and your vote today will show all of us what is truly in your heart and soul.

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- 12 Jodie Cantrell, jcantrell@incschools.org, 219-680-0715

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- 13 Remove cops from CPS! Our society needs so much change, and we can make such an impact by treating the Black students of Chicago as STUDENTS and not criminals. Let's use the money in ways that will actually benefit all of our students and show that we care about the kids in our communities.

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- 14 Members of the Board:

Who holds CPS Legal accountable? Who holds the CPS Office of Inspector General accountable? Both offices sit above the Chief Executive Officer on the CPS organization chart.

Additionally, if a person has a complaint about one or both offices simultaneously, to whom is that complaint registered and what is the process? Does the Board hire outside counsel outside of the jurisdiction of CPS Legal and OIG?

How are ethical safeguards ensured? The CPS Ethics Officer sits within and under the jurisdiction of the CPS Legal department.

Thanks,

Miriam

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- 15 SROs are not the answer to student behavioral problems. Students are young humans that are meant to have schools as a safe place for them to learn and grow. As students have said, over and over again, cops make them feel less safe. Board of Education, please think about your own children. Please think about Marshall High School, where a

child was suffocated by a police officer. Please think about what the money that goes to their pockets - \$152,000 per police officer and \$172,000 per sergeant. Think about that \$33 million. Why do we spend that on punitive, dangerous police officers, when we could spend it on so much more? I am a nonprofit worker for an organization that teaches restorative justice in CPS. One of our partner schools, Sarah Goode STEM, wasn't even included in the district-wide survey. How do you explain utilizing data that is CLEARLY skewed white and Asian, when your students are overwhelmingly Black and Latine? Please, listen to your students. Listen to your community. It's clear that the LSCs are not the correct process for this matter. It's on you. Please say NO to this contract. Please vote YES on the resolution to phase out SROs. Work with staff and students to learn how they actually can stay safe.

16 As a former CPS teacher and Chicago resident, I am a stakeholder in this decision because my heart lives in my former students and colleagues who are still part of CPS. They deserve safe schools, but the presence of CPD in our schools does not make us safe. WE keep us safe. We are trauma-informed, relationship-based educators, social workers, psychologists, community outreach coordinators, and more. Why do majority-white schools stay safe, increase academic performance, boost student self-confidence and self-efficacy, attract the best teachers, and offer cutting-edge curricular and extracurricular experience? It's not because they spend millions of dollars on police in schools. It's because they invest — with time, money, effort, trust — in students, their families, their communities (from all angles), their teachers, their support systems. They invest in health and wellness, in art, in research, in best practice. Ending the CPS contract with CPD will not wholly solve the issues due to and that lead to school segregation. However, it will unequivocally signal that Chicago stands with its children, families, and communities. Stand at the forefront of the tide of change. End this contract.

17 I am an LSC member and the parent of a CPS elementary student in Rogers Park. I urge the Board to vote no on renewing the Chicago Police Department contract with CPS. As you know, a number of LSCs have voted to remove SROs from their schools. I'm sure you are already familiar with research from the Shriver Center (<https://www.povertylaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/handcuffs-in-hallways-final.pdf>) and the Chicago Lawyers Committee (<https://www.clccrul.org/blog/2020/6/23/research-sros>) showing the negative impact of school resource officers and the disproportionate effect on Black and Latinx students. Especially now, during the pandemic, we need to ensure that CPS resources are focused on helping our students learn, not policing them. Thank you.

18 August 25, 2020

Chicago Board of Education
1 N. Dearborn, Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

My name is Aurelia Aguilar and I am a member of Healing to Action working with the SexEd Works Coalition. I am a mother of CPS students who are now attending Roosevelt High School, a school with over 1,000 students. I am writing to advocate for funding comprehensive sexual education led by the Office of Student Health and Wellness to ensure that sexual education is implemented equitably across Chicago.

Right now, the Office of Student Health and Wellness is working to revise the existing sexual education policy to ensure that the curriculum addresses topics like LGBTQ issues and is accessible for diverse students. But many of the parents in my community are devastated with the quality of training the educators receive to implement the curriculum. In order for these changes to be successful in the new policy, there needs to be resources and funding to ensure educators can provide a safe and informative learning environment for LGBTQ youth and diverse students.

In speaking with parents, I've learned that at times, educators skip over important themes because they don't feel comfortable teaching them. In other instances, they do not have the proper tools to answer student questions or ensure that us, as caregivers, have the tools to continue these conversations at home.

Under the new policy, sex educators will be receiving a 90 minute training and receive a certificate that would be valid for four years. This is like telling a math teacher that they will only have 90 minutes to learn about all of the math from K-12 and hope that they can teach it well.

In order to have meaningful implementation of comprehensive sexual education, we need to ensure that educators have enough training and resources to support students and educators. Parents in my community see that the budget needs to have a mechanism to ensure educators receive the appropriate training so that they can competently teach comprehensive sexual education to our students.

In calculating the cost of implementing comprehensive sex ed, I looked at the cost of educators receiving the district's training as it stands which is a full-day. If there's 2 educators in each of the 462 schools in the district, and the cost of a substitute teacher in each school is approximately \$126 a day, it would require a minimum of \$175K to implement comprehensive sexual education in all of the schools on an annual basis.

In the district's \$4 billion budget, investing \$175K could be the difference between experiencing gender-based violence or having communication skills and tools like consent to prevent and end gender-based violence for a whole generation

As a parent I ask that educators have the tools and resources to ensure youth, particularly marginalized LGBTQ youth and diverse learners, have the support and education they need their whole lives to engage in healthy relationships. Thank you for your attention, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Aurelia Aguila

19 August 25, 2020

Chicago Board of Education
1 N. Dearborn, Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

My name is Maria Serrano and I am a member of Healing to Action working with the SexEd Works Coalition. I am a mother of two Chicago Public Schools students who study at Maria Sucedo - a school with over 1,000 students - in the Little Village community. I am writing to advocate for funding comprehensive sexual education led by the Office of Student Health and Wellness to ensure that sexual education is implemented equitably across Chicago.

This year, my daughter graduated 8th grade. When I asked her if she had received sexual education, she shared that she had not. I learned that my daughter is one of the 70% of children in our district who did not receive the comprehensive sexual education as promised in the policy. In my research, I learned that like my daughter, many of the students live in the South and West sides of Chicago.

Recently, I spoke with the Office of Student Health and Wellness and they shared that they are working with 10 Chicago schools to implement comprehensive sexual education. I learned that even though the Office does not have funding, they have been supporting these 10 schools to implement sexual education. Those schools include:

Englewood - Stem
Simeon
Lindbloom
Benito Juarez
Roberto Clemente
Walter Payton
Lane Tech
Wells

If these 10 schools, where half are known to have robust resources for school, require funding to implement comprehensive sexual education, I believe that all schools should receive the funding to ensure the implementation of comprehensive sexual education from K-12 as promised by the policy.

I know that the policy is currently being revised by the Office of Student Health and Wellness. As a mother and activist, I see that this policy must have a funding requirement attached to ensure that all CPS students, regardless of their zip code, have access to comprehensive sexual education. I'm particularly concerned for students now who do not have a safe place at home, who experience abuse in the home, or who continue to live in fear at home because of their identity or sexuality. By ensuring comprehensive sexual education is in place, this can support both youth having a safe space and engaging caregivers like me so that we can reinforce those lessons at home and in our communities.

As a parent I ask that the existing policy be implemented equitably by ensuring that there is funding behind the policy. Thank you for your attention, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Maria Serrano

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- 20 Two concerns: 1) I am writing in support of the Capitol Expansion request for Sauganash Elementary School. Sauganash is an amazing neighborhood school, with a diverse student body. Over 40 languages are spoken among families. The school is not able to do all the things they would like to due to space limitations. For example, indoor recess is in the cafeteria, some classes take place in the hallway, including meetings between student and staff that should be in a room. The student body has outgrown the capacity of the school and needs space to adequately serve the students and families. 2) I am writing in favor of cancelling the Chicago Board of Education contract with the Chicago Public Schools. Cops do not need to be in schools, and their presence prevents students from feeling safe and secure, particularly on the west and south sides of Chicago. That funding is desperately needed for additional resources in the school, staffing, materials, equipment, etc. CPS schools are grossly underfunded and this is a disservice to the kids in Chicago.

21 Dear Board of Education Members:

My name is Kristy Brooks and I'm starting my 15th year as a Professional School Counselor with CPS. In my work with students across various school communities over the years, I've noticed a disturbing lack of follow-through in multiple schools on teaching the required worthwhile, preventive, and comprehensive CPS sexual health education curriculum. I first sought out sex ed instructor training from CPS in 2008 when I saw how great my students' needs in this area were and have pushed for it to be implemented in each school I've worked at since that time. I personally taught sex ed lessons to many classes K-8th so can speak to the empowerment this sex ed knowledge brings to students; unfortunately I can also attest to the barriers in our schools and catastrophic consequences when these lessons are withheld.

There have been many positive changes in the CPS Sexual Health department over the last decade. I find the scope and sequence of the lessons across K-8 to be interactive and engaging for the most part. From teaching correct body part names in Kindergarten, to breaking down gender stereotypes in 2nd grade, the primary lessons are vital to ensuring our students have the knowledge and skills to report any harm that has come to them. The 5th grade curriculum uses a powerful visual aid to explain the spectrums of gender identity, expression, and attraction to normalize where one falls on each of the spectrums as a valid part of understanding and valuing ourselves. This particular lesson is one that I've used not only class-wide for 5th graders, but in multiple 1-1 counseling sessions with LGBTQ students who have come to me for support over the years. Abstinence is taught, as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), contraception, and healthy relationships in 7th and 8th grades. Learning about the dangers of STIs as well as the benefits and limits of contraception prior to becoming sexually active is prevention education. Learning about consent and what that does and does not look like helps students recognize and prevent sexual violence in our communities. Last, but certainly not least, the anonymous question box gives students a safe way to ask sexual health questions and get a knowledgeable response that's not from friends or a google search. The amount of misinformation students bring in via the question box is alarming and I'm grateful to have the time and space to discuss it. For example, "The 'blue waffle' isn't a real STI, you cannot get AIDS from masturbation, and you should see a doctor about those symptoms (refer to the handout for the closest clinic for free confidential STI screening and treatment)". These lessons empower CPS students to make informed personal choices when it comes to sexual health.

The positive outcomes I've witnessed from providing comprehensive sex ed in CPS makes the roadblocks to all CPS students receiving these lessons that much harder to ignore. In my experience, the school administrator can make or break the sex ed program at a school. I am lucky to work with a phenomenal Principal at my current school who supports our school's compliance with the required minutes of K-8 Sex Ed lessons by ensuring our schedule allows for it and by hiring a PE teacher who is trained to teach it with me. Under former administrators, I have been repeatedly shut down and ignored when asking for our staff to be trained and our schedules to be arranged for our school to follow the mandate for teaching K-8 sex ed. Some admin might have a personal view that doesn't align with teaching comprehensive sex ed in our schools; others might be (wrongly) worried that many parents will be upset so they ignore the CPS mandate to teach it. Some administrators have refused to excuse teaching staff to attend the CPS Sex Ed training by stating they could not afford a substitute, so

allocating funding for subs while teachers attend the training would eliminate that barrier. FOIA data that showed only 30% of CPS schools meet the CPS sex ed teaching requirements per self-report; we need better district-wide accountability to ensure schools are following the mandated K-12 Sex Ed lessons and that starts with identifying the barriers 70% of our schools are up against.

In addition to a supportive administrator, a CPS sex ed curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities is desperately needed. Although I hear that one is “in the works”, I continue to struggle to adapt the current lessons for students in my school’s 3 cluster programs for students with disabilities that need a significantly modified curriculum. I certainly don’t want to leave my most vulnerable students without the knowledge they deserve to understand their bodies, make informed developmentally-appropriate personal choices, and protect themselves from harm.

The most impactful reach of these lessons I can convey to you from my School Counselor viewpoint is the decrease in suicidal ideations among my LGBTQ students once CPS’s comprehensive sex ed program was implemented in my school. The past 7 years I’ve taught at the same school and am responsible for responding to all student suicidal ideation in our building. The first 4 years when we did not follow the CPS mandate to teach the full sex ed curriculum K-8, I responded to many LGBTQ-related suicidal ideations, particularly among my middle school students. The past 3 years with my school complying with CPS’s comprehensive sex ed policy, I noticed a significant reduction in LGBTQ-related suicidal ideations each year. I strongly believe that this curriculum saves lives and is vital for the health and safety of our Chicago students and communities. Please commit to identifying and removing barriers to provide all CPS students with sexual health education.

Thank you for listening,
Kristy Brooks
Professional School Counselor

22 Dear Board of Education members: I am writing to ask that you vote to terminate the Chicago Public Schools' contract with the Chicago Police Department. Listen to the students who've led actions across the city for police-free schools. What they're asking for instead is to have schools of support, filled with counselors, social workers, nurses, teachers, parent mentors, and restorative justice practitioners. If LSC's had been given the power to reinvest the money from police salaries into these educators and staff, many, many more LSC's would've voted to end their relationship with the police. You have the power to provide that choice, and more importantly, you have the power to recommit this school district to the value, joy, and sanctity of Black lives by voting to terminate the police contract.

I'm a researcher and a professor of education and so I can give you another reason for voting to end the contact: in meta-analyses of research, which look across studies to determine overall trends, there is no conclusive evidence that police make schools safer. There is no benefit in the benefits column. But there are many, many costs. The research shows that students report feeling greater fear, disconnection, and disengagement in schools with police. Schools with police suspend and expel more students, arrest more students, and have lower attendance. And the students most

likely to experience these negative outcomes are Black students. CPS's own data shows egregious disparity and discrimination: Black students are arrested by school police 9 and 1/2 times more than white students. There is also the enormous cost of all the resources and staff students are deprived of when the district is spending so much money on police.

A vote to end the contract with the Chicago Police Department will contribute to students' success and well-being and the creation of a more racially just educational system. Please do the fact-based and morally right thing. End the contract.

Thank you, Cynthia Taines (40th ward) #blacklivesmatter

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- 23 Please trust and believe Black youth when they say they do not want the police in their schools. Please demonstrate to Black youth that their voices are being heard, their life's matter, and that funding their teachers, librarians, and school systems are more important than funding a racist institution that was designed to harm Black people. Remove the police from the schools and put that money back in the community.
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- 24 Please remove SROs from all CPS schools. Police in all forms do not belong in a place where mistakes are supposed to be made in order to grow and learn - schools. Fear is a killer of trust, safety, imagination, concentration and expression. These officers may not intend to incite fear in our children but they do and they're killing the tools our children need to succeed in school and in life. Remove SROs from all CPS schools.
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- 25 Remove police from CPS.
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- 26 As a Chicago resident and taxpayer, I ask that we remove all cops from our public schools and divert that money to funding positions for caring adults who are trained to provide social, emotional and academic support to our young people. Cops in schools are traumatizing and re-traumatizing our kids and contributing to inequities in marginalized communities. If we care about our students, cops must be removed from public schools now.

27 The CPS Board of Education should end its contract with the Chicago Police Department entirely. It has been exhausting to consistently hear students tell the board and their school LSCs that, at worst, the School Resource Officers make them feel less safe and as though they are under constant scrutiny and, at best, that the officers sit in an office all day and do nothing - and then have the adults with decision-making power ignore their voices and keep voting to keep SROs in schools, without any accountability for those votes. I recently learned that the district has no policy for how and when schools track SROs' interactions with students, and therefore data is completely inconsistent between schools. How can the board credibly argue this program is effective when there is no data available showing that having police stationed in schools does anything to increase the safety of people in the school or outside of it?

As a taxpayer, I want my dollars to go toward resources that make CPS students', teachers', and staff's lives better. Here is what students and teachers at my neighborhood high school (whose LSC has voted to retain its SRO) have told me would make the school more welcoming and safe: counselors; social workers; restorative justice programming; better custodial services; and capital improvements to get mold out of their classrooms, stop hallways from flooding during rainstorms, and make bathrooms feel safer and cleaner. Why are my tax dollars paying for officers to sit and do nothing, while water is flooding into the hallways whenever it rains and mold in classrooms is making teachers sick, and CPS says there is no budget to adequately fix those problems? Give LSCs an opportunity to choose where the SRO money could be redirected and I bet my neighborhood school's vote would be different. Even better, take responsibility as the Board of Education and stop wasteful spending on outdated notions that control and fear imposed by police officers make schools safe.

28 I am urging Board members to vote against renewing a contract with the Chicago Police Department to place SROs in our schools. The survey done by CPS to gather student input has faulty and incomplete data. We do not need police in our schools surveilling our students. Police have traumatized our young people and their families enough in heavily police communities. The \$32 million could be put to better use providing social supports to our students.

29 We do not need police in schools. Please keep police out of schools and cancel the contract between CPS and CPD.

30 I am writing to urge the board at this mornings meeting to vote to remove all cops from CPS. The youth have made their voices loud and clear by sharing their firsthand experience with SROs, who disproportionately arrest and punish BIPOC and underprivileged students. School should never be a place where students are afraid, and SROs create fear and intimidation. How can our youth be expected to learn in that environment? The young people leading the movement to get cops out of their schools are the very people you serve in your position. I urge you to listen to them. Listen to them. Treat their testimonies with respect and care, and vote to remove all CPD from CPS. Please, the future of our city depends on your vote. Listen to the young people.

31 We need more police present.

32 I am writing to submit my hope that the BOE will do the right thing and vote to remove SROS and any form of police from CPS. Young people in Chicago have made it loud and clear that police do not make them feel safe. All students in this city deserve to live and learn in an environment free from fear, free from harassment, and free from the presence of police.

- 33 When there are a bunch of students and teachers who say they don't want cops in their schools, you have to listen to them. If you say you love kids, then you have to listen to what they say and act on it. Students and teachers know their situation better than you ever could. While members of the board may have previously been students and teachers, they are not that now. They are appointed members of the board and not experiencing school as a student of teacher in the present moment. Members of the board exist to represent people involved in schools. Do your jobs!
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- 34 Our students have spoken. They don't want cops in schools. Trust them.
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- 35 Hello, I wanted to voice my concern for having School Resource Officers. Have police in schools is a proven detriment to children. It promotes an environment that is unsupportive and punitive for children to learn in. It reinforces the school to prison pipeline. What kids need is more resources, school counselors, adequate supplies, after school programs. All of these help kids be creative and grow and helps them have a safe and supportive environment. Police have NO place in schools. Please vote to take cops out of schools. Thank you
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- 36 I worked in a CPS school that was able to choose to have a social worker rather than a police officer in our school and it was truly the best thing for our school. There is no reason schools need someone with a gun, who works for an organization that has historically harassed people of Chicago, coming into their school every day. Do what's right.
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- 37 I am writing to ask from the bottom of my heart that you vote for removing CPD from CPS. I am a social worker. I have worked in a high school and seen the impact that police have on young people. Our young people deserve SO MUCH BETTER than to be policed at school. They deserve teachers with the resources they need, who do not buy resources out of pocket. They deserve fully funded extracurricular activities to pique their passions and keep them busy. They deserve school social workers who can actually take more than 5 minutes to talk with them, who are not trying to see an entire school's worth of trauma on their own. Behavioral struggles from students are not a sign of criminality. Far more often, they are a sign of trauma or instability outside of the school. How could we expect police to solve these problems, when for so many youth they are representatives of the same violence that produces this instability outside of school?

Youth are not a safety threat. Young people come to school to learn, to grow, to laugh. It is trauma that stands in their way, trauma and a lack of resources. I am a social worker. I have extensive training in mental health, and I have been working with youth since I was 16 years old and working as a teacher's aide at my synagogue. This decade of experience has taught me that attempting to stop traumatized behavior by increasing the trauma DOES NOT WORK. It only makes matters worse. It pushes youth out of school and makes them feel that there is no place in the educational system for them. It punishes a child's natural curiosity, loudness, and propensity to push boundaries (which is laughed off in wealthy white teens and criminalized in low-income Black and Latinx teens).

Youth need room to grow. Developmentally, they need to push boundaries. Sometimes they are loud and yes, sometimes they make mistakes. The way you support a child is by assuring them they will be loved no matter what. Police do not do that. SROs do not do that. Community does that. Have your own children never made a mistake? Did you not give them grace, room to grow, and assurance that you loved them even as you held them accountable? Do you not truly believe that all children deserve the same? Whose child deserves to be handcuffed instead of shown love? Show me that child.

Show me that family. They do not exist.

We are seeing, right now in our city, youth rise up for what they need and they deserve. They are showing you what they can do. They are showing you that they feel a sense of community, a sense of leadership, and a sense of purpose. To ignore that in favor of SROs would be cruel to them, and counterintuitive to the needs of the city.

38 I am a social worker in the child welfare field with additional experience working with youth at the Juvenile Detention Center (JTDC) and the Illinois Youth Centers (IYC). As someone who has studied and worked with youth of many ages, in particular youth with a criminal justice background, I am urging you to listen to the voices of Black and Brown youth in our City and vote to end CPS' contract with the Chicago Police Department and remove SROs from ALL public schools.

When I worked with youth at the JTDC and IYCs, I learned that these youth were not bad kids. The system had failed them in many ways. One of the ways the system failed them was by not providing wrap-around support to promote healthy development in their schools. When they got into fights at school, instead of the response being a caring adult asking what was wrong, they were met with punitive practices from police officers or SROs. Thus, they set along a school to prison pipeline. The youth with stories like that were predominantly Black and brown.

However, there is a way to interrupt that pipeline. By removing SROs from CPS, and reinvesting that money in resources for the caring adults who work at CPS as teachers, social workers, and nurses, students can receive care and healing and avoid the cycle of incarceration.

Moreover, the negative impact of SROs on students in CPS is not equally felt. Though BIPOC students are 60% of the CPS population, they make up 95% of the incidents with school police. Children of Color who repeatedly report feeling unsafe w/ SROs in school. Research also shows that SROs do not reduce violence in our schools and they negatively impact Black students academic performance. This is a systemic issue that needs a clear district-wide anti-racist policy, not a piecemeal response.

This is the school civil rights issue of our time. Please be on the side of justice for our youth and our community.
Eliana Sigel-Epstein, 60640

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- 39 Please remove police from our schools. The stress and trauma this causes for Black and brown students, as well as the increase in POC students that are fed into the school to prison pipeline because of a minor transgression (or even a misunderstanding) that occurs with police in their schools, is immeasurable. These students need social workers and other mental health resources instead of armed forces.

Only an extremely small percentage of incidents in schools requires physical intervention and use of force, and of these, some of the escalations are caused by the police themselves, who bring weapons into weaponless situations and who are not trained specifically to deescalate or work with young people in any capacity.

There is an argument that some people make in favor of officers in schools outlining the chance for a positive impact on the students. This is well-intentioned but ultimately harmful for BIPOC students, many of whom will inevitably be targeted by police later in life. It does little good for these students to have a positive experience with officers who systematically and disproportionately will target them over white people. All this experience will do is teach them to trust a system that cannot be trusted, as numerous studies will show (Black people make up 22% of *fatal* police shootings alone in the US in 2020 despite being only 13.4% of the population).

I recognize that many of these schools can't be left hanging with no personnel to help, and some of these schools are even voting to keep officers because they feel it is their only choice (though far from their first choice) of having anyone at all. This is not right. Schools should have the staff they need to support the students. Only then can we break the cycle of policing and violence. Please listen to the students and their experiences.

40 Im writing to support the movement for police free schools. It is a data driven, evidence based practice that will reduce student anxiety and promote relationship building and connection based justice. I was disappointed that in passing this decisions to the LSCs, CPS would not allow individual schools to make the choice to reinvest funds into alternate safety plans. The choice was: cops or nothing, rather than: cops or something else. And I believe that something else is possible. You have the ability to choose something else. Thank you for your time.

41 Cops don't belong in schools, not in Chicago, not anywhere #ACAB #DefundPolice #CPACNow

42 As a teacher and community member the safety of our students is incredibly important to me. Our students mental and physical wellness requires us to remove the SROs from schools and reallocate those funds to social workers and restorative justice programs. If Chicago Public Schools are serious about equity, they will understand that police do not protect and have not historically protected black and brown communities. We can not reform our way out of this. We need new systems that reimagine how we care for and serve our young people. Protection and safety come from resources, not policing. We need police free schools.

43 I am urging you to terminate CPS' contract with CPD. As a CPS alum, I have seen firsthand how having officers in schools does not promote safety or learning but instead creates an authoritarian state and instills fear. The environment perpetuated by SROs in schools is not compatible with a healthy school environment, and it needs to be up to the Board to end the contract once and for all. It is not acceptable to shirk this responsibility and place the weight on the LSCs when 1/5 of CPS schools don't have an LSC or their LSC doesn't have a quorum or voting power and when schools don't get the option to keep the money that would've gone to the SROs. This power lies with the Board of Education, and I'm urging you to make the right decision and end the CPD contract.

44 Hello Board of Education,

I am asking you to listen to the demands of the youth and vote to end the contract with CPD and keep SROS out of schools. I have witnessed many school board meetings, protests and other actions where Black and brown youth detail their demands for police free schools, the violence that SROs bring into their life and how this money could instead be invested into Black and brown youth. I am disheartened by how the Board of Education continues to ignore the demands of these youth. It is not enough for LSCs to vote separately- the board must end the contract.

CPS must join the growing number of cities to keep police out of schools and protect our Black, brown, queer and disabled students.

I urge you to vote to end the contract the Chicago Police Department. #copsoutCPS

45 There should be no police officers in Chicago Public Schools. We have a responsibility to educate and care for our children, not threaten them with violence or introduce them to direct harm. The money being spent on CPS' contract with the Chicago Police Department is money meant for our children and city's future. Let them live and learn in peace.

46 Please take police out of CPS schools and stop the school to prison pipeline for Black and brown students.

- 47 Please vote to dismiss the SROs. Children should be able to learn without the threat of the criminal legal system looming over their shoulders. Reinvest the money in resources that actually contribute to their education.
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- 48 I am demanding police free schools, we need to invest more into students, invest into mental health for our black, brown and queer youth, invest into art programs, and into restorative justice practices. We need to terminate that CPD AND CPS CONTRACT NOW. It is proven that police in schools don't improve anything and instead harass our black and brown youth in and out of schools. Take for example the Defund CPD and Abolish Ice Protest that happened recently where young people were beaten and pepper sprayed by police for demanding the bare minimum, those same police are in our schools!!!
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- 49 I am a music educator in the city of Chicago. I am writing in support of the movement to completely end CPS' contract with CPD, to remove all SROs from schools, and to reallocate the money to fund other essential school services, with an emphasis on underfunded schools.
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- 50 I am commenting to oppose the presence of police officers in schools. I graduated in 2015 and there was a police officer assigned to my high school. While he seemed like a nice guy he did nothing to make my school safer. We still had a problem with nearby gang violence and students having a hard time. In schools across the country a school police officer has never prevented a school shooting. The police serve no purpose in schools other than to cost the city and the school district money. If we want to actually make schools safer we should be investing in mental health care for students and economic development for the communities surrounding schools. Every dollar spent on police in schools could instead be going towards giving students and better education and doing things that actually make them safer.
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- 51 Hello, My name is Robert Szczesniak. With incoming 1st and 5th graders, we have been involved with Sauganash Elementary for 6 years. Thank you for your time and consideration of the Sauganash Annex Expansion.

Each of the last 6 years at Sauganash has been an increasingly difficult game of Tetris as the continuously growing student population needs to fit into a vastly undersized building.

It is a testament to Mrs. Munns and her team that each year this school maintains extremely high educational standards. However, sacrifices are continually made along the way. Physical space for educational resources have been eliminated or severely limited. This includes the library, art, music, and science labs.

There is not enough gym space to properly and safely conduct physical education. Storage rooms, hallways, and stairwells have been converted to teaching spaces. Not only does this hinder learning but violates fire codes and other safety best practices.

These adjustments are unsustainable the student population has been consistently growing for the past 15 years. This rate is expected to continue and accerlate as older households transition to younger families, the recently completed subdivision of more than 30 homes enrolls, and the recent trend of local private school students transferring to Sauganash continues.

This growth trend is not merely a wave that we can wait to crest but a long term trend that needs to be addressed immediately to provide a safe learning environment for the current and future students of Sauganash Elementary. The most recent population data

published by CityData.com compiling data from 2017-2018 provides detailed demographic trends. The most populous age groups at the time were adults 35-40 years old and children 4 years old and younger. Sauganash Elementary is a school poised for continued and sustained growth.

We truly value the high quality of education and diverse experience that Sauganash Elementary delivers on a yearly basis. We hope that you continue to support this success story by approving the capital investment of the Sauganash Elementary Annex Expansion. Because regardless of the quality of teachers and curriculum we are up against a very fixed physical space limitation.

52 As a CPS administrator, I personally love our SRO. She is well trained, personable, and calm under pressure. That said, she is one of the few CPD officers I have ever had a positive and helpful interaction with, and even as a white woman I know that the police as a whole come from a racist system and continue to perpetuate that racism onto the black and brown bodies I have devoted my life's work to supporting. Research also shows that use of police, intentional or not, overwhelmingly is used against black students even when white peers commit the same infractions. As this is the reality, I implore you to remove all police from CPS, and work with schools to put discipline in place that keeps everyone safe without police intervention. It is possible, and it's what our children deserve.

53 It is increasingly evident that law enforcement do not keep our children safe in schools- teachers and support staff do. Our country has been shocked by incidents of in-school police officers harming and arresting children- young children have been handcuffed and thrown to the ground, among other incidents. It is shocking that in Chicago most schools may have police officers but may have a nurse only one day per week and even fewer social workers. Please listen to the youth of our city who have organized to call for removing cops from their schools.

54 As a CPS administrator, I personally love our SRO. She is well trained, personable, and calm under pressure. That said, she is one of the few CPD officers I have ever had a positive and helpful interaction with, and even as a white woman I know that the police as a whole come from a racist system and continue to perpetuate that racism onto the black and brown bodies I have devoted my life's work to supporting. Research also shows that use of police, intentional or not, overwhelmingly is used against black students even when white peers commit the same infractions. As this is the reality, I implore you to remove all police from CPS, and work with schools to put discipline in

place that keeps everyone safe without police intervention. It is possible, and it's what our children deserve.

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- 55 End the school to prison pipeline by ending the CPS contract with CPD! Police in schools do not prevent violence, do not make students safer, do not address the underlying needs of students and their communities. Students and educators have already put in the work to imagine a different way, a better future that actually addresses trauma instead of causing more of it. End the contract and spend that \$30+ million on actual support, not more racist police terror. #CopsOutCPS
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- 56 Please see attached bilingual written public comment from Maria L. Toribio, president of the Kelvyn Park High School LSC, and co-chair of the Elementary Justice Campaign in POWER-PAC IL, a project of COFI.
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- 57 I am writing to urge board members to vote to remove SROs from Chicago public schools. Our schools need counselors, social workers and nurses, not police. We need to follow a restorative justice model instead of the punitive model that does not solve any problems and does not make our society safer.
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- 58 Keep CPD out of CPS! Cancel the contract. Reforms DO NOT WORK, and are super expensive! Children shouldn't be arrested in the classroom! They should have counselors and social workers helping them overcome their problems! Invest in our students!
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- 59 On a host of key measures (e.g., rates of suspensions, student perceptions of safety, high school graduation rates) empirical, peer-reviewed research findings do not indicate positive effects of having police in schools . "We want to be able to have a school system where students are greeted with school nurses, with full-time mental health supports, and not the Denver Police Department." --Denver School Board Member, Tay Anderson. This is the type of leadership and commitment that our students in Chicago deserve, as well. Listen to the students and let them show you, the Board, the way forward. The students know the research and have plans for how to move forward without police and policing in schools. Listen to the students and make some positive changes, starting with following peer-reviewed research findings and the voices of those you are charged to serve, the students.
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- 60 As a former CPS teacher and a current education researcher, I hope that the Chicago Board of Education listens to the voices of young activists and the advice of research and ends CPS's contract with the Chicago Police Department. The Board's previous choice to refer the decision to individual LSCs was fundamentally flawed because while ending the district's contract with CPD would free up money to spend on other resources, individual schools were told they would not receive any additional resources if they voted to remove resource officers from their schools. Many LSCs who voted to retain their school resource officers might have made different choices if given the option to replace their school resource officer(s) with a social worker or other specialist(s).
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- 61 It is crucial for the safety of our students that we move towards police free schools with alternative safety plans. As we have seen over and over again, across the country and in our own neighborhoods, the continued use of police puts our BIPOC students at risk of police violence. We have also seen no evidence that they provide protection for any of our students when crises do occur. Schools should provide opportunities and a place to dream, and at the very least a reprieve from state sanctioned violence and neglect to our students, particularly for those in underserved and overpoliced neighborhoods. I

hope you take this opportunity to reimagine what our schools and communities could look like, and the freedom we can afford our students to learn without a fear inducing police presence.

62 The children in Chicago Public Schools deserve better. We cannot allow financial and personnel resources to be routed away from necessary sources like social workers, special education, small class sizes, additional staff training to CPD. CPD has terrorized Chicagoans for decades and children fear their resource officers. Data shows that black and brown children are overrepresented in behavioral interventions by CPD in schools. We need cops out of CPS.

63 Please see the attached.

64 As a community member and educator, I urge you, as a member of the Chicago Public School Board, to vote for the removal of SROs from the halls of our schools.

I am a teacher at a CPS neighborhood elementary school. We teach students about the power of their voices and agency they have as citizens of their communities. I hope you all have heeded the voices of our students! You should be proud of their thoughtful dedication and articulation on why removing SROs is vital, and show this by listening and voting as their representatives. I would be disheartened as a fellow resident and educator to know CPS does not put true student safety over status quo practices that have been shown to perpetuate racial inequities. As CPS moves toward restorative justice practices and philosophies, rightly so, our schools must back that up with action. And like someone said during an LSC meeting, you can't have a restorative conversation when one of the parties is holding a gun. Please consider the symbolic message and concrete step this vote is towards ending racial injustices in our school system. Lead with love!

In solidarity with the youth freedom fighters! #COPSOUTCPS #PoliceFreeSchools

65 Either the cops go or Lori goes!!

66 I support removing CPD from CPS and redistributing those funds to support more social services for students.

67 It is unconscionable to continue diverting funds that are desperately needed for nurses and counselors to police, who feed our youth into the prison pipeline.

Hire counselors to address the root of problems before they become dangerous. Hire union security guards for everything else.

68 Please vote to end CPD on site of CPS schools. Students and the community have been clear: SROS are not good for kids of color, or kids with disabilities. Invest in restorative justice and mental health instead!

69 I am a Northwest side resident writing in support of the resolution requiring schools to create plans for campus safety without SROs. I heard in June's Board of Education meeting from several board members that even though the presence of law enforcement contributes to a school-to-prison pipeline, especially for Black students and students with disabilities, the schools in their neighborhoods face a constant threat of violence so high that it requires the presence of a police officer. I strongly support the creation of a plan to change this situation, because our students deserve a safer future. CPS students, alumni, and teachers have all spoken out against the SRO program and I believe it is time to listen.

- 70 I write to voice my support to remove police from Chicago Public Schools. As a person who has worked my entire career in education as a teacher, administrator, and researcher, I know that police are not the answer to improving safety and school climate. Continuing to criminalize our youth instead of supporting them will perpetuate the cycles of violence, and we have better alternatives to improve safety that cost significantly less than policing. The events of recent weeks show that police departments are not equipped to de-escalate dangerous situations or to treat all people equitably and with dignity.
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- 71 Please find alternate safety places for CPS other than a \$33 Million contract with CPD. That money could be used much more effectively on other community-based safety programs and other needs of CPS.
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- 72 CPD should not be in public schools. The money currently spent on the contract with CPD could be used so much more effectively, especially right now. Schools should ALL have nurses, counselors, librarians, and general supplies before a single cent is spent on CPD. The fact that you have teachers spending thousands of dollars of their own money on classrooms, you have students who can't afford lunch, you have schools without guidance counselors, is ridiculous. Cut the contract and actually invest in your students.
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- 73 As a concerned Chicagoan, I am writing to urge you to listen to the voices of Black and Brown youth in our City and vote to end CPS' contract with the Chicago Police Department and remove SROs from ALL public schools.
The data is clear that police presence in our schools is harming our city's students, particularly Children of Color who repeatedly report feeling unsafe w/ SROs in school. Research also shows that SROs do not reduce violence in our schools and they negatively impact Black students' academic performance. (Source Chicago Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights.)
Reducing the SRO budget to \$12 million is an admission by CPS that the SRO program is ineffective and harmful and needs to be completely eliminated. This is a systemic issue that needs a clear district-wide anti-racist policy, not a piecemeal response. End this problematic contract immediately so CPS can use that money for vital services like school counselors, social workers, restorative practitioners, technology, nurses, and the like!
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- 74 I urge the Chicago Board of Education to end its contract with the Chicago Police Department and to remove all police officers from all CPS schools, and to invest instead in more school counselors, social workers, nurses, and other school personnel that can address the needs of our students proactively and that are trained in restorative justice practices. Our students deserve a loving, nurturing school environment, and the presence of police seems to escalate the crisis a student may be experiencing in that moment, reinforcing an atmosphere of fear and suspicion that adds to the diminishment, instead of the replenishment, of a student's resilience and healing. I hope the Board does the right thing and sends the powerful message that is needed right now - that we want to build up, rather than tear down, the education our students so that they can be the informed, engaged future leaders of our democracy.
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- 75 Please end your contract with CPS. They do not belong in our schools.

- 76 Our young people deserve real safety, and that means not having police officers in their places of learning.

We know it's impossible to learn if someone does not feel safe. And we know that police treat people very differently based on race. Almost 85% of the students in our district are Indigenous, Black, and brown (data from CPS website). 75% of the people arrested on CPS grounds were Black last year. Throughout the city, police have been brutalizing protesters, even peaceful ones, and CPD's leadership has done nothing to stop them. Why do we want them in our schools, around our children? Their presence alone can create an unsafe environment for students of color, which makes it incredibly hard to learn. We are not only putting our students in danger by putting police officers in schools, but also are doing them a great academic disservice.

CPS students have been working incredibly hard to get cops out of their schools. Several LSCs have voted to remove their SROs, which is encouraging, but we know that not all CPS schools have LSCs or have full membership to their LSCs. Many of the SROs that remain are in predominantly Black schools. This is a deplorable lack of leadership from the Mayor, CPS central, and the school board.

We demand you all take the steps to ensure Indigenous, Black, and brown students feel safe and are safe in their schooling environment, in part by recognizing and mitigating the trauma that student interactions with police can cause.

I beg you to follow the lead of your counterparts in Minneapolis, Denver, Portland, and Milwaukee. Doing so will reduce tensions that exist between our youth and law enforcement, tensions that have surely increased as a result of the police department's mistreatment of many Chicagoans over the past 3 months, and increase the resources our city and students will need in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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- 77 CPS schools must become police-free zones. School should not be a place where students need to split their attention between learning and fear of police action/brutality. Schools are not police precincts or military outposts - treating them as such promotes fear and tells students they are dangerous. Rather than funneling money into on-campus police presence, funds for school safety should be used for alternative safety plans that do not endanger students as they try to learn.
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- 78 Police do not belong in our schools. Schools are meant to be an environment that facilitates and fosters comfort, learning, and acceptance. For some students, it is impossible to focus on and live out that reality due to the presence of police. Is it not enough that people of color have an underlying, constant worry about interacting with police? Why do we have to make that fear escalate and exist in their schools? If you really care about growth and education, you will let schools be a safe place, free of police and full of passion, for students of color.
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- 79 Please cancel the contract between CPS and CPD. That money should be diverted where it would better serve our communities.
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- 80 Children who struggle in school should be met with support and love, not violence and sanction. Police officers are only trained in the latter of these, and therefore have no place in our educational institutions. Rather than funding SROs, CPS should be investing in more substantial support structures, like counselors, social workers, and better access to resources for low income or housing insecure students.

- 81 I am submitting a comment in favor of removing police officers from schools. Research on this subject has consistently shown that the presence of police in schools increases students' chances of interaction with the justice system, creating school to prison pipelines. Intervention in student violence or discipline is possible without the presence of armed officers and the involvement of the justice system that can set students at a lifelong disadvantage. Beyond that, the mental strain of a constant police presence in a student's life is a real threat to their well being. Furthermore, at a time when school budgets are constrained, it is unconscionable to pay the police department to enforce laws while resources to prevent violence and other behavioral issues in the first place are being depleted. Change depends on our treating students like human beings first and not as potential criminals.
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- 82 Please keep the police out of schools. It's a place for learning and children cannot do that if they are worried they will be shot or harmed by police. School should be a safe place and police have time and again proved that they cannot provide that and have consistently been the aggressors. Put that money towards education instead and assisting the overworked and underpaid teachers.
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- 83 I support police free schools and alternative safety plans. Please cancel or at the very least reduce the \$33 million contract between CPS and CPD. Our kids deserve to thrive in a safe atmosphere, free of the presence of police who have historically, and currently, been a threat to black and brown bodies.
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- 84 I'm writing to provide my input to support police free schools and implement alternative safety plans in CPS. I'm a CPS alumna. I've seen first hand the lack of resources that our local schools have. As a current Chicago resident, I've witnessed the violence, brutality, and trauma that the police department has inflicted not just on our students but communities, individuals, and families across the city. The police department has demonstrated that they do not protect and serve our students, families, and individuals of Chicago. Rather, they create a lack of safety for our students, particularly students of color. I'm writing to share that I support that Chicago Public Schools cancel their contract with the Chicago Police Department. Maintaining this contract sends only one message to our students: that their voices, safety, and lives do not matter. A contract with CPD has the potential to create a re-traumatizing environment for students which furthers a lack of safety. Our students, staff, and schools need to be supported with funding for classroom supplies, teacher's salaries and benefits, support staff (cafeteria, custodial, etc.) salaries and benefits, nursing services, special education staff, mental health and trauma counseling, case management services to meet families basic needs, sexual health education, and programming for the arts, music, athletics, STEM, and cultural groups. An armed officer cannot possibly be expected to provide all of these services that are essential to students' safety, health, and well-being.
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- 85 I support removing the police presence from schools in Chicago. Our kids need better guidance counselors and support staff -- not cops -- if we want them to succeed in thier education.

86 To know where we are headed we have to know where we started. “ In the south however, The economics that drove the creation of police forces were centered not on the protection of shipping interests but on the preservation of the slave system. Some of the primary policing institutions there were the slave patrols tasks with chasing down runaways and preventing slave revolts.” - Time Magazine - how the US got its police force, by Olivia Waxman-

Though we may not be in the south, Chicago is one of the most segregated city's in the nation! I ask you, how can a system made to remove freedoms from the black Americans be constitutionally allowed in an educational space? How do you expect any black student to feel safe with the presence of cop and the alarming statistics of police brutality on minorities?

Education is one of the only things that cannot be taken from Black Americans. Reinforcing cops in CPS is putting up a even strong barrier to knowledge!

It is common knowledge when children Or adults feel harassed or discriminated against they have worse memory loss/focus.

I believe the question to ask is - do minority's feel comfortable around cops? I believe that answer is “ NO”. Therefor the answer to allow cops to occupy our schools should be “NO” as well. Black children matter as do black lives!

87 My name is Lucianne Walkowicz; I'm an astrophysicist and the co-founder of the JustSpace Alliance. As a STEM educator, I care deeply about creating programs that are responsive to the needs of our youth-- not just as far as subject matter or level, but in making sure they have a safe and supportive environment in which to learn. Based on my experiences mentoring Black and Brown students from across Chicago and the country, and listening to their experiences, I am writing to tell you that police presence destroys those students' safety, endangering not only their learning but their lives. You must, MUST listen to our Black and Brown community members and END CPS's contract with CPD. That money can go to so, so many better things that will actually support student learning, and make schools a place they no longer have to fear for their lives.

88 I want the board to work to remove police from CPS schools- cancel the contract and get them out. Start student supervision over with holistic and healthier approaches. An institution founded on racism only perpetuates it, no matter the setting. I wouldn't want my children to be in school with a police officer there and I was lucky to attend a school where that wasn't the case. We had other issues being in a poor, rural area but at least we didn't have cops threatening us. And if local councils want to self determine this then let them but don't let the default be that the police stay- start from scratch and provide them all of their options for protecting students, staff, and teachers. Make sure they know that they're not safer with police present (as research shows) and that their kids would be targets if they're black or brown. Use those millions of dollars for education and social service improvements. <https://www.endzerotolerance.org/single-post/2019/03/11/Research-on-the-Impact-of-School-Policing>

89 I am submitting the testimony I gave at the Board meeting today as a written statement, as well as a written statement by Mr. C. W. Chan, Founder and Board member of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community as an attachment.

90 The cops have no place in CPS. They teach nothing but being criminalized at a young age. School should be a safe place for students. Bring more nurses and counselors!!

91 It is past time for cops to be out of schools. More than ever CPS students need access to restorative justice, social services, and to be heard. CPS had wrapped their 5 year plan in the banner of equity. However, how is it equitable for students to experience trauma every time they walk into their school building and see a school resource officer. The reasons for officers are often around safety. But I ask safety for whom? If the students they are supposed to protect are actually terrorized by their actions, that is not safety. The pandemic has shown a light on so many things that are not working in this country. This is one of those areas. #CopsOutCPS

92 We are happy to see many schools receiving facilities investments. We believe every school should get the necessary repairs and upgrades they need. Most schools have waited far too long for such investments.

Parents continue to ask Raise Your Hand: How does CPS choose who has to wait and who doesn't? Parents, schools and the public deserve to know this, and to have a more equitable framework where every school that has a crumbling roof or failed plumbing system is considered equal and worthy of capital dollars.

At last year's FY20 capital plan hearings, it was nice to see a slide that claims that you have a process. That needs to be shared widely and with more explanation.

THERE IS NO CURRENT SYSTEM TO INFORM AND ENGAGE PARENTS- instead we have begging and politics driving CPS capital budget decision making.

We continue to ask CPS for a long term, overarching, citywide Educational Facilities Master Plan which is informed by robust community engagement. This is not a crazy ask... it's actually the law. As far as we can tell, CPS is not in compliance with this law.*

The current state of how capital plans are made is no way to run any kind of a system. Also, with billions of dollars in unmet facilities needs an EFMP may be the only way out in addressing school facility needs.

All students deserve well-resourced, well-maintained, clean, healthy, comfortable school buildings. And all communities deserve stable, well-resourced schools. The CPS Board of Education should engage in a transparent process to determine capital projects.

Additionally, the process for signing up to speak at the FY21 capital plan hearings was unacceptable and not transparent. There was info about the hearings (dates, times) on cps.edu/calendar BUT only the budget hearings had a link to www.cpsboe.org to sign up to speak. We never saw a direction given as to where to sign up for the capital plan hearings. We looked repeatedly at both the CPS calendar webpage as well as the CPS BOE website and we never saw it. Sure it's possible we missed it but why "time out" speaker registration? Why hide (it seems like it was hidden?) the registration link? We're happy that the 2 communities that are getting big investments (Sauganash ES & Chinatown HS) were able to find the speaker registration sign up but how did they find it and absolutely no one else did? Barely anyone attends these anyway, let alone speaks, so why make it difficult? This type of thing erodes trust in the district and is truly unnecessary, BUT addressing facility needs are necessary and crucial for student health & safety.

*The law that was passed in 2011 requires CPS to have a 10-Year Educational

Facilities Master Plan or EFMP. In September of 2013, a Plan was approved and, supposedly, implemented. A 5 Year Update to the original EFMP was published last summer- it is still labeled as "Draft" on the CPS website and there was no real community engagement around it. CPS does a major disservice to communities when they don't engage them and follow a publicly available plan that distributes resources across the city to address facilities needs fairly and equitably.

Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education

P.S. If the above statement sounds familiar, yes, it's our statement from last year's capital plan hearings and incredibly similar to what we've said year after year for about 5 years. https://www.ilraiseyourhand.org/ryh_20_budget_hearings

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- 93 Police presence is often interpreted in schools as confrontational and punitive, rather than restorative. The police are not trained to deal with discipline and other problems, notably with autistic students, and often escalate situations that could be better dealt with by school staff, especially counselors and social workers, who are properly trained and know individual students, without the use of excess force.
-
- 94 Use Resource Officer budget for school social workers and creative artists.
-
- 95 My letter demanding the removal of SROs from CPS and the termination of the CPS-CPD IGA is attached.
-
- 96 The only interaction I ever had with a cop in my school was them illegally interrogating me without allowing me to have a lawyer present and without notifying my parents. They don't stop school shootings and they don't keep kids safe. They just take much needed funds out of the classroom and use it to intimidate children.
-
- 97 The attached letter was also sent to BOE@cps.edu.
Raise Your Hand
-
- 98 The attached letter was sent to BOE@cps.org plus each individual board member, CEO Jackson, Chief Chou, and City officials.

99 It is past time to remove police officers from our city's schools. Black and Brown students have worked and fought for years to show that SROs have a negative and violent impact on their health, education, and safety. They are people armed with tasers, tear guns, and even firearms places of learning full of children. They cause Black and Brown youth to be overly surveilled, criminalized, abused, and harassed. True safety for our schools would look like school counselors, nurses, community and parent engagement, appropriate class sizes, not untrained, unqualified individuals with semi lethal weaponry. Please, vote today to remove all SROs from our schools.

100 I'm Alex Lopez. I'm a member of an LSC, Chicagoans for Anti-Racist Education or CARE, and the parent of three kids who attend a school in Lakeview named after a racist scientist. I originally signed up to speak with you all about removing Louis J. Agassiz's name from our school but I am inspired to name what I see happening today.

While the board publishes Dr. Swinney's equity framework prioritizing racial equity on paper, your actions repeatedly accept and extend false white supremacist narratives as inevitable while treating racial justice as a second class goal.

CPS 's hybrid plan accepted the narrative that our schools were too crowded to bring back students into safe conditions without talk of reopening the 50 shuttered schools in our Brown and Black communities, without attempting to rehire all of the veteran educators of color who were laid off by administrations past.

CPS perpetuates the white supremacist narrative that police are the only way to keep us safe when you say LSCs should decide about SROs but won't allow LSCs to invest the same funds in alternatives.

Today, CPS is sending 1,000 school clerks, predominantly women of color, back into school buildings without a safety plan while we hold this meeting virtually for our own safety. You're telling parents that reopening will follow the science but not for these Brown and Black mothers, never mind all the early childhood research that your distance learning plan ignores.

When we defend the status quo, we preserve and perpetuate the historical inequities. Why is the board cramming a virtual replication of the status quo school day on us without seeking the creative input and experience of the thousands of educators and families who have been prioritizing equity in their classrooms and communities everyday.

Our elementary school is named after one of the founders of anti-Black ideology and when we try to take his name off the building we're told to prioritize Board policies and process, the same board which put his name on our building in the first place. If you cannot confront the racist legacy of a dead man in Lakeview then I hold little hope that you will confront the living racism which permeates our school system.

101 I am deeply disappointed by the decision the Chicago Board of Education made today to keep CPD in CPS. SRO presence in schools does not keep students safe, in fact it actively harms students, Black and Brown students especially. There are many studies on this, studies that I'm sure you've been sent and have disregarded time and time again. This actively violent behavior is unacceptable. Students should not have police in their schools. Our tax dollars are paying to have police in schools, and that money should be going to additional resources and funding for students- more after school programs, more arts programs, more counselors, more nurses, more resources that will not only make schools safer for students, but will provide them with the solid public

education they deserve as American citizens. Board of Education, you are on the wrong side of history. Students have been organizing and protesting demanding CPD out of CPS, and you do not listen. Who do you serve? Because it is clearly not students and their well-being.

102 As a CPS alumni, I respectfully ask the Board of Education discontinue their contract with CPD and instead use those resources to provide enough school psychologists and social workers in each CPS. I strongly believe combating the issue of within in an emotional and mindful level will do much more good than providing cops into our schools to solve issues that they cannot solve.

Students are not criminals.

They are growing human beings that are still developing their emotional stance, brains and view of society. We don't need to create a criminal pipeline to incarceration for them. We need to create a reliable source that will enhance their development in a positive and educational point of view with the help of our social workers for example. We need professionals like school psychologist to care for our students and analyze where their educational process is hitting a road block instead of taking them to the deans for "acting up" when in reality the student is struggling. Especially during this pandemic, ending the contract with CPD of 33million dollars, the Board of Education should use the money to provide more resources to our teachers as well.

Thank you.

103 Comments sent in attachment

104 Dear CPS Board Members:

I wish to address two issues that relate to actions the Board has taken today. First, the reforms to the SRO program do not adequately address the root problems of inequity in discipline highlighted in the report I submitted to the Board last month. Specifically, the disparities in suspensions and police involvement for non-criminal offenses by children in elementary schools need to be addressed. For perspective, my analysis revealed 11% of CPS elementary schools have the same or more police involvement than the typical high school. Moreover, elementary schools that have the highest rate of police involvement for non-violent offenses are overwhelmingly schools that educate low-income students of color. However, many schools with the same demographics approach education and safety differently, with better outcomes.

Interrelated to discipline policies and academic planning is the involvement of Local School Councils (LSCs). This raises another troubling issue: the schools with the highest percentages of students of color have LSCs with the greatest vacancies. My analysis of the LSC records compiled by Raise Your Hand for schools with available data finds 44 of the 51 schools with the highest population of White students (>32.4%) had full parental representation with the remaining seven having only one vacancy. Schools with 10 to 32.4% White students had vacancies in the majority of their LSCs (34/61). CPS schools with less than 10% White students had parent vacancies in 4 out of 5 LSCs, and more than 60% had multiple vacancies. The advice being given to these schools by the Office of Local School Council Relations that compliance with the law is optional must stop because they contribute to marginalized students receiving inequitable treatment and significantly fewer educational opportunities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Angel Alvarez
Research Assistant Professor
Department of Neurology
Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine
angel.alvarez.phd@gmail.com

105 The attached statement in PDF form is likely an easier way to read our comments. However, we have also pasted the text below. Thank you for you time in reading and reflecting on our comments.

August 27, 2020

Dear Chicago Board of Education Members,

We thank you in advance for reading our statement and reflecting not only on our words, but on the words and actions each of you makes as a member of the Chicago Board of Education (BOE). How do your words and actions show the public—the students, the parents, the teachers, the leaders in Chicago Public Schools(CPS)—that you are committed to anti-racism?

Who We Are

This written comment is on behalf of Chicagoans for Anti-Racist Education (CARE), a community-led campaign comprised of parents, guardians, students, alumni, community members, and stakeholders committed to removing CPS racism. Our work began to specifically address inequity at our elementary school, which is named for Louis J. Agassiz, one of the founding fathers of anti-Black ideology and scientific racism.

CARE's first initiative was to call on CPS to remove the name of our school, a name that has caused harm for far too long to our student body, of which over 50% identifies as BIPOC. For over a century, Black and brown children have had to walk through the doors under the name of a man who thought they were less than, simply because of the color of their skin (If you are not familiar with Louis J. Agassiz, please take a look at the section "Louis Agassiz—America's Theorist of Polygeny" in *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen J. Gould).

While removing the name from the school building is a necessary statement and representative of action and support for our BIPOC families, it is also a catalyst for much deeper and vital work needed at our school, and across the district, to engage in authentic anti-racist teaching, learning, and community-building. As a group, we are also focused on ensuring that administration and staff, across the district, get support from CPS leaders and the BOE for ongoing professional development, curriculum, and policies dedicated to anti-racism.

Our Call to Action

Our group was formed in July, in the wake of two nationwide pandemics—racism and the coronavirus. On May 31, we received Dr. Janice Jackson's "A note about last night and where we go from here" email to the CPS community. We often return to her words (excerpts below) from that email as a call to action that helps guide our work:

- "If we are going to progress as a society, this moment must lead us to confront racism—in all of its forms—on a daily basis."
- "I'm challenging our community—parents, teachers, students—to call racist behavior out when we see it. We've tolerated intolerance for far too long, and the time has come for us to act."
- "This work is not easy but that cannot be an excuse to delay progress. Black lives matter, and it's past due for us to prove it with action."

CARE asks, when will the excuses to delay progress stop? When does the anti-racist work begin?

Operationalizing CPS' Equity Framework

Three years ago, the LSC at our school guided the community through the name change process as outlined in CPS Policy Section 302.2 ("Naming or Renaming of Schools") and voted to not move the name change process forward. At the time, this effort was met with resistance, but that resistance came not from our parent community of which more than 50% voted to change the name. Rather, resistance was led by our school's principal, Mira Weber, who directed her predominately white staff to support her efforts to retain the name due to budgetary concerns and to protect the brand she had built. In other words: The financial needs of the school and her political capital were used as excuses to fail to meet this basic level of support for our BIPOC community.

In 2017, the Office of Equity did not even exist at CPS. Now, in 2020, with the newly released Equity Framework, there is an opportunity to go through the renaming process with oversight and accountability from Dr. Maurice Swinney and his team. While the school has CPS' written support for removing the name from our school, we have yet to see this support manifest in actions and oversight. In less than a month, the two community "listening forums" will be held on the renaming process and we have no assurance from Principal Weber that there will be a professional mediator leading the forums and we are unclear as to what the focus of these forums is. CPS, in written communication from Dr. Swinney, has said the name will be removed and Principal Weber, in written communication to the school community, has said that the new name will be selected through a student-led inquiry process. What, then, will be discussed during these community forums?

How will CPS ensure that anti-racism is at the forefront of these forums?

We call on the BOE to ensure that CPS applies the Equity Framework and leadership to this renaming process at our school. We ask for Dr. Swinney and his team to provide a professional mediator for these forums to ensure no further harm is done to the BIPOC families at our school. In 2017, Principal Weber stated it was a "divisive, arduous, toxic task of searching for a new name" and stated, "My proposal to move our community forward most expeditiously is to vote no on a formal name change and rather informally remove the Louis J and market ourselves rigorously as The Agassiz School." The leader of our school called the 2017 process toxic and publicly suggested a new name that is insulting and is an act of whitewashing. In 2020, we have the same principal leading our school, and she continues to emphasize the need to hear all voices and stated at the August 12th LSC meeting that "There is no right or wrong on this."

We wholeheartedly disagree. There is a wrong, which is why we are submitting this statement today. While we appreciate CPS' words, it is continuing to push a process, which CPS itself has already amended to fit this circumstance in this moment (refer to Policy Section 302.2 and the six "circumstances" for renaming listed in this existing policy). CPS must also rise to this moment and recognize that we will not be the only school looking to remove a name from a school named after a racist historical figure. CPS must recognize that in order to operationalize the Equity Framework, it must be

willing to work with each school individually and through its very specific set of circumstances. Our school's past is relevant to the process CPS now asks us to undertake—especially in light of the fact that nothing at our school has changed with regard to our school leadership's commitment to our BIPOC since we last went through this process in 2017.

Confronting Our Past

In the last three years, our school has seen more disciplinary action taken against Black students—not less, despite the addition of “restorative practices.” To that end, Principal Weber has not employed a full-time restorative justice coordinator despite that being best practice. Our school's test scores have declined significantly for our BIPOC, illustrating enormous opportunity inequity. Requests for deliberate expectation and actions around equity in our CIWP are met with “we're adding culturally diverse texts.” The police responded to four calls at our school last year—all for Black students. In June of 2019, while Dr. Jackson stood in our auditorium and delivered the keynote address to our 8th grade graduates, seven of the sixty-three graduates were not able to participate in the ceremony due to a point system created through a racist lens. We assume it will come as no surprise to you that those seven students were mostly Black and/or students with IEPs. We also assume that these injustices listed above, while only a snapshot, are outcomes of bias application of inherently racist systems prevalent in many schools across the district.

How does a principal lead a school through this process when systems of white supremacy are at the forefront of the school?

To date, Principal Weber has not yet voiced support in removing the school's name. She has said she will create a student-led inquiry for selecting a new school name, which will commence on the very first day of school and run through October when the students will present names to our LSC for vote. However, when asked directly to state, “I support renaming the school,” she demurs. When asked directly if she would allow for professional mediation during required “listening forums,” after acknowledging the potential harm for our BIPOC, she demurs. When asked directly if she would allow homerooms to choose “Agassiz minus the Louis J.” as one of the name suggestions, she demurs. She has not denounced the name, yet Dr. Swinney has.

We have emphasized to CPS the urgency with which the school's name should be removed in order to prevent further harm to our BIPOC and to unite our community around the process of selecting a new name—a unification our principal is wholly ill-equipped to facilitate. As a result of Principal Weber's reluctance, we are also pressing CPS' Office of Equity to provide complete oversight—both of the student-led inquiry and beyond. Our primarily white staff is in need of vetted and qualified professional development in anti-racist education in order to carefully lead our students through this inquiry. Our principal has not given any indication that has taken place, nor that it will. Our administration is in dire need of anti-bias training and education. Our school is in need of a local officer of equity who can provide the lens through which our administration and staff should be implementing every part of our curriculum, discipline, and culture. If we are to truly be an equitable school, we must insist that our school's leadership is committed to equity—not simply in words, but in actions. Again, we assume that all of these vital needs at our school are ones needed at all schools across CPS.

We also respectfully ask this Board to translate words into actions. CPS carved the name Agassiz into our stone and CPS can remove it—now. CPS is asking us to rise to this moment and we are attempting to do just that. In order to rise up to this moment, CPS must take action not simply describe it. Our students deserve nothing less. Removing the school name can happen separately from choosing a new name.

One School, One District

The Office of Equity and the Board of Education have an opportunity to apply the Equity Framework and leadership to this one movement at one school. This work can, and should, help guide the district's commitment to anti-racism. There is much work to be done at the systemic level in terms of policy and curriculum and we continue to hone in on the translation of the commitment we see in words, into actions at all levels in CPS.

We were struck by the ability of the majority of public speaking spots at the August BOE meeting to be co-opted to amplify one very specific set of voices, especially during a time in which systemic racism is at the forefront of our society regarding issues such as policing in schools and white supremacy. CARE is mindful of the comments made by Member Elizabeth Todd-Breland and Member Amy Rome regarding "opportunity hoarding" and how white parents need to be voices for all children, not just their own children. While this written statement hones in on the current focus of renaming our school and all the supports needed to implement this process, we feel strongly that how CPS handles this issue at our school sets precedence for its anti-racist work across the entire district.

On June 1, in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police and the protests that followed, CPS released, "Say Their Names," a listing of resources to help parents and educators foster conversations about race as well as "how to take action for racial justice." In it, CPS quotes Angela Davis, "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist" and goes on to say, "Safeguarding our young people means that we all must do the work to think and act equitably, show up for our Black students and colleagues, interrogate our own biases, and live an actively anti-racist life."

Yet, here we are today, just hours after the Chicago Board of Education disregarded the voices of its Black students, who spoke passionately about how unsafe police made them feel in school, and voted to retain the Chicago police within our schools. (We thank Member Todd-Breland and Member Rome for their dissension and powerful statements.)

So, when does the anti-racist work begin?

CARE is calling on CPS to take action as part of the district's commitment to anti-racist work by doing the following:

- Remove the racist name from our school now. There is no excuse to delay progress. This name of a scientific racist is still carved in stone on our building and is visible in written form across school and district digital platforms.
- Provide oversight at our school to lead our administration, staff and students through a name-change inquiry that, if not conducted thoughtfully, could re traumatize our BIPOC students.
- Ensure that a trained mediator is present at all community/listening forums at our school. This mediator should communicate the goal and process of the forum, as well

as actively facilitate the discussion.

- Evaluate school leadership at every CPS school to ensure those entrusted with our students' education are committed to doing so from a position of anti-racist systems and action.
- Provide anti-racist professional development to all administrators and teachers in the district.

CARE is calling on the BOE to hold CPS accountable to its own calling for a commitment to anti-racist actions in every school across the district.

As CPS itself said on June 1, "At this time, we must focus on our shared humanity, and prioritize learning and talking about the root causes of the current protests and the interracial activism. This is a time to come together, listen, learn, share in grief and in hope, and act for a more just, equitable, and racially conscious world."

Sincerely,
CARE (Chicagoans for Anti-Racist Education)

cc: Dr. Janice Jackson, Dr. Maurice Swinney, Mr. Liam Bird

**August 26, 2020 Board of Education Meeting
Attachments for Written Comments
Received Monday, August 24nd through Thursday, August 27th
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

There is no place for police in schools! There is no reason for Chicago schools to include cops in any way! CPD has proven themselves to be incompetent, violent and deadly in many cases stop funding this organization that terrorises Black and Brown communities! Break the contract with CPD! You want to help and make a difference fund communities! Defund CPD! CPAC NOW!



Violence and Crime Prevention



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

Where we stand: What can policymakers and public officials learn from research on violence prevention?

Violence remains one of the leading causes of death in the United States. It disproportionately affects our youngest and most vulnerable citizens, leaving them to face a devastating array of immediate and lifelong consequences – ones that severely constrain their life opportunities and ignite a downward spiral of violence begetting further violence.

Between 2000-2012, approximately 6,500 soldiers died on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq. During that same twelve year period, 165,000 people died on U.S. streets and in homes as a result of violence and crime – an order of magnitude approximately 25 times greater.

Communities laced with violence suffer painful and long-term repercussions as well. Residents and businesses flee from the communities. Our health care system becomes overburdened. Precious resources must be diverted to an expensive and stigmatizing criminal justice system and an overworked social services system. The University of Chicago Crime Lab, co-directed by SSA faculty Jens Ludwig and Harold Pollack, estimates that the annual cost of gun violence alone to the U. S. economy is \$100 billion (\$2.5 billion each year in Chicago), factoring in lost worker productivity, medical costs, mental health costs, and costs to the government vis-à-vis the criminal justice system. “When violence drives people and business out of the city, it reduces the tax base, which degrades the ability of government to tackle the violence problem, which fuels still further violence in a vicious downward cycle,” Ludwig notes.

Using research and scientific tools to prevent violence

To address this complex problem, the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) has made a strategic institutional commitment to generate the knowledge and professional leadership that will prevent violence before it occurs. Never has a premier university undertaken such an ambitious and comprehensive effort to address the problem of violence prevention leveraging the full force of the University's practice, research, and evaluation resources.

Taking the lead among U. S. schools of social work, SSA is testing new approaches that are beginning to reveal promising strategies. Our goal is to build knowledge, promote evidence-based strategies, and inform practitioners and policy makers about what works to stop violence and its steep human and economic costs.

Several major SSA programs, including The University of Chicago Crime Lab, SSA's Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention (CCYVP), and studies housed at SSA on the early prevention of violence, are underway now. Leveraging multiple disciplinary vantage points, these SSA efforts are determining the soundest interventions and policies to prevent violence – and its dire consequences – thereby raising the potential to save lives and strengthen our communities, while saving the public significant dollars. *“In criminal justice, we spend hundreds of billions of dollars in interventions, but often we don't know what really works,”* says Harold Pollack, SSA's Helen Ross Professor.

Focused Research Programs on Violence Prevention

Three separate SSA research programs focus on different stages in the complex cycle that spawns violence. All of them draw on core strengths of the University: the pursuit of deep understanding and knowledge, the nurturing of leadership, and the application of scientific research to maximize human benefit – all within the context of fully engaged community partnerships, some as old as the school itself. When combined within SSA, these research programs represent a rare opportunity to strike at the core of one of society's most persistent and devastating ills.

The three SSA violence prevention programs include:

Crime and Policing –
the Crime Lab

Youths and Community –
the Chicago Center for
Youth Violence Prevention

Early Prevention
and Family Support

Crime and Policing – the Crime Lab

“What we are striving for is that in 10 or 20 years crime policy will be different – more effective, cost-effective and humane – because of the large-scale scientific research projects that we’ve done.”

Jens Ludwig, co-director,
UChicago Crime Lab

Too often, responses to violent crime are emotional or political and produce few measurable results. Little hard evidence exists on the effectiveness of crime reduction strategies, and few programs receive rigorous evaluation, so policy makers respond more often to anecdote, rather than to evidence. The University of Chicago Crime Lab, co-directed by Jens Ludwig, McCormick Foundation Professor of Social Service Administration, Public Policy and Law, and Helen Ross Professor Harold Pollack, has begun bridging the research gap between the causes of crime and violence, and the effectiveness of the policies implemented to address them.

Police officials and policy makers in the City of Chicago, as well as the White House, have turned to the Crime Lab to learn how to use resources most effectively and what strategies produce the biggest impact. As evidence of that commitment and the promise of the Crime Lab, former U. S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, current Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy, and Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Evelyn Diaz all serve on the Lab’s advisory board. Such partnerships allow researchers to collect real-time data from field tests, disseminating their findings directly and immediately to leaders who set social service and criminal justice policies and priorities. Beyond Chicago, the Crime Lab now is working with police departments in Los Angeles, New York, Boston, and Baltimore to examine how guns used in crimes move around criminal networks.

Recently released results of the Crime Lab’s large-scale randomized clinical trial of the “Becoming a Man” (BAM) program, carried out in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools and two local nonprofits, were significant. The results revealed that high school youth who participated in BAM had a 44 percent reduction in violent crime arrests, as well as significant improvements in school attendance and class participation. A cost-benefit analysis of the program reported a minimum savings to the public of three dollars for every one spent on the program.

As part of President Obama’s initiative to address opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men, the Becoming a Man program recently received support from the National Institutes of Health and the Chicago Public Schools that includes a goal of expanding the program to three to five new cities in the next three years.

In addition, the Crime Lab received a distinctive grant in 2014 – the Award for Creative and Effective Institutions from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation – one of only seven recipients selected from around the globe. This prestigious award is the organizational equivalent to MacArthur’s “genius” awards for individuals.

Youths and Community – the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention

SSA's Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention (CCYVP or the Center), led by Professor **Deborah Gorman-Smith**, a nationally recognized authority on youth violence prevention with two decades of experience, is one of only six U. S. Academic Centers for Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Her team of SSA researchers at the CCYVP work collaboratively with community members, practitioners, and policy makers to test new integrated strategies to avert youth violence.

Working in the high-risk community of Humboldt Park, the Center has been building a comprehensive and integrated approach to address youth violence. This approach includes working with youth across a range of ages – from young children to older adolescents and young adults. It also involves families in teaching lifelong violence prevention skills and strategies. Center faculty and staff also provide training to schools and community agencies in selecting and implementing youth violence prevention programs.

The Schools and Families Educating Children (SAFE Children) program for first graders and their families is one remarkable example of CCYVP's work. The 15-week program emphasizes engagement of the entire family in school activities, development of the child's confidence and social skills, and building family cohesiveness. The first randomized clinical trial revealed that when SAFE Children students enter high school, they exhibited **substantially lower levels of violence, engaged in less risky sexual behavior, and were nearly twice as likely to be on track to graduate.** SAFE Children is proving that short-term interventions early in life can produce the life-time benefits of stronger families and engaged parents who are committed to the future of their children and communities.

The Center's comprehensive approach in Humboldt Park has yielded remarkable early results. Notably, during a period when the murder rate in other violent communities and in Chicago as a whole showed little change, the homicide rate in Humboldt Park fell by fifty percent. Extrapolating these results, if the Center's approach had been applied to the 17 Chicago communities with the highest rates of violent crime, the city would have averted more than 100 murders in 2013 alone.

“Working to have an impact at the school level and at the neighborhood level is a really different approach... the university-community partnership has the best chance of really making a difference.”

Deborah Gorman-Smith, SSA Professor and Immediate Past President, Society for Prevention Research

Early Prevention and Family Support

SSA Dean Neil Guterman's work is integral to these violence prevention efforts. As an international expert on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, Guterman seeks to advance evidence of strategies that prevents children's early victimization, itself one of the most potent drivers of later-life violent behavior. Child abuse is concentrated in the earliest years of life and almost 80 percent of the 1,700 children who die each year as a result of child abuse are three years old or younger. Neurological and psychological evidence shows that early parenting plays a strong role in steering either healthy or violence-prone behavioral trajectories in children.

"If designed and delivered right, early prevention strategies can prevent child abuse, and alter the long-term trajectory of children's lives, all delivered in a highly cost-efficient manner."

Neil B. Guterman, SSA Dean and Mose & Sylvia Firestone Professor

Scientific findings, including those released by Guterman, have found that intervening early using specialized home-based service strategies can prevent upwards of 60 percent of cases of child abuse, and alter the long-term life trajectories of children and their families. Cost-benefit analyses indicate that such programs can also save the public four dollars for every dollar spent. This inexpensive short-term service strategy can help eliminate early childhood trauma, subsequent medical and mental health consequences, and the precursors to violence perpetration later in life. The science, however, is far from complete. Early interventions are not uniformly effective, so capturing the greatest benefit means designing strategies that better map to the drivers of abuse, and Guterman's most recent work is testing a "second generation" strategy yielding early positive findings that widens the predominant focus of early home visitation services from the mother-child relationship to a more inclusive focus on both mothers and fathers.

Of note, the interest in home visitation programs has grown steadily, as has research support from such entities as the McCormick Foundation, the Pritzker Early Childhood Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Pew Foundation, and the Oscar G. & Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation. Moreover, in response to the demonstrated success of home visitation programs, a growing number of state agencies have begun to incorporate such programs into their delivery systems, driving more focused national growth in this transformative strategy.

First Violence Prevention Training Program in U.S.

As SSA continues to develop evidence-based strategies through these three major research efforts, we also have established the nation's first violence prevention training program in a school of social work. SSA's program trains students to think and act strategically and implement evidence-based strategies that are effective, practical, and results-oriented within communities.

Already, SSA graduates of the first five cohorts have assumed leadership positions in varied violence prevention settings around the U. S., ranging from home- and center-based early prevention services, school-based youth and domestic violence prevention programs, and advocacy and community-based organizations.

What's Next?

Our aim now is to accelerate our research of successful violence prevention strategies, share our findings with practitioners and policy makers, and continue to train leaders to apply this cutting-edge knowledge to directly lower violence and save lives. Specifically, we intend to:

Develop sound new knowledge. Through scientific experimentation and implementation of programs, SSA is setting a standard of knowledge on violence prevention. Our faculty, with backgrounds in social work, urban planning, economics, sociology, and health policy, bring a diversity of thinking and experience to develop the most reasoned, effective, and practical responses.

Create a knowledge center for researchers to interact and collaborate with city officials, community partners, and stakeholders. SSA seeks to build a center consisting of physical and scholarly spaces where scholars, community activists, and government officials from around the world can learn, interact, examine strategies, and develop sound solutions.

Continue leadership development initiatives. In the next decade, SSA expects to educate dozens of master's and doctoral students who will be specially trained and skilled to be violence prevention policy makers, advocates, clinicians, and researchers.

Expedite knowledge dissemination and influence change agents. SSA is leveraging its work to influence, inform, and inspire private and public sector leaders about proven violence prevention strategies and policies.

The Impact of Philanthropy

The aforementioned SSA efforts can thrive with philanthropic support in the following areas:

Research support. Increasingly, officials look at hard evidence to inform their decisions, and SSA is one of the few places generating science that can provide this evidence. Support for SSA research will allow faculty to further pursue, accelerate progress, and expand the scope of our violence prevention programs. Already, current SSA research has identified misalignments in practices and policies within nonprofit and government programs and suggested improvements that can save tax dollars and lives. Additional endowment and expendable funds for capacity-building efforts will increase collaborative and interdisciplinary research at the Crime Lab, the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention, our studies in child abuse prevention, and other efforts among our partners in the community. It also will allow us to apply our findings and strategies more broadly, thereby yielding even more savings, in economic and human terms.

Fundraising goal: \$13 million

Building expansion and enhancement. Currently, SSA's research and engagement activities in violence and crime prevention occur outside of our University campus building, across three different spaces not designed for supporting or sustaining such work. Having a centralized, designated building with state-of-the-art technology, expanded research space, and meeting areas for scholars, community leaders, and social welfare practitioners can encourage further community engagement, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and deeper discovery to support and sustain our path-breaking work.

Fundraising goal: \$10 million

Scholarship support for next generation leadership development. Our students, superbly trained to advance and apply the scholarship conceived and tested at SSA to drive down violence in our communities, often do so without significant compensation. Their skills, ambitions, intelligence, and training equal those of students at the University's medical, business, and law schools. Yet SSA graduates face job prospects at a markedly lower pay scale – average salaries range from the upper \$30,000's to upper \$40,000's – and they graduate with close to \$70,000 in student debt. To lower the economic barriers, and attract the best and the brightest individuals to tackle the difficult problem of violence, SSA must make a concerted effort to help students graduate without heavy academic debt so they are undeterred from pursuing a career in service.

Funding goal: \$10 million

Focused knowledge resource and change agent. Philanthropic support can help bolster the visibility and reach of SSA's pioneering work among private and public sector leaders who are positioned to implement violence prevention strategies and policies. In this regard, we seek to recruit new leading researchers who can further accelerate our programs and make SSA the foremost destination for the most advanced scholarly work in violence prevention. We also seek to create outward facing efforts and forums for scholars, stakeholders, and policy makers – at local, national, and global levels – where we can share our research, strategies, and results to help shape violence prevention innovations.

Funding goal: \$7 million

For more information, contact:

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sgilmore@uchicago.edu
773.702.1146
ssa.uchicago.edu

DEFINING PROBLEMS. SHAPING SOLUTIONS.

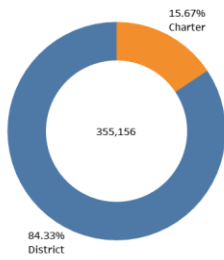
Chicago Public Charter Schools School Re-Opening Survey Data August 26, 2020

What are the demographics of Chicago’s public charter schools?

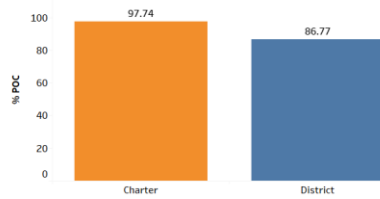
- Chicago’s 117 CPS charter campuses serve 55,646 students, the majority of whom qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and identify as students of color.
- Chicago’s charter schools primarily serve students on the South and West sides of the city– in neighborhoods that have been historically under-resourced.

CPS SY19 20th Day Enrollment Snapshot

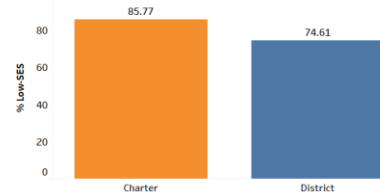
Total CPS Enrollment



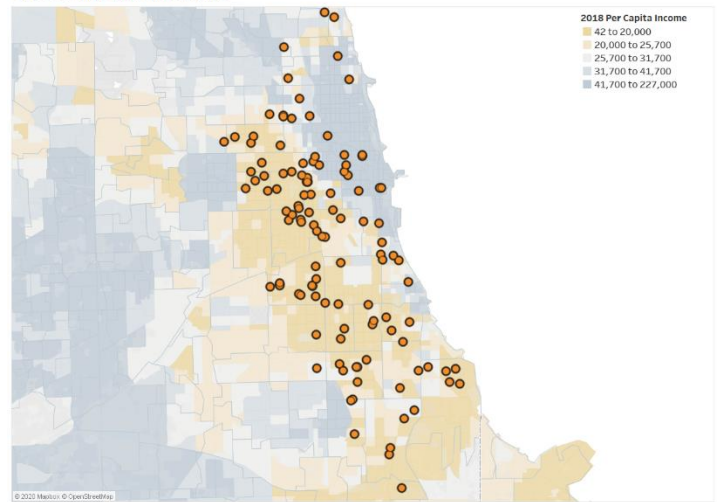
Students of Color



Low-Income Students



SY20 Chicago Charter Locations



- In the top five neighborhoods where charters are located, families tend to earn far below city median income, have high unemployment, and tend to work in essential industries such as health care, transportation, and food service. These inequities are only exacerbating with the challenges posed by COVID-19. (Source: [CMAP June 2020 Community Profiles](#))

- 6.68% of Chicago’s charter students are housing insecure, compared to 2.79% of district peers, according to the SY19 ISBE Report Card.

- In large part, our alternative/option schools account for this difference. The top 10 charters with the highest percentage of housing insecure students are mainly options schools – eight YCCS campuses and Instituto Justice and Leadership Academy – ranging from 27.7% to 53.1% of students facing inadequate housing. There is one exception with the KIPP Chicago – Bloom campus, which has the fourth highest rate of housing insecurity for students in charter schools.

CMAP Community Profile Data			
Community Area	Median Income (City Avg: 55,198)	Unemployment (City Avg: 8.9%)	Essential Worker Estimates
Englewood	21,275	26.8%	18.1% Health Care 8.0% Transportation 11.5% Food Service
North Lawndale	26,781	17.5%	17.8% Health Care 10.9% Food Service 7.1% Transportation
West Town	96,499	3.5%	10.8% Health Care 9.4% Food Service
Auburn Gresham	34,661	18.8%	19.5% Health Care 9.2% Food Service
Austin	33,420	13.6%	17.3% Health Care 9.4% Food Service

School Re-Opening Survey

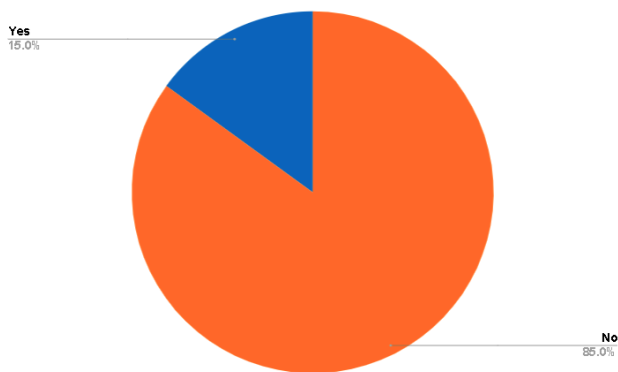
Last week, INCS administered a survey to all 140 member schools in Illinois, including the 117 CPS-authorized charter schools to gather additional data on access to devices and connectivity, re-opening plans, and engagement heading into the beginning of the new school year. Below is the preliminary data. We will continue to track and update this as more data becomes available.

Device and Connectivity Challenges

- The most recent CPS engagement data shows that 91.5% of charter students are considered digital, roughly 4.9% less than district-peers.
- With over 90% of charters moving to full remote learning this fall, ensuring that all students have access to devices is a top priority.

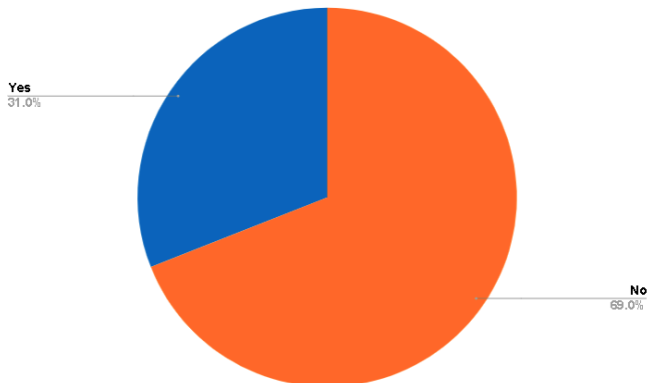
Do all your families have reliable access to internet?

- 85% of charters surveyed say that their students don't have reliable access to internet.



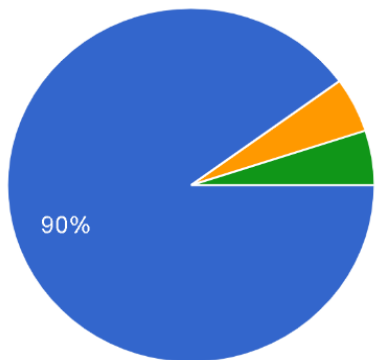
Do all your students have devices?

- Though the charter community has disseminated thousands of devices and internet hotspots, most charters (around 70%) report needing additional devices.



Beginning-of-Year Return to School Format

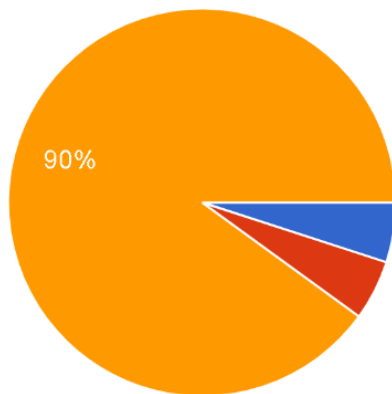
- 90% of charter schools plan to re-open fully remote.



- Remote for all
- In-Person for all
- Hybrid for all
- Mixed in-person/hybrid/remote

Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction in Fall SY2021

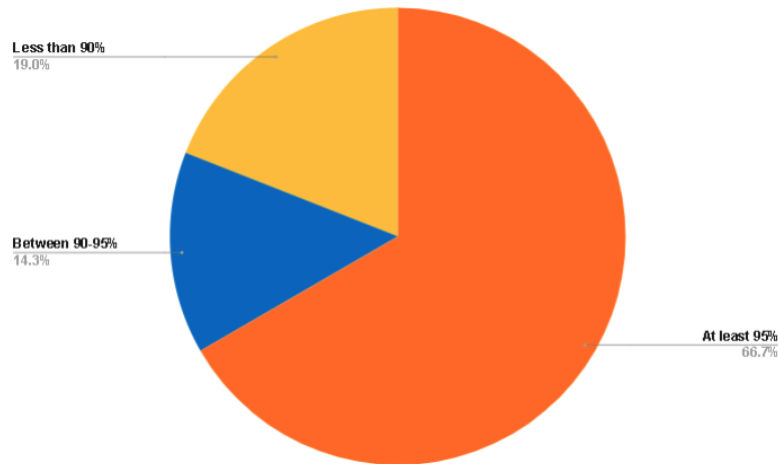
- 90% of charters are using mixed synchronous and asynchronous instruction.



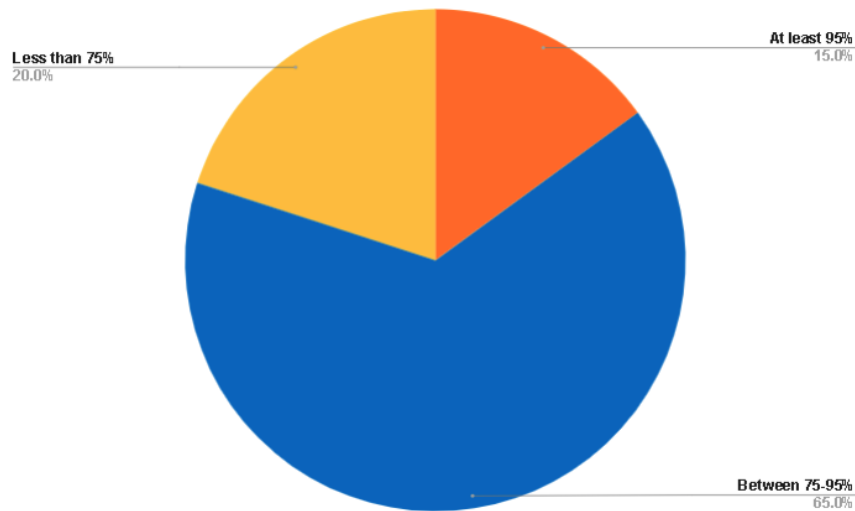
- All synchronous
- Mostly synchronous
- Mixed synchronous & asynchronous
- Mostly asynchronous
- All asynchronous

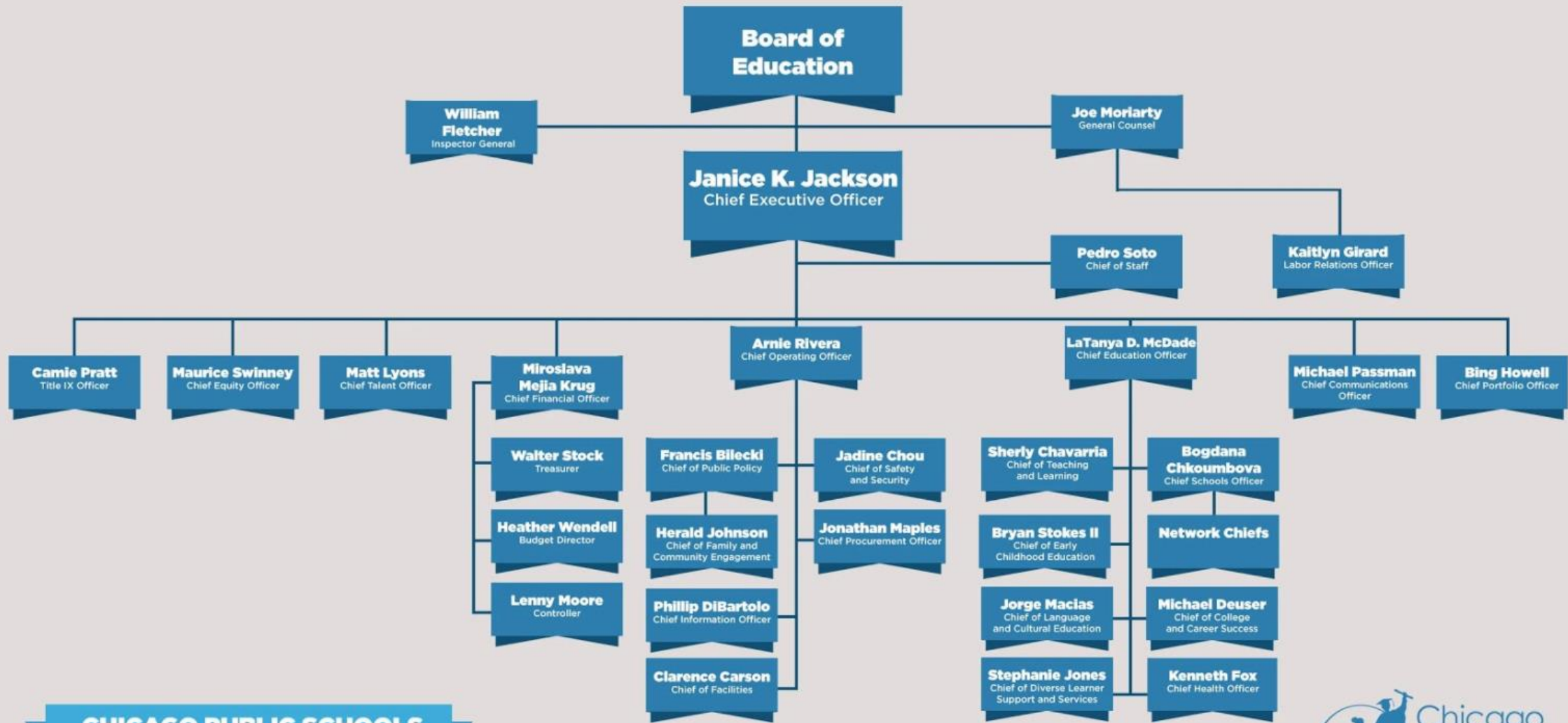
Charter Weekly Student Contact

- Even with these increased connectivity challenges, charter student engagement is similar to that of district peers according to the most recent CPS engagement data. In the spring, charter weekly student engagement peaked at 84.1% during the week of May 24th. INCS’ own survey data shows that the 65% of schools surveyed reported at least 95% weekly student contact and at least 90% remote learning engagement at least three days per week.



Weekly Remote Learning Attendance (At Least Three Days Per Week)





CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Organization Chart
July 2020



July 17, 2020

Chicago Board of Education
1 N. Dearborn, Ste 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Board of Education Members:

My name is Kristy Brooks and I'm starting my 15th year as a Professional School Counselor with CPS. In my work with students across various school communities over the years, I've noticed a disturbing lack of follow-through in multiple schools on teaching the required worthwhile, preventive, and comprehensive CPS sexual health education curriculum. I first sought out sex ed instructor training from CPS in 2008 when I saw how great my students' needs in this area were and have pushed for it to be implemented in each school I've worked at since that time. I personally taught sex ed lessons to many classes K-8th so can speak to the empowerment this sex ed knowledge brings to students; unfortunately I can also attest to the barriers in our schools and catastrophic consequences when these lessons are withheld.

There have been many positive changes in the CPS Sexual Health department over the last decade. I find the scope and sequence of the lessons across K-8 to be interactive and engaging for the most part. From teaching correct body part names in Kindergarten, to breaking down gender stereotypes in 2nd grade, the primary lessons are vital to ensuring our students have the knowledge and skills to report any harm that has come to them. The 5th grade curriculum uses a powerful visual aid to explain the spectrums of gender identity, expression, and attraction to normalize where one falls on each of the spectrums as a valid part of understanding and valuing ourselves. This particular lesson is one that I've used not only class-wide for 5th graders, but in multiple 1-1 counseling sessions with LGBTQ students who have come to me for support over the years. Abstinence is taught, as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), contraception, and healthy relationships in 7th and 8th grades. Learning about the dangers of STIs as well as the benefits and limits of contraception prior to becoming sexually active is prevention education. Learning about consent and what that does and does not look like helps students recognize and prevent sexual violence in our communities. Last, but certainly not least, the anonymous question box gives students a safe way to ask sexual health questions and get a knowledgeable response that's not from friends or a google search. The amount of misinformation students bring in via the question box is alarming and I'm grateful to have the time and space to discuss it. For example, "The 'blue waffle' isn't a real STI, you cannot get AIDS from masturbation, and you should see a doctor about those symptoms (refer to the handout for the closest clinic for free confidential STI screening and treatment)". These lessons empower CPS students to make informed personal choices when it comes to sexual health.

The positive outcomes I've witnessed from providing comprehensive sex ed in CPS makes the roadblocks to all CPS students receiving these lessons that much harder to ignore. In my

experience, the school administrator can make or break the sex ed program at a school. I am lucky to work with a phenomenal Principal at my current school who supports our school's compliance with the required minutes of K-8 Sex Ed lessons by ensuring our schedule allows for it and by hiring a PE teacher who is trained to teach it with me. Under former administrators, I have been repeatedly shut down and ignored when asking for our staff to be trained and our schedules to be arranged for our school to follow the mandate for teaching K-8 sex ed. Some admin might have a personal view that doesn't align with teaching comprehensive sex ed in our schools; others might be (wrongly) worried that many parents will be upset so they ignore the CPS mandate to teach it. Some administrators have refused to excuse teaching staff to attend the CPS Sex Ed training by stating they could not afford a substitute, so allocating funding for subs while teachers attend the training would eliminate that barrier. FOIA data that showed only 30% of CPS schools meet the CPS sex ed teaching requirements per self-report; we need better district-wide accountability to ensure schools are following the mandated K-12 Sex Ed lessons and that starts with identifying the barriers 70% of our schools are up against.

In addition to a supportive administrator, a CPS sex ed curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities is desperately needed. Although I hear that one is "in the works", I continue to struggle to adapt the current lessons for students in my school's 3 cluster programs for students with disabilities that need a significantly modified curriculum. I certainly don't want to leave my most vulnerable students without the knowledge they deserve to understand their bodies, make informed developmentally-appropriate personal choices, and protect themselves from harm.

The most impactful reach of these lessons I can convey to you from my School Counselor viewpoint is the decrease in suicidal ideations among my LGBTQ students once CPS's comprehensive sex ed program was implemented in my school. The past 7 years I've taught at the same school and am responsible for responding to all student suicidal ideation in our building. The first 4 years when we did not follow the CPS mandate to teach the full sex ed curriculum K-8, I responded to many LGBTQ-related suicidal ideations, particularly among my middle school students. The past 3 years with my school complying with CPS's comprehensive sex ed policy, I noticed a significant reduction in LGBTQ-related suicidal ideations each year. I strongly believe that this curriculum saves lives and is vital for the health and safety of our Chicago students and communities. Please commit to identifying and removing barriers to provide all CPS students with sexual health education.

Thank you for listening,

Kristy Brooks
Professional School Counselor
KLBrooksie@gmail.com
773-484-0263

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EDUCATION, VOICES

What Students, Parents and Teachers Agree on When it Comes to Sex Ed

11/4/2019 by **AURELIA AGUILAR**

As a teenager in Guatemala, I never received information about sexual health or healthy relationships. Our schools did not have nurses or social workers to speak with students about these issues, and I definitely couldn't count on my parents. It wasn't until I was an adult that I had a safe space to talk about healthy relationships, gender-identity and sexuality.

Unfortunately, that same dynamic plays out today across the United States—even though students and teachers both want better sex education programs in their schools



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FEMINIST DAILY NEWS

Police Have Killed 751 People This Year

Jacob Blake Shot in Back Multiple Times by Police in Kenosha, Wisconsin



Last fall, I joined a leadership program by [Healing to Action](#), a Chicago-based nonprofit that works to end gender-based violence by building the leadership and collective power of those most impacted by it. The program taught me about important concepts like gender agency and consent. I assumed my four children learned these topics as part of their sexual health education in the United States—but my teenagers who attend Chicago Public Schools (CPS) had never heard of consent or ever had a dialogue in school about healthy relationships.

The CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness [promotes a comprehensive sexual education policy](#) that requires two trained instructors and, for students in Kindergarten through 4th grade, at least 300 minutes of instruction per year, and 675 for students in grades 5 through 12. It was clear to me, after talking to my daughters, that their school fell significantly short of these requirements. Sexual health education is not provided in every grade. Those mandated instructors are nowhere to be found.

[Many of my fellow Chicago parents share the same frustration.](#) Some confide that they themselves need more information

Roundup

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An advertisement for Pandia Health. The top part is a blue banner with white text: "Going to the pharmacy is so 90s. Skip The Trip Each Month!" followed by three checkmarks and the text "FREE DELIVERY", "AUTOMATIC REFILLS", and "ONLINE PRESCRIPTIONS". Below the banner is a photograph of three young women smiling. At the bottom, the Pandia Health logo is displayed with the tagline "The easiest way to get birth control." and social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, along with the website URL "www.PandiaHealth.com".

curriculum or have had the opportunity to talk with trained instructors about their children receiving sexual health education. Many don't even know if there are trained instructors in their schools.

Reform is needed to ensure equitable access to sex education. Healing to Action's SexEd Works campaign is fighting to ensure that the community has a voice in how sex education is administered, that there's funding for equal access to sex ed regardless of the zip code and that support exists for parents to understand it and teach kids about healthy relationships at home.

One step in the right direction that the district could take would be to hire more nurses and social workers—a demand being made by the Chicago Teachers Union. Embedding nurses and social workers into the community ensures equitable access to health experts that can talk about consent and healthy relationships with youth who may not have a safe space outside of school to learn about these concepts. While it's not the only fix to address the current state of sexual education, it's a start.

After I spoke with my daughters about consent, their lives changed. Being able to say "no" has drastically improved their self-confidence and their ability to form healthy relationships.

Sex education can be a life-saving and-changing form of violence prevention. I want this—not just for my daughters, but for all young people like them. And I'm not alone. Their teachers want this, too, and so do other parents.

TAGGED: SEX EDUCATION, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Aurelia Aguilar is domestic worker, parent of four, Chicago-based activist and member of Healing to Action.

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August 2, 2020

Dear Chicago Board of Education,

My name is Nicole Bracy and I am criminologist, professor and researcher who has been studying school policing in various contexts over the last 15 years. I understand that your school is considering whether to continue using a School Resource Officer (SRO) and appreciate that this is a difficult decision you are weighing carefully. I am submitting this statement in hopes that I can offer a few insights from my experience studying school policing that may be useful in your decision-making.

I will begin by asking you to consider this question: In what other environment, besides a school, is a group of people subject to daily police supervision? The answer of course is prison. Isn't it odd and disconcerting that schools and prisons have this in common? And further, what message is this sending to young people?

While the policy and practice of placing police officers in schools has been advertised as "common sense safety," particularly in the wake of a few highly publicized mass shootings in schools over the last several decades, **there is little to no empirical evidence demonstrating that having a police officer in a school makes students safer or prevents school shootings.** To the contrary, research studies of schools with SROs demonstrate multiple negative outcomes for students including increased referrals to law enforcement for minor infractions, increased arrests, increased suspensions, and decreased school attendance. Research also points to very troubling racial/ethnic disparities in the application of school policing that disproportionately has negative impacts on Black students.

My professional and personal opinion is that police officers do not belong in schools and the more we can do to minimize interactions young people (particularly BIPOC youth) have with police officers, they better off they will be. I am the mother of a fourth grader in California and I have argued the same point to her school. SROs have been and continue to be the wrong solution for our children and schools across the country.

I urge you to seize this moment for change. The decision before you is a rare opportunity to do things differently for Chicago's schools and children. By divesting in policing and investing in prosocial strategies and programs such as conflict resolution, counseling and restorative justice, you have the ability to transform the culture of your school and show students that you are committed to preparing them for careers and college, not jails and prison.

Nicole Bracy, Ph.D.

Harder+Company Community Research

San Diego State University, School of Public Affairs

Education

1/5 Of Schools Lack Enough Local School Council Members To Vote On Keeping Police

Chicago Public Schools wants local school councils to vote on having police in their schools, but a fifth don't have an LSC or lack a quorum.

By [Sarah Karp](#)

July 14, 6 a.m. CT



Elected local school councils at the 72 Chicago public schools with police officers are supposed to vote this summer on whether to continue the school police program. Andrew Gill / WBEZ

Elected local school councils at the 72 Chicago public schools with police officers are supposed to vote this summer on whether to continue the school police program. Andrew Gill / WBEZ

[Education](#)

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By [Sarah Karp](#)

July 14, 6 a.m. CT



Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and CPS CEO Janice Jackson insist that elected local school councils should decide whether police officers remain stationed at their schools, and the voting process at city schools already has begun.

But some are questioning whether these local councils are capable of making such a weighty decision. More than a fifth of the 72 schools with police officers assigned to them either don't have LSCs at all or don't have enough members to form a quorum, according to information from June obtained by Raise Your Hand-Illinois, a parent advocacy group. Also, about 20 schools have appointed LSCs, and many others only serve in an advisory role.

Despite well-known problems with LSC capacity, Lightfoot has said the councils are the best choice because they know their schools.

"It is not for me as the mayor or Dr. Jackson to dictate to local schools what they need," she said on June 25. "It has got to be based upon the unique circumstances at the local level at each school and making sure that we are continuing to empower those local school councils."

Jianan Shi, executive director of Raise Your Hand, said his organization is a proponent of strong LSCs and works to support them. But he notes the school district has limited the power of some over time and let them languish without the requisite numbers.

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“It is disingenuous for CPS to hand this off to LSCs,” he said. “We have a long way to go before LSCs are fully engaged or empowered.”

Shi and others also highlight research that shows police in schools increases the likelihood that students of color will be arrested and leads to the school-to-prison pipeline. They say a civil rights issue should not be determined by local school councils.

Local school councils are supposed to have 13 members, including parents, community members, teacher representatives and, in high schools, a student. The school’s principal also is a member. Overall, only a third of elementary and high schools with LSCs have a full roster of members.

The school district said high schools without the seven members needed for a quorum are being urged to appoint members before the vote. If they cannot, CPS says they are “strongly encouraged” to engage their school community on this decision. Ultimately, though, for schools without quorums, the principal and network chief will make the final determination.

CPS also is releasing a “toolkit” on Wednesday to be used by local school councils to help them make their decisions.

School district officials have told LSCs they should vote between July 15 and August 15, but at seven schools the decision has already been made.

Northside College Prep voted to remove the police. Six schools — Harlan, Amundsen, Chicago Vocational Career Academy, Hyde Park Academy, Sullivan and King — voted to keep them. Neither Harlan nor Chicago Vocational Career Academy have quorums, according to CPS data.

Natasha Erskine, a former LSC member and a parent advocate, noted that many LSCs are only advisory because they are on probation and therefore don’t get to



with full powers does. Yet CPS officials, in this case, are saying they will heed the vote of advisory councils.

“It is just off, and it doesn’t feel democratic,” Erskine said.

In a lot of cases, Erskine said, LSCs simply do what the principal wants because they aren’t empowered and feel like the principal knows what the school needs. And, she added, many principals may be reluctant to get rid of the school police because CPS has made it clear that position won’t be replaced with another staffer or money to spend as the school sees fit.

Sarah Karp covers education for WBEZ. Follow her on Twitter

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Maria L. Toribio Public Comment to CPS Board of Education

August 26, 2020

My name is Maria Leticia Toribio. I am the president of the Kelvyn Park High School LSC, and the co-chair of the Elementary Justice Campaign in POWER-PAC IL, a project of Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI).

Today, I want to ask the members of the Board of Education to vote against renewing the contract with the Chicago Police Department. The reforms to the SRO program that CPS announced for the upcoming school year are not enough, because these reforms do not create police-free schools. There is no need to wait another year to achieve police-free schools in our district. The Board of Education has the power to make this decision today. I, along with POWER-PAC IL, ask the members of the Board to make this decision now.

As a member of POWER-PAC IL, I know firsthand that having police in schools does not help students or our community. Police officers do not resolve conflicts between students or help students repair their relationships. Police in schools only leads to our youth having criminal records from an early age that follow them for the rest of their lives.

Through POWER-PAC IL, I have practiced restorative justice as a Peace Keeper at Nixon Elementary School for 2 years. In the past two years, I have also volunteered at Kelvyn Park High School to support restorative practices with students. These experiences showed me the importance of restorative justice as an alternative to school safety. I have helped young people process their experiences by providing them a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing themselves, because they know that someone is attentively listening to them. I believe in the power of restorative justice. This is what CPS should be investing in instead of police officers. I, along with POWER-PAC IL, ask the Board members to reject the proposal to allocate \$12 million to the SRO program this school year and direct those resources to providing community-led restorative justice as well as social emotional supports to our students.

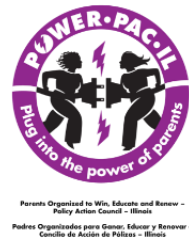
Three of my daughters are affiliated with Kelvyn Park High School. My youngest daughter is starting her freshman year this fall, and my two older daughters graduated from this school. As the president of the Kelvyn Park Local School Council, I led



conversations with my fellow LSC members this summer to advocate for our school to remove the School Resource Officers. We were one of seventeen schools in CPS that voted to get rid of our SROs. After the LSC had voted, members of our school community voiced their support of our decision and called for an increase in social emotional supports and restorative justice programs to support our students and community.

I, along with POWER-PAC IL, ask the Board of Education to commit targeted funding for community-led restorative justice and social and emotional learning to the seventeen schools that voted to remove their SRO programs. This money should come from the \$21 million CPS is saving now that these schools have voted to remove their SROs. It makes sense that the money that was used for police in the past, should now be used for supportive services at the newly police-free schools.

I urge the members of the Board to act on the points I have raised with you today. Thank you.



Maria L. Toribio Comentario Público a la Junta de Educación de CPS

August 26, 2020

Mi nombre es Maria Leticia Toribio. Soy presidenta del LSC de Kelvyn Park High School, y la codirigete de la Campaña de Justicia Elemental en POWER-PAC IL, un proyecto de Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI).

Hoy quiero pedirles a los miembros de la Junta de Educación que voten en contra de renovar el contrato con el Departamento de Policía de Chicago. Las reformas al programa de SRO que CPS anunció para el próximo ciclo escolar no son suficientes, porque estas reformas no crean escuelas libres de policías. No hay necesidad de esperar otro año para lograr tener escuelas libres de policías en nuestro distrito. La Junta de Educación tiene el poder de tomar esta decisión hoy. Yo, junto con POWER-PAC IL, pedimos que los miembros de la Junta tomen esta decisión ahora.

Como miembra de POWER-PAC IL, yo sé de primera mano que tener a los policías en las escuelas no ayuda ni a los estudiantes ni a la comunidad. La policía no resuelven los conflictos entre estudiantes y no ayudan a los estudiantes a reparar sus relaciones. La policía en las escuelas solo resulta en que nuestros jóvenes desarrollen un récord criminal desde temprana edad que los persigue el resto de sus vidas.

A través de POWER-PAC IL, yo he practicado la justicia restaurativa como Hacedora de Paz en Nixon Elementary por 2 años. En los últimos dos años también he sido voluntaria en Kelvyn Park High School apoyando las practicas restaurativas con los estudiantes. Estas experiencias me demostraron la importancia de la justicia restaurativa como una alternativa para la seguridad escolar. Yo he ayudado a los jóvenes a procesar sus experiencias brindándoles un espacio seguro donde ellos sienten la confianza de expresarse sabiendo que alguien los está escuchando atentamente. Yo creo en el poder de la justicia restaurativa. Esto es en lo que CPS debería de invertir en vez de policías. Yo, junto con POWER-PAC IL, pedimos a los miembros de la Junta que rechacen la propuesta que asigna \$12 millones al programa de SRO este ciclo escolar y dirijan esos recursos para proporcionar apoyos de justicia restaurativa guiados por la comunidad al igual que apoyos socioemocionales para nuestros estudiantes.

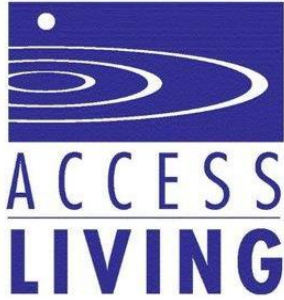
Tres de mis hijas están afiliadas con Kelvyn Park High School. Mi hija menor va a comenzar su primer año este otoño, y mis dos hijas mayores ya se graduaron de esa escuela. Como presidenta del Consejo Local Escolar de Kelvyn Park, yo dirigí



conversaciones entre los otros miembros de mi LSC este verano para abogar a favor de quitar a los Oficiales de Recurso Escolares de nuestra escuela. Fuimos una de diecisiete escuelas en CPS que votó para quitar a sus SROs. Después de que el LSC votó, miembros de nuestra comunidad escolar expresaron su apoyo de nuestra decisión y pidieron un incremento en los apoyos socioemocionales y los programas de justicia restaurativa para apoyar a nuestros estudiantes y nuestra comunidad.

Yo, junto con POWER-PAC IL, pedimos a la Junta de Educación que comprometan fondos designados a la justicia restaurativa guiada por la comunidad y el aprendizaje socioemocional en las diecisiete escuelas que votaron por eliminar sus programas de SRO. Este dinero debería de venir de los \$21 millones que CPS está ahorrando ahora que estas escuelas votaron por quitar a sus SROs. Tiene sentido que el dinero que antes se utilizó para la policía, ahora se utilice para servicios de apoyo en las escuelas que ahora son libres de policías.

Le pido a los miembros de la Junta de Educación que actúen sobre los puntos que les he presentado hoy. Gracias.



Chicago Public Schools Special Education Budget Review

FY 2021

Supporting Students with Disabilities in the Pandemic Era

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August 2020

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Executive Summary

Access Living has provided an annual review and analysis of the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) budget as it impacts students with disabilities since 2006. Typically, our report aims to review if the CPS budget adequately funds its special education program to ensure equity and good educational outcomes for students with disabilities. With the unprecedented Covid-19 school closures this year, Access Living shifted our budget review to focus on better supporting students with disabilities with remote learning, along with a review of CPS's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Program/Student Accommodation budget.

For FY21, CPS proposed total spending of \$8.4 billion, an increase of \$545 million from the FY20 amended budget.¹ The \$8.4 billion spending plan includes \$6.92 billion for the operating budget, \$758 million for the capital budget, and \$711 million for debt service payments.² Out of the almost \$7 billion operating budget, CPS allocated \$1.16 billion for its special education program in FY21.³ The FY21 special education budget supports a total of 10,945 special education teacher, clinician, aide, and supporting administrator positions, including an additional 44 social workers, 55 nurses, and 40 case managers.⁴

In Chapter 1, Access Living identifies a critical issue with CPS's FY21 budget for special education services. Remote learning calls for additional resource support for students with disabilities, not less. However, the FY21 budget does not include a sufficient number of additional special education teacher and aide positions for remote learning in the fall. To adequately support students with disabilities with remote learning, teachers, aides and various clinicians need to spend more time on teaching preparation, team collaboration, data collection and analyses, as well as student check-ins and consultation with parents and caregivers. CPS's FY21 special education budget is not reflecting a meaningful increase in total special education teacher, aide, and case manager positions who were budgeted at schools.

We welcome CPS's new Remote Learning Guidance on Special Education with detailed instructions for providing services to students with disabilities for the fall semester.⁵ However, we have grave concerns about how the already thinly-stretched special education staff at schools can implement the guidelines in carrying out an extensive amount of additional work to meet the IEP goals with remote learning. Without additional budgetary consideration of the further remote learning support needs, the proposed FY21 budget does not seem to be adequately supporting disabled students' educational needs in the upcoming school year. We recommend

¹ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget, <https://www.cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about/finance/budget-2021/docs/fy21-budget-book-v22.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

⁴ *Id.* According to the FY21 Interactive Budget Report, the FY21 special education budget of \$1.16 billion includes \$67 million of special education funding to charter schools.

⁵ CPS School Reopening 2020 ODLSS Remote Learning Guidance, <https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1jRpHnav1P3pJLnsC-bMAEwZm03S31-uB9ow0nqdyBZg/mobilebasic>.

that CPS allocate an appropriate portion of the \$470 million in federal Covid aid for supporting students with disabilities.⁶

In Chapter 2, Access Living discusses the impact of the Covid-19 school closures and rapid shift to remote education on students with disabilities and their families. Often, special education services are offered in a small group or one-on-one setting to appropriately support students' learning. The emergency school closures took the essence of these small group or one-on-one instruction and related services, as well as social and emotional learning opportunities, away from students by isolating them at home. In the spring, CPS had significant difficulty providing special education or accommodation services to students as required by their IEPs or 504 plans due to various technology and service implementation obstacles. As a result, students with disabilities could not make expected progress with their IEPs and many have shown signs of regression with their critical skills.

Access Living recommends that CPS provide robust support with quality and quantity to students with disabilities. Most of all, CPS should hire more teachers and aides so students can receive adequate support with asynchronous portion of remote learning. With remote learning, more instructional support should be given to students with disabilities in order to offset the limits of remote learning. We also recommend CPS prioritize in-person instruction and therapy services as the safety of students and staff allows and provide a safe learning place for students. Our specific special education service recommendations can be found on pp. 9-10.

Lastly, Access Living presents our discussion on CPS's \$20 million ADA improvement budget in FY21.⁷ The district's plan of making every school first-floor accessible is miscalculated in that it does not actually address students' need of access to educational spaces, since classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, and gyms are not typically on the first floor of schools. First-floor accessible schools also exclude any parent with mobility disabilities from parenting and equally engaging in their child's education by limiting their access to first floors, when many educational spaces are on higher floors. Even for basic parent teacher meetings, first-floor access does not mean there is a reasonable first-floor space for a parent to meet with a teacher. The only way to increase accessibility for students, parents, teachers, and caregivers with mobility disabilities is making a school fully accessible vertically, not just first-floor accessible. Our specific recommendations to improve school accessibility can be found on pp. 13-14.

⁶ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, pp. 19-21.

⁷ CPS FY21 Proposed Capital Plan, <https://www.cps.edu/about/finance/capital-plan/capital-plan-fy2021/>.

Chapter 1

FY21 Budget is Not Sufficient to Support the Remote Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities

In the 2019-20 school year, CPS served over 67,000 identified students with disabilities.⁸ Most of these students received special education services based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Other students with disabilities who do not need a modified curriculum still received accommodations based on their disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These students have 504 plans describing their disability accommodations. Under the IDEA and Section 504, CPS is required to provide free appropriate public education services to both groups of students with disabilities.

Budget Overview

In FY21, CPS budgeted a total of \$1.16 billion for its special education and disability accommodation services (special education budget) for students with disabilities.⁹ The FY21 special education budget supports a total of 10,945 special education teacher, clinician, aide, and administrator positions.¹⁰ CPS announced that the FY21 budget includes an additional \$97 million from the FY20 budget.¹¹ However, detailed budget amounts in the FY21 Proposed Budget book, as well as the district's Interactive Budget Reports, do not clearly show the \$97 million increase.¹² In fact, CPS announced the \$97 million special education funding increase with the school-level budget release in April, 2020.¹³ The \$97 million special education funding increase is based on the April preliminary allocation of special education teacher, aide, and case manager positions at individual schools. To meet the actual needs of schools, CPS also added special education teacher and aide positions through the budget appeals process from May through August 2020. In the below table, the "2021 Proposed Budget" in the "Budgeted at Schools" raw number, \$851 million, reflects the funds supporting a total number of special education teacher, aide, and case manager positions as of early August, 2020, after adding more teacher and aide positions from the preliminary position allocation in April.

⁸ As of 20th day SY 2019-20: Students with IEPs total 51,691 and students with 504 plans total 16,037, CPS School Data, Demographics, School Year 2019-2020, <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/demographics/>; CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419.

⁹ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

¹⁰ *Id.* According to the FY21 Interactive Budget Reports, the FY21 special education budget of \$1.16 billion includes \$67 million of special education funding to charter schools.

¹¹ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 5.

¹² CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78; CPS FY21 Interactive Budget Reports, <https://www.cps.edu/about/finance/budget/budget-2021/>.

¹³ CPS Press Release, CPS Increases School Budgets by More Than \$125 Million with Additional Resources to Advance Equity Throughout the District. April 28, 2020, [https://www.cps.edu/press-releases/cps-increases-school-budgets-by-more-than-\\$125-million-with-additional-resources-to-advance-equity-throughout-the-district/](https://www.cps.edu/press-releases/cps-increases-school-budgets-by-more-than-$125-million-with-additional-resources-to-advance-equity-throughout-the-district/).

Based on the FY21 Proposed Budget Book, as well as the FY21 Interactive Budget Reports, the FY21 special education budget includes an increase of \$136 million from the FY20 Ending (end of school year) Budget, including an additional 44 social workers, 55 nurses, and 40 case managers.¹⁴ The “Total Department” row shows funds supporting administrators and citywide clinicians, such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, nurses, and social workers.

FY20-FY21 Special Education Budget Summary

	2020 Amended Budget	2020 Ending Budget	2021 Proposed Budget	FY20 Ending Budget - FY21 Proposed Budget Comparison	FY20 Amended Budget - FY21 Proposed Budget Comparison
General Funds	\$261,989,330	\$260,815,204	\$290,509,940	\$29,694,736	\$28,520,610
Other Grant Funds	\$18,005,155	\$20,576,693	\$18,937,449	(\$1,639,244)	\$932,294
Total Department	\$279,994,485	\$281,391,897	\$309,447,389	\$28,055,492	\$29,452,904
Budgeted at Schools	\$718,963,112	\$742,763,112	\$850,978,720	\$108,215,608	\$132,015,608
Grand Total	\$998,957,597	\$1,024,155,009	\$1,160,426,109	\$136,271,100	\$161,468,512

Source: FY21 CPS Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

In FY20, the charter school funding model changed and their special education funding is delivered through the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS), adding \$64 million to the department’s FY20 budget.¹⁵ In FY21, the total of \$1.16 billion special education funds budgeted under ODLSS includes \$67 million to charter school special education programs, an increase of \$3 million compared to the previous year.¹⁶

CPS Should Use the Federal Covid Aid Funds for Robust Remote Learning Support for Students with Disabilities

Access Living identified a critical issue with CPS’s FY21 budget for special education services related to the pandemic. The FY21 special education budget does not include a sufficient number of additional special education teacher and aide positions for remote learning in the fall. Remote learning requires an extensive amount of additional work for staff: remote learning/online platform-focused teaching preparation, team collaboration, data collection analyses, student check-in and consultation with parents and caregivers. The below table shows

¹⁴ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

¹⁵ CPS FY20 Proposed Budget Book, p. 70.

¹⁶ A total of \$67,762,902 in FY21, CPS FY21 Interactive Budget Reports, Budget by Fund>General Fund> FG114 Special Education Fund, <https://biportal.cps.edu/analytics/saw.dll?Dashboard#no-back-button>.

that the FY21 Budgeted at School positions of 8,900.4 special education teachers, aides, and case managers does not provide any increase from the FY20 ending positions of 8,909.4.

FY20-FY21 Special Education Position Summary

	2020 Budgeted Positions	2020 Ending Positions	2021 Proposed Positions
General Funds	1,803.4	1,817.4	1,911.4
Other Grant Funds	129.1	133.1	133.1
Total Department	1,932.5	1,950.5	2,044.5
Budgeted at Schools (Special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and case managers)	7,850.9	8,909.4	8,900.4
Grand Total	9,783.4	10,859.9	10,944.9

Source: CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

Because CPS allocates special education positions based on students’ IEP needs, an increase of special education positions is not an additional supplementary support. Rather, any change in the number of positions means a change in students’ IEP needs. For that reason, comparing the FY20 Budgeted Positions and the FY21 Proposed Positions does not truly provide insight into the current service needs of students. Rather, the FY20 Ending Positions (as of June 2020) in comparison with the FY21 Proposed Positions (beginning Sept. 2020), shows if the FY21 Proposed Budget and supporting positions generally meet the current IEP needs of students.

On Aug. 18th, 2020, one week after the FY21 proposed budget release, CPS released its new Special Education Remote Learning Guidance for the fall.¹⁷ The fall remote learning guidelines offer detailed instructions for staff to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities to as much extent as possible. Nonetheless, Access Living finds no meaningful additional teacher and aide budget allocation in support of extensive remote learning in the fall. Meanwhile, in the above table, the “Total (ODLSS) Department” positions include an increase of 94 departmental positions, reflecting an additional 44 social worker and 55 nurse positions to be hired during SY20-21.¹⁸

Access Living welcomes the district’s thorough guidance on providing services to students with disabilities for the fall semester. However, we have grave concerns about how the already thinly-stretched special education staff at schools can implement the Special Education Remote Learning Guidance in carrying out an extensive amount of additional work to meet the

¹⁷ CPS School Reopening 2020 ODLSS Remote Learning Guidance, <https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1jRpHnav1P3pJLnsC-bMAEwZm03S31-uB9ow0ngdyBZg/mobilebasic>.

¹⁸ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 78.

IEP goals with remote learning. Without additional budgetary consideration of the further remote learning support needs, the proposed FY21 budget is not sufficient to adequately support students' educational needs in the upcoming school year. We recommend that CPS allocate an appropriate portion of the federal Covid aid of over \$470 million for supporting students with disabilities in FY21.¹⁹

Chapter 2

How to Better Support Students with Disabilities in the Fall

Challenges with Remote Learning

Since the COVID-19 school closures in March, schools, students, and families have faced immense challenges with students' learning because the emergency shift to remote education tended to result in CPS not being able to adequately meet the educational needs of students with disabilities according to their IEPs. Students with disabilities receive individualized special education services or accommodation services based on their individual needs in relation to their disability. Often, special education services are offered in a small group or one-on-one setting to appropriately support students' learning. In addition to specialized instruction services, schools also provide students with disabilities with various related services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work/counseling, and nursing, if such services are necessary for a student to benefit from special education. The Covid emergency took the essence of these small group or one-on-one instruction and related services, as well as social and emotional learning opportunities, away from students by isolating them at home.

The pre-Covid special education setting no longer works with remote learning. Families of students with disabilities have been reporting various impediments to education. Students with sensory or developmental disabilities often experience accessibility barriers to online platforms, including the digital divide resulting in lack of digital devices and internet connections. For example, a student with autism found remote learning inaccessible because the one-fit-for-all online setting did not accommodate his sensory needs. According to the new CPS Special Education Remote Learning Guidance for the fall, students who cannot access online learning due to their disabilities will receive weekly or bi-weekly paper packets with directions, lesson plans, and modified work.²⁰ To these students, the burden of learning, if any, is enormous, because paper packets do not provide the equivalent level of human services that they need to make meaningful progress.

¹⁹ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, pp. 19-21.

²⁰ CPS School Reopening 2020 ODLSS Remote Learning Guidance, p. 14, <https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1jRpHnav1P3pJLnsC-bMAEwZm03S31-uB9ow0nqdyBZg/mobilebasic>.

Other students with autism or other developmental disabilities also found a sudden change to remote learning hard to keep up with due to new routines and online-based activities. Although CPS distributed laptops and offered internet access support, it did not automatically guarantee educational access to students, including students with disabilities. Younger students with disabilities and students with attention deficit disorder often find remote learning boring and less interactive, so to assist them with learning, a parent or another caregiver had to take a role of teacher, aide, and therapist at home even though they were not equipped to do so. For every student with a disability, a student, teachers, and families needed to find alternative individualized ways of education with remote learning, but in most cases, parents and caregivers found themselves struggling to make it through a full day without the professional in-person support that their students used to have in school. For many students with disabilities, isolation at home also hurt their social and emotional development.

Students with Disabilities Need Robust Support with Quality and Quantity.

In the fall, Access Living hopes that CPS finds a way to provide students with disabilities and their families with robust support with quality and quantity. During the 3-month remote learning period in the spring, the district had difficulty providing special education services as required by students' IEPs or 504 plans due to various technology and service implementation obstacles. As a result, students with disabilities could not make expected progress with their IEPs and many have shown signs of regression with their critical skills.

Access Living welcomes CPS's newly offered Remote Learning Guidance on special education with detailed instructions of providing services to students with disabilities. However, as we discussed in Chapter 1, we have grave concerns about the FY21 special education funding because it does not seem to be sufficient to support additional education personnel that students need with remote learning.

We recommend that CPS provide robust support with quantity and quality to students with disabilities as follows:

- 1. Hire more teachers and aides so students can receive adequate support with asynchronous portion of remote learning.** For example, a student with a shared classroom aide for assistance should be able to receive the same level of assistance when she is doing remote learning school work asynchronously. Because a shared aide would likely need to assist assigned students one-by-one with asynchronous remote learning, there should be more aides in the 2020-21 school year. Likewise, more instructional support should be given to students with disabilities in order to offset the limits of remote learning. To achieve this goal, CPS should provide more teachers and classroom aides to students with disabilities.

- 2. Prioritize in-person instruction and therapy services as the safety of students and staff allows.** Remote learning is harder on students with disabilities because special education essentially requires individualized education services, which often have social, tactile, visual, or auditory components that help students stay on track. To prevent continuous regression of students and maintain progress, CPS must prioritize students with disabilities with in-person education services as the safety of students and staff allows.
- 3. Provide a Safe Learning Space for Students.** The pandemic has worsened socioeconomic disparities among CPS students, including students with disabilities. For students whose home or family situation is not equipped to provide an appropriate environment for their learning, CPS can better support these students by providing a safe learning space in their buildings and offering support services while keeping them safe.
- 4. Extend the Special Education Service Eligibility Period for Graduating Students.** Students who graduated in the spring or soon to be graduating students with disabilities have not received adequate transition services since the Covid school closures. CPS should stop the clock until school reopening and extend these students' special education service period for the time they lost due to the school closures. Although Illinois law requires that the school district provide special education and transition services until a student turns 22 years old, it is a minimum, and CPS is free to offer more services for a longer period. With an extended service period, these students will better realize their right to gain meaningful independent living skills until they graduate.
- 5. Use the Federal Covid Aid Funds to Support Students with Disabilities.** To provide robust individualized support for students with disabilities in the pandemic, CPS should commit additional resources to offset the limits of remote learning. CPS should use an appropriate portion of its \$470 million federal Covid aid funds and support our students with disabilities so they can continuously make meaningful progress.

Chapter 3

Improving CPS Accessibility for Students with Mobility Disabilities

CPS's FY21 capital budget totals \$758 million.²¹ The district allocated \$20 million of that capital budget for ADA Improvement and Student Accommodation as a part of a commitment to spend \$100 million over the next five-years to make every school first floor accessible.²² CPS explains its ADA accessibility improvement plan as follows:

- Support for Students with Physical Limitations

We will invest \$20 million to increase Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility in 36 schools as part of a multi-year program to ensure all CPS buildings have first-floor accessibility. Starting FY2021, CPS is committing to spending \$100 million over the next five years to improve accessibility of parking lots, main entrances, main offices, and public restrooms.²³

CPS Must Prioritize Making Schools Fully Accessible for Students

Access Living strongly opposes CPS's plan of making every school first-floor accessible. District-wide first-floor accessibility will not increase educational opportunities for students with mobility disabilities because the district does not provide all educational spaces, including classrooms, on the first floor. With first-floor accessibility, students with mobility disabilities may very unlikely be able to access all classrooms, attendance offices, cafeterias, gymnasiums, pull-out rooms, libraries, art rooms, and other necessary spaces if they are located above the first floor.

First-floor accessible schools also exclude any parent with mobility disabilities from parenting and equally engaging in their child's education by limiting their access to first floors, when many educational spaces are on higher floors. Even for basic parent teacher meetings, first-floor access does not mean there is a reasonable first-floor space for a parent to meet with a teacher. First-floor accessible school buildings may offer some accessibility to community members but it still falls short of what is needed for students and their parents with mobility disabilities. The only way to increase accessibility for students, parents, teachers, and caregivers with mobility disabilities is making a school fully accessible vertically, not just first-floor accessible.

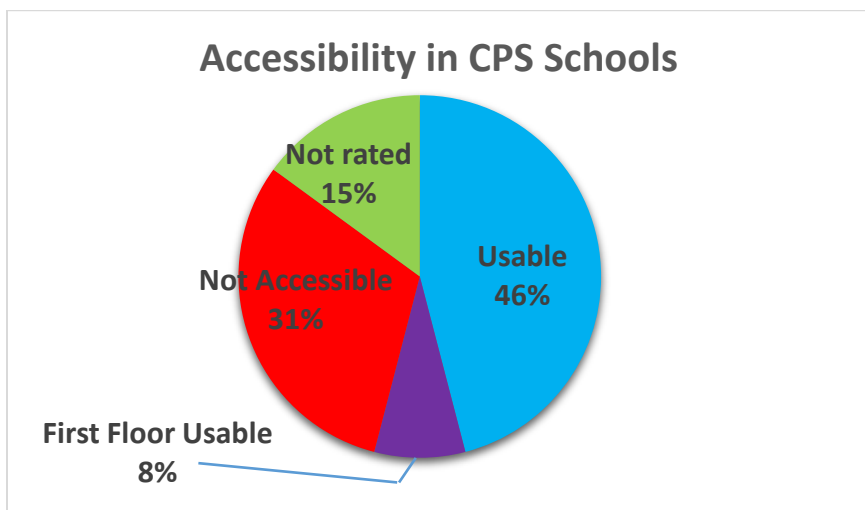
Since FY20, CPS has been allocating ADA improvement funds primarily to make schools first-floor accessible. We oppose CPS's district-wide first-floor accessibility plan because equity for students with mobility disabilities cannot be achieved unless all CPS school buildings are fully accessible so they can equally enjoy the same academic programs as their

²¹ CPS FY21 Proposed Capital Plan, <https://www.cps.edu/about/finance/capital-plan/capital-plan-fy2021/>.

²² CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, pp. 7-8, 93, 181-83.

²³ CPS FY21 Proposed Budget Book, p. 183.

peers without disabilities do. Under the ADA, CPS has to make any newly constructed (on or after January 1993) buildings or major renovations to be ADA accessible. Because of the ADA new construction requirement, from FY15 through FY19, the number of usable schools in CPS had slightly increased even though the district did not make any capital investment during those fiscal years to improve accessibility of pre-ADA built schools. To bring equity to students with mobility disabilities, CPS’s ADA capital investment should be spent on making pre-ADA built schools fully accessible.



Note: Above figures include all CPS schools, including charter schools.²⁴ CPS accessibility terminology is distinct from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) terminology and definitions: Under the ADA, buildings are referred to as “accessible,” “first-floor accessible,” and “inaccessible” or “not accessible.” CPS’s term, “usable” is not equivalent to “accessible” under the ADA, however, a student with a mobility disability can still attend a usable (generally accessible) school and participate in school programs although not every element may be perfectly accessible. “Usable” schools also include a small number of newly constructed or renovated ADA compliant schools but CPS does not differentiate these ADA accessible schools ratings from pre-ADA usable schools.

In CPS, more than half of schools are not available for students with mobility disabilities to attend.²⁵ We also find that CPS’s accessibility level is inequitable for students with mobility disabilities in the South and West Sides of the City.²⁶ Notably, in Pilsen-Little Village, Englewood-Auburn Gresham, and Chatham-South, two out of three schools are not usable for students with mobility disabilities.²⁷ With the unequal degree of accessibility among geographical regions in the South and West Sides, Black and Brown students need to travel

²⁴ As of June, 2019, CPS had 642 schools in total: Usable schools (295); First-floor Usable schools (52); Not Accessible schools (199); Not rated schools (96), CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites. Nor rated schools are mostly charter and option schools and CPS’s own data does not include these schools’ accessibility ratings.

²⁵ Due to lack of vertical accessibility features, students with mobility disabilities cannot attend first-floor usable schools.

²⁶ Access Living, *Accessibility in Chicago Public Schools: Students with Mobility Disabilities Are Not Yet Equal* (Aug. 2020), pp. 15-16, 29-33, 36-38, available at https://www.accessliving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPS-Accessibility_Students-with-Mobility-Disabilities-are-Not-Yet-Equal_Access-Living-1.pdf.

²⁷ *Id.*

longer distances than their peers in the North Side, due to a severe lack of accessible schools and high quality programs.²⁸ For example, in Chatham/South Shore, only NINE schools are usable (generally accessible) out of the 32 schools in total whereas in the Near North Side, 15 schools are usable out of the 28 schools in total.²⁹ CPS needs to prioritize schools in the South and West Sides in improving school accessibility by making those schools fully accessible to students.

For more discussion, please see our CPS school accessibility analyses report, [*Accessibility in Chicago Public Schools: Students with Mobility Disabilities Are Not Yet Equal*](#).³⁰ The report offers insights on school accessibility disparities in CPS and the inequitably small number of usable (generally accessible) schools available to Black and Brown students in the South and West Sides of the City.

To improve accessibility in CPS schools, Access Living recommends:

- 1. CPS Must Use the ADA Capital Investment Funds to Make Schools Fully Accessible** so students with mobility disabilities can access and enjoy the same academic programs as their peers without disabilities. Under the ADA, CPS is required to make any newly constructed building or major renovations accessible. Furthermore, the district’s capital investment on improving accessibility should prioritize projects making pre-ADA built schools fully accessible. CPS’s current plan of improving first-floor accessibility is a significant cost that provides minimal benefit, especially since there is no guarantee that it would complement future plans for full accessibility.
- 2. Make the Accessibility Information Easily Available and Complete Accessibility Rating of All CPS Schools.** CPS should make detailed ADA school accessibility information, if a school is “usable (generally accessible)” or “fully ADA accessible,” easily available on the CPS website, School Locator, as well as the district’s school choice application and selection process, GoCPS. Such accessibility information is critical for students and their parents with mobility disabilities in their school choice and selection process. To effectively assist students and their families with mobility disabilities, CPS should also provide an accessibility rating of all CPS schools, including charter schools.
- 3. Prioritize Schools in the South and West Sides.** CPS should prioritize its South and West regions in improving both elementary and high school accessibility. Notably, in Pilsen-Little Village, Englewood-Auburn Gresham, and Chatham-South, two out of three schools are not usable (generally accessible) for students with mobility disabilities.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Access Living, *Accessibility in Chicago Public Schools: Students with Mobility Disabilities Are Not Yet Equal* (Aug. 2020), Accessibility in CPS Elementary Schools chapter, pp. 20, 33, https://www.accessliving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPS-Accessibility_Students-with-Mobility-Disabilities-are-Not-Yet-Equal_Access-Living-1.pdf.

³⁰ *Id.*

The severe lack of usable schools, as well as the dearth of high quality programs, hurt Black and Brown students and their communities and place an inequitable burden on these students to travel a further distance to attend usable schools with higher quality ratings far from their neighborhoods.

- 4. Allocate a Separate Fund for Individual ADA Accommodations.** The ADA requires CPS to reasonably accommodate students and other individuals with disabilities so they can have equal access to CPS's buildings, programs, and services. A reasonable amount of funds, sufficient to address vertical access needs and separate from a budget for the ADA program (district-wide capital investment to improve overall school accessibility), should be devoted and spent to meet the needs of current or enrolling students who present accessibility needs at their schools.
- 5. Devote More ADA Accessibility Improvement Investment.** Although more than half of CPS schools are not fully accessible for students, CPS's FY20 ADA improvement budget of \$20 million makes up less than 3% of CPS's capital investment for the next school year. If CPS is willing to spend \$20 million in FY21 for first-floor accessibility, the district can, and should, allocate an equivalent amount to make schools fully accessible for students.
- 6. Create a Long-Term Accessibility Plan to Make Every School Fully Accessible, in Partnership with Disability Stakeholders.** CPS's sister agency, the Chicago Transit Authority, committed to a 20-year All Stations Accessibility Plan (ASAP) to make all public transit stations accessible. It recognizes the need to identify and obtain new funding sources to meet this commitment and determined project prioritization in consultation with the disability community. As of today, more than half of CPS schools are not available for students with mobility disabilities. We need a long-term strategic plan to make every school fully accessible and CPS should take a leadership role to bring equity to students and their families with mobility disabilities. Furthermore, such a plan should be developed with disability community stakeholders.

This report was led by Chris Yun, Access Living's Education Policy Analyst. Ms. Yun can be reached at cyun@accessliving.org regarding this report. Access Living's website can be visited at www.accessliving.org.

CW Chan's Statement for Chicago Board of Education 8/26/2020 Board Meeting

My name is CW Chan, I am the founder and board member of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC), the organization that has spearheaded the Chinatown High School advocacy.

Depending on the age of the person you talk to, you would be told that Chinatown has been trying to get a community high school for 20 years, or 40 years, or 60 years. The fact is, Chinatown has been at the current location for almost 110 years, 109 to be exact, and there was never a community high school in and around the neighborhood, and there isn't one now still.

When I lived in the Uptown area in the early '70s before the Argyle Asian Town taking shape, I saw many Chinese students attending the nearby Senn High School and I learned that many of them came from the South Side Chinatown neighborhood.

A little over twenty years ago, we were encouraged by then CPS Superintendent Paul Vallas to explore a Chinatown Charter School, and the community group worked diligently and developed a curriculum blue print and even identified a qualified candidate for the principal's position.

Perhaps Mr. Del Valle would remember that in January of 2011, he met with Chinatown community as a mayoral candidate and high school was among the issues that were discussed. Mr. Del Valle indicated at that meeting he would be supportive of a high school in the neighborhood.

In July 2015, we took the case to the Mayor's office and met with Mr. Arnie Rivera, then Mayor's Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Education.

Fast-forward to the more recent CPS decision and initial steps to convert NTA to be a neighborhood high school. It came real close, but then again, it was not meant to be.

Despite repeated hopes and disappointments of the past decades, and in the midst of this most uncertain and difficult time with the pandemics, today I come before the Board with a new sense of confidence, optimism and gratitude, for now the mayor, our state legislator, our alderman and the CPS are all on our same page. When the board acts later today to approve the FY2021 budget with a \$105 million capital expenditure, \$50 million from the State and \$55 million from other sources, for the Near South neighborhood high school, we can move quickly to the next tasks of identifying location, capacity, boundaries, and curriculum priorities, building on the knowledge and experience that CPS and Chinatown community had acquired together from our previous collaborations.

We want to let you know that the BOE and the CPS can count on an engaged and relentless Chinatown community as a full partner. We will share freely, speak forcefully and act diligently and constructively. We envision this new high school to be one that's sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of, and fully embraced by this immigrant community.

While this new school will have a sizable student population of Chinese descent, we also recognize and celebrate that this school will have a most socially, culturally and racially diverse student body, and we shall work closely and jointly with our neighboring communities, leveraging on this unique attribute, to develop a new model of innovative best practice in learning and teaching with community and parental engagement.

Over the course of the last three decades, Chinatown has welcomed a new park, a new field house, a new public library, each as a result of city/community engagement and collaboration, and each has become a most prominent showcase institution of its category and a pride of the city. We look forward to this new Near South School as another example of win-win outcome of government/community working together.



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The **Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)** is a coalition of major service organizations in the community. Its mission is to empower the Chinese American community in Greater Chicago Region through planning, organizing, civic participation, education and coalition building.

CBCAC's initiatives are supported by Chicago Community Trust, and other community institutions and individuals

COALITION FOR A BETTER CHINESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY
華埠更好團結聯盟

SOLIDARITY

Testimonial Presented at the August 26, 2020 Chicago Public Schools Board Meeting

My name is Grace Chan McKibben. I am the executive director of Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, a community planning and policy organization. I am testifying to support a FY21 CPS budget that includes the cost for a new high school in the Chinatown area. Thanks to the advocacy of Representative Theresa Mah, the Illinois General Assembly approved \$50 million in capital funds toward a high school that serves the Armour Square and Bridgeport communities, which have never had a CPS neighborhood high school in the 166-year history of CPS.

Generations of high school students in this area have had to travel to attend as many as 50 different high schools, from Senn to Bogan. CPS' own studies have found that students from Chinatown have one of the longest daily commutes among CPS students. Not only does the long commute negatively impact students' time for study, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities, the distance from home to school also makes it challenging for parents to be fully engaged with the schools.

With the pledged funds in this year's budget, we can begin the process of planning and implementation that will include parent and community voices. The elementary schools in the Near South communities in the attendance area of this new high school serve a diverse population of White, Black, Latinx, Asian, and mixed-race students. The high school will also fully embrace this diversity and support the needs of immigrant families at the same time. A school that is intentional in embracing different cultures prepares students for an increasingly diverse world. By approving the budget that will support such a school, we are building for our children's future and our community's future.

August 26, 2020

Comment for August 26 meeting

boe@cps.edu

Via online portal

Police Out of Chicago Public Schools

To CPS BOE members,

I write again, as I did in June, to demand the end to the presence of Chicago police officers, or law enforcement officers of any kind, in Chicago public schools. Children should not be policed at school. Schools must be an entirely safe space for learning, caring and support of Chicago's children and youth. I repeat my previously expressed, data-driven reasons regarding the harm that police in schools causes our school children and youth (towards the latter half of this letter). I am adding to my previous comments regarding lack of financial responsibility in continuing to spend funds on police in schools, and adding new comments regarding the undemocratic, irresponsible, and non-transparent aspects surrounding CPS's directive for LSCs to vote on SROs.

The CPS contract with CPD is Fiscally Irresponsible

Schools are struggling to pay necessary teacher and staff salaries. At my daughters' school, we are combining a classroom and scraping funds to pay a part-time teacher position. Our school is one of **several** that has a structurally-unsound temporary annex that has long since expired. The facility is not secure in the event of a police shooting, has water leaks, is not accessible in violation of the ADA, is susceptible to rodents, has climate control issues, and does not have space to allow for full-day pre-K, among other problems. We have been told that there are not enough funds to replace our annex at this time because there are many schools in dire need of facilities improvements. Thus schools must wait in line (for years) for the most basic physical requirements to have a safe learning environment for our school children. This year, schools will be coping with the COVID health pandemic and have an even more dire need for safe and clean facilities, and nurses and social workers to keep our children healthy and help them cope.

How can CPS take **any amount of money** from our school to give to the already over-funded police department that receives 40% of our City's budget? Even if any police officers are assigned to schools, that is their duty to Chicago's people, and should be funded by the existing police budget. The BOE-CPD contract unconscionably commits CPS's limited resources to police officers that should not be there in the first place and should be funded by CPD's budget, a budget that dwarfs CPS's budget and many other important City resources.

LSC Vote on SROs

CPS's delegation of the vote to local LSCs has been commended by many as a means to listen to the community regarding the issue of police in schools. However, the way that CPS put this decision on LSCs was replete with problems that have undermined the process at many schools. The timing of the required vote occurred when high school student reps were leaving their LSCs and many LSCs lost the student rep's vote. Many LSCs also had vacancies, no quorum and could not officially vote on the SRO question. Yet falsely CPS publicly posted that those voted LSCs in favor of SROs.

The toolkit issued by CPS encouraged public forum and comments in advance of the vote. However, the toolkit did not come out until mid-July and many schools had already voted, without any public participation, on the SRO issue. Amundsen HS is just one example - that LSC voted in June without using the toolkit and without any meaningful public participation. Many LSCs did not post notice of the meetings or agenda online in advance of the meeting in violation of the OMA, and did not openly provide methods for the public to attend or speak at the meeting. At least one LSC ended the meeting when members of the public tried to participate - Marshall HS where Dnigma Howard was brutally abused by police.

When I and many other members of the public tried to find out and obtain meeting notices, the SRO vote results, meeting minutes and other matters that are public information according to FOIA, we did not receive the information. People who made FOIA requests to CPS were told to contact LSCs directly - LSCs who do not properly have a designated FOIA or OMA officer. When I contacted LSCs directly, I was referred by one LSC to CPS Legal and told LSCs are not handling FOIA requests. This change in LSC and CPS's response to FOIAs occurred **during** the LSC SRO vote time-table, is

FALSE, and is clearly an attempt to hide the deficiencies in the SRO votes at many schools. I am the OMA and FOIA officer for my LSC and I know that we are required to undertake our own training regarding FOIA. I have **never** been informed (to this date) that I should refer FOIA requests I receive in my role as FOIA officer to CPS legal.

For those schools that truly involved public participation, truly listened to the community and voted, the majority voted for the removal of SROs. When examining the list of schools who voted in favor of SROs, it must be recognized that the list is inaccurate because many of those votes lacked any public participation, or were without a quorum so the principal made the decision. For those hard-working and conscientious schools that fully allowed for public participation, the process was stressful and pressured. Many LSC members reported sleepless nights and fatigue as they wrestled with this weighty decision. This is a district-wide decision as it pertains to an IGA between CPS and CPD, and the delegation to the LSCs was an attempt to shirk the financial and moral responsibility CPS has to its students and staff to properly allocate funding and ensure students are truly safe, rather than policed.

LSCs were also making this decision with CPS's false information that there would be no re-allocation of funds if they chose not to retain SROs. That is logically and factually **FALSE**. CPS has already drastically cut the SRO budget in response to public pressure and the absurdity of spending \$33M on SROs when schools will be closed, we need resources for remote learning and COVID response, and the community is vehemently protesting police in schools. CPS and the BOE must not hide behind the misleading and invalid votes of LSCs that voted to retain SROs.

The remainder of my comments (below) are the same as those I expressed in June. These reasons are most compelling and have been expressed by thousands of other people, **most importantly the students and youth leaders who know and live the reality of police in schools in Chicago.**

Police action is disproportionately enforced against Black children

In line with other common-knowledge data about racist law enforcement, police and staff in schools take action against Black students far more frequently than against non-Black students. “Although Black children comprised approximately 40% of the CPS student population that school year, over 60% of CPS’s law enforcement referrals and school-related arrests were of Black children.”¹ This disparity is true nation-wide: Black students are arrested or referred to law enforcement at double the rate of their enrollment, according to the latest Civil Rights Data Collection by the U.S. Department of Education.² Thus, the over-policing of already under-resourced communities is continued in the over-policing of students in under-resourced schools.

Police officers in schools is harmful for all children

Being arrested is traumatic; being held in a detention room is traumatic; being handcuffed is traumatic; being subjected to physical force is traumatic; being accused of a crime is traumatic. Many children and youth that come into contact with police officers in school have experienced trauma and will continue to experience trauma in their lives. Some of this trauma occurs from experiences with police officers in their homes and neighborhoods, such as seeing a loved one arrested or subjected to force by police officers, or being subjected to harassment, intimidation, arrest or force themselves.³ At the City’s Police Accountability Task Force youth panels, “the stories shared by local youth were overwhelmingly negative and painted a dark view of police-youth interactions.”⁴ Having police officers in schools increases the likelihood for further incidents of trauma to students. It is also a trigger and reminder of the trauma students have already experienced during police contacts.

¹ Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, *Handcuffs in Hallways*, p. 14, available at <https://www.povertylaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/handcuffs-in-hallways-final.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection* (New Release for 2018), p. 3, available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>

³ See also *Police Accountability Task Force Report*, p. 38, describing examples of police abuse of Black and Latinx youth, available at https://chicagopatf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PATF_Final_Report_4_13_16-1.pdf

⁴ *PATF*, p. 55.

Police officers in school criminalizes youth

Having police officers in schools escalates discipline or safety matters to criminal matters. Consider the following scenarios that change dramatically when a student is interacting with a police officer instead of a staff member: A student is escorted to and/or held in another location in the school by an officer - the student is detained in police custody. A student argues with an officer, walks away from an officer, or otherwise does not follow an officer's directions - the student is resisting/obstructing a police officer and can be charged with a crime. A student makes any physical contact with an officer, even to get away or in self-defense - the student may be charged with battery to a police officer, a felony. The presence of police in school escalates and criminalizes common adolescent behavior issues.

Police officers in school take resources from our students

CPS is paying CPD \$33 million a year to install police officers in our school. Last year, Chicago police officers were paid a median base salary of \$82,000/year.⁵ Last year, approximately 100 officers were assigned to schools - where is the other \$250,000 per officer being spent? Chicago teachers went on strike to demand a social worker in every school. The average salary for a CPS social worker is \$80,212.⁶ Average salaries for a CPS school counselor and psychologist are \$81,682 and \$86,583, respectively. The removal of police from schools would allow for the funding of the equivalent number of these crucial trained and educated support personnel. To keep our students safe, CPS can continue to employ school security staff (who are paid an average salary of \$36,685) without criminalizing our youth. CPS resources must be used to care for and support students. CPS funds must not be taken from our schools and children to fund CPD.

Your Community is Demanding #policefreeschools

At Goethe Elementary, the school my children attend and where I serve on the LSC, we do not have police officers in our school. But I write this letter for over-policed schools, in over-policed communities. I write this letter to

⁵ <http://directives.chicagopolice.org/forms/CPD-61.400.pdf>

⁶ According to the Chicago Public Schools Employee Position Files, available at https://cps.edu/About_CPS/Financial_information/Pages/EmployeePositionFiles.aspx.

support and protect Black students, students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, immigrant students and other vulnerable students that have been disproportionately policed, and otherwise mistreated or abused in schools. I write this letter in solidarity with the numerous other organizations and individuals demanding and campaigning for the removal of police from schools, such as Students Strike Back, Assata's Daughters, BYP100:Chicago, BLM:Chicago, No Cop Academy, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Enlace Chicago, Chicago Community Bond Fund, Grassroots Collaborative, and the Chicago Teachers Union.

Sincerely,

/s/Amanda Yarusso

Amanda Yarusso



We join the youth-led coalition for police free schools in denouncing both the proposed [resolution and Intergovernmental Agreement](#) between Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Police Department. Together, these proposals maintain a legacy of harm and unequal treatment of protected children; particularly Black, low income and those with specialized needs.

On Monday, we released a joint [letter](#), detailing the persistent oppression, opportunity gaps, research data and CPS stakeholder experiences as a result of CPD School Resource Officers. We stand with youth who call for the need for mental health and a safe haven supports, not armed police. We know 21 schools have safety plans that do not involve police inside the school, namely Brooks College Prep (Roseland) and Curie HS (Archer Heights)...they have not had SROs for up to five (5) and two (2) years respectively.

In Chicago, the district continues to see record decline in student enrollment. Resource-poor schools and communities are being pitted against each other with declining student enrollment, social spending austerity and less restorative practices. These trends cannot be separated from the continued dislocation and displacement of the Black community in Chicago. Destabilized and overpoliced schools foster an increasingly toxic climate—inside and outside the classroom—that pushes directly impacted families out.

To be clear, we believe the proposed resolution is vague and does not begin to meet the scope or burden. The Board should vote no and terminate the CPD SRO contract. Our assessments of the proposed resolution are:

Strengths:

- Acknowledges that CPD School Resource Officers are not the most effective option

Deltas and Unintended Consequences:

- Lacks an inclusive, community-driven process – involving parents, students, teachers, school administrators, student support staff, and other community partners for completing a revised District safety plan with strategies for enhancing student learning, safety, and well-being
- The resolution lacks specificity. We are unclear who defines this proposed process? Who facilitates this process? How do we ensure participatory decision-making with school and community stakeholders?
- The resolution never once mentions race, the burdens police in CPS schools have had on children and the mentions of community engagement are vague and potentially tokenizing.

- The resolution fails to mention there are twenty-one (21) district schools that operate with alternative safety plans, security guards, safe passage within Office of Safety & Security control
- The resolution fails to acknowledge the security measures available today. Because there is no alternative framework to SRO's articulated, this can mean no real strategic plan to transition away from SRO's, funding for professional development and implementation of a restorative/healing centered approach.
- We believe there must be more than discussing removal of CPD SROs. We must also transform how the city and district envision policing youth - often security and disciplinarians do their own form of policing that is detrimental to the safety of young people.
- The resolution discusses alternatives to SROs, but never frames this in terms of a positive or restorative vision. This could lead to a model in which SROs are largely replaced with other forms of security presence. This is why the district must implement an inclusive process going forward

Should the Board vote today to remove police...we join Chicago's students, school communities and LSCs calling to reallocate funds previously used for sworn police officers toward student support positions such as school-based social workers, psychologists, restorative justice practitioners, or other mental or behavioral health professionals, as the budget supports, to meet the needs of students. With schools closed for virtual remote learning through the first quarter, there is sufficient time to implement safety protocols in place at the 21 schools who do not have police presence.

Thank you for your service and dedication to Chicago's youth, our future leaders and educators.

Chicago Community Groups Condemn City's SRO "Reforms", Demand IGA Not Be Renewed and Dollars Invested Back into Local Schools

Mayor Lori Lightfoot
Sybil Madison, Deputy Mayor of Education
The Members of the Chicago Board of Education
Janice Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools
Jadine Chou, Chief of Safety and Security

We are concerned stakeholders of Chicago Public Schools (CPS): students, teachers, parents and caregivers, alum, Local School Council (LSC) members and community for police free schools. We call on the Mayor of Chicago and the Chicago Board of Education to not renew the contract with the Chicago Police Department School Resource Officers.

"The problem with the consent decree implementation has not been the consent decree, which was crafted after years of investigation, advocacy, negotiations and community involvement. The problem is the defendant, the city of Chicago.

*So yes, we agree with the mayor that the process of implementing the consent decree has been slow. Slower than the consent decree demands.
The mayor and the city have the power to change that."*

-Shareese Pryor, chief of the civil rights bureau of the Illinois attorney general's office, June 2020

We call on Board of Education members to unequivocally reject any new contract with the Chicago Police Department. This week, the Chicago Board of Education will vote on an amended intergovernmental agreement, defended by the Mayor and Chicago Public Schools chief Janice Jackson with claims of reforms to come. Enough is enough. We can wait no longer on illusory promises of reform, when we have spent nearly 10 years attempting to work with the District to reform a system that refuses to acknowledge its failures.

We are clear that 100% of Chicago's schools should be free of School Resource Officers (SROs) immediately.

Amid COVID-19, a global health pandemic that has patently altered our lives in Chicago, we implore decision-makers to invest in the dire needs of students and families, schools and communities--- especially as the city and school district are facing massive uncertainty about federal and state funding this fiscal year. **We believe all police funding: \$33M in SY19-20 and recently announced \$12M must be reallocated to provide every child in CPS an equitable and quality education, cultivating safety with trauma-informed supports.**

We know that the safest schools and communities are fully resourced and immersed with localized power. This call for investment and inclusion will be used to empower LSCs, administrations and community engagement to develop their unique alternative school safety plans. **Additionally and most**

importantly, school campuses can be resourced with conflict-resolution, mentors, ambassadors, peacekeepers, violence interrupters, and community-inclusive transformative justice practices and adequate training in conflict resolution and de-escalation. We believe this work must be inclusive and led by directly-impacted people and BIPOC organizations.

Unfortunately, CPD police officers have been used to fill the gaps in Chicago's most under-resourced schools, particularly in the South and West sides. On the recent LSC calls, we heard councils that serve predominantly Black, diverse learners and low income students, detail how they use police officers to fill roles traditionally held by teachers, deans and counselors. We listened as principals said: "we can't afford to lose these two bodies" and "we can't get rid of these resources without getting the money for an alternative." And others admitted they use CPD SROs for roles outside of the parameters in the CPD SRO policy.

As of August 18, 55 CPS schools serving our most vulnerable children, will remain policed by CPD. According to CPS data and [Chicago Sun-Times](#) reporting, these students remain over-represented, targeted and disproportionately subjected to over-policing resulting in the school-to-prison pipeline. On a recent call with the Office of Diverse Learners Supports and Services, the district essentially admitted there is an unequal system of punishment and arrest in CPS, particularly among Black and diverse learner students.

On Wednesday, August 19, CPS released: [Chicago Public Schools Proposes Progressive Reforms to School Resource Officer \(SRO\) Program Based on Feedback](#). The reform areas are: Significant Decreases in Arrests of Student Arrests on School Property, Critical Improvements to the IGA, New Partnerships to Help Strengthen the District's Holistic Approach to School Safety and Reduction in Funding for SROs and Elimination of Mobile Officer Units.

Categorically, we reject the proposed reforms as they do not meet the moment or burdens. In fact, it raises more concern.

Of significant concern is the new reform to formally bar CPD SROs from accessing the CPD Gang Database and collaborating with ICE. For years and in recent months, we expressed concern over CPD's access to CPS student records and information, as many families report police presence in schools make them less safe.

Over and over again, we have been met with denials around CPD SRO access to and placement of youth in the flawed CPD Gang Database. In April 2019, the city of Chicago Office of Inspector General report on the Gang Database calls to question its accuracy and potential life altering impact on individuals, particularly young Black and Latinx men. We need to understand the scope of how this practice may have impacted youth as CPS accounts for the third highest rate of inquiries, nearly 88,000 transmissions. It is no surprise that many individuals have been added to the database before turning 18. In fact, some have been added when they were 11 and 12 years old.

Over the past decade, there are documented cases of harm to Chicago's children in CPS schools by police, resulting in drop-outs, prolonged trauma and millions of dollars in lawsuits. For years, the City Office of Inspector General has called for substantive reforms but time and time again CPS and CPD have failed to meet these requirements.

This is particularly concerning given the unfortunate historical and current state of policing in our city. The legacy of unconstitutional policing by the Chicago Police Department is well documented in recent lawsuits and Department of Justice investigations dating back to 2017 and before. As a result, in March 2019, the city of Chicago and CPD entered into a federal reform agreement or consent decree. The decree has *21 compliance areas* pertaining to policing youth in schools and in the community. **To date, the majority of these reforms have not been met and more than a year later, CPD remains significantly behind in making even minimal progress.**

In recent months, CPS youth, alum, college students and allied citizens have taken to the streets to exercise their constitutionally protected right to freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Instead, they've been beat, sprayed at close range with unknown chemical weapons, kettled and arrested. This, as youth have repeatedly said, police do not make them feel safe in school.

Finally, and above all, in order to give every child access to an equitable quality education, the Chicago Board of Education has a moral, research-based obligation to vote to terminate the contract of fear, oppression, civil rights violations and school to prison pipeline impacting today's youth. We stand ready to work with the city and district to develop safety protocols and resources that do not involve police officers.

We, the undersigned, plea for the termination of the Intergovernmental Agreement with Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Police Department School Resource Officers in its entirety. In its place, CPS must undertake robust community engagement processes to develop alternative school safety plans, and provide school campuses with the resources they need to address conflicts and keep students safe. CPS must also institute antiracist policies and procedures and provide training for teachers, staff, and administrators to understand race/racism and its impact on teaching, learning, and knowledge transmission, recognize differences between antiracism and multiculturalism in pedagogy, curriculum, and educational advocacy.

Organizational Sign On:

- Action Now & Action Now Institute
- Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
- Chicago Teachers Union
- Chicago United for Equity
- Chicago Veterans for Peace
- CPS Alumni for Abolition
- Illinois Families for Public Schools
- Northside Action 4 Justice
- Pilsen Alliance
- Raise Your Hand For Illinois Public Education
- United Working Families

Attachments:

[Current CPS Youth-led Coalition for Police Free Schools](#)

[CPS Alumni Testimonials: End the CPS-CPD Contract](#)

[CPS Alumni Letter to the Mayor and CPS Leadership](#)

[CPD Consent Decree Non-Compliance Areas Regarding Policing Youth](#)

[Review Of The Chicago Police Department's Management Of School Resource Officers, Follow-up City OIG Investigation into Chicago Police Department's Gang Database](#)
[Expansive and Focused Surveillance - New Findings on Chicago's Gang Database](#)



August 27, 2020

Board of Education
Chicago Public Schools
1 N Dearborn St
Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: School Resource Officers

Dear Members of the Board of Education of Chicago Public Schools:

We are three proud Black mothers from the South Side who have a total of thirteen children and grandchildren who are CPS students or graduates. We have served on local school councils and Title I parent advisory councils, and we are members of Stand for Children.

We are writing you today about the issue of police in schools.

This summer, we formed a working group on school safety. We have been diving deep into CPS's School Resource Office policies and procedures. We have exhaustively looked over the CPS website to figure out what information is available and accessible school safety and how it can be better. We have been talking with other CPS parents and our neighbors about how they feel about police in schools. We have been studying the research. We have met twice with Chief Chou to learn where CPS is headed and share our families' experiences with SROs and security staff in schools. We have been following the Board's handling of this issue. Most importantly, we have been listening to our children's concerns about school safety.

We do not disagree with letting local school councils decide about police in high schools because that is one way of letting those most impacted have a voice, and we understand they may be in unsafe neighborhoods, but that cannot be the end of the game. It is a temporary fix for a much deeper problem steeped in systemic racism.

It is no accident that the three of us are Black and live in under-resourced neighborhoods. That one of us, a single mother, works 50 hours a week. That another is a victim and survivor of gun violence. And another had to move, even though her kids wanted to stay at their school, because the neighborhood was becoming too unsafe. This is what systemic racism looks like.

Systemic racism also looks like many police who, even if they are not aware of it, make unfair assumptions about students like our children, grandchildren, and parents like us, simply because we are Black. In one of our families, the kids duck down in fear when driving past police because they know that police shoot Black people.

Systemic racism also looks like schools in neighborhoods like ours which do not have enough social workers and case managers, and those who do this work are not paid enough. We know some great professionals in this field and, believe us, they can do more good than any police officer in any school.

Here is where we are, today, on this issue:

- CPS has been focused on LSC's at the high school level but there is a lot of misunderstanding regarding policies and procedures for elementary school security guards. We are asking for transparent and accessible policies and procedures regarding training for elementary school security guards.
- If School Resource Officers remain in high schools, they should be required to wear soft uniforms while in schools.
- We are asking that CPS listen harder to parents like us. Elevate us and our connection and relationships to the communities most impacted by School Resource Officers and school safety. We know that transparent community outreach by CPS is necessary for community buy in and understanding.
- Not only should there be more social workers and case managers in schools in our communities, there should be real family engagement and real partnerships between schools centered on anti-bullying and building relationships. We have seen great examples and sad examples we can tell you about, but the bottom line is you sit in a seat of power and have the authority to order transformational work here.

We plan to keep on going and doing what we can, but we don't sit in the front row seats like you. But just in case anyone is tempted to write us off, watch out. Becoming citizen experts on school safety is not something we wanted to do; it's something we must do. Because that's what moms do.

Let's work together to take down racism.

Thank you for your time,

Natassia Ballard

Parent of 3 children
Resident of Back of the Yards
Former LSC Chairperson and PAC
President at O'Keeffe Elementary
Current CPS parent at Libby
Elementary

Sharon Baker

Grandparent of 5 children
Resident of Washington Park
Current LSC member at Chicago
Vocational Career Academy
Current CPS parent at Kenwood
Academy, Evers Elementary School
and Simeon Career Academy

Kimberly Payton

Parent of 5 children
Resident of South Shore
Current LSC Vice chairperson at
O'Keeffe Elementary
Current CPS parent at O'Keeffe
Elementary, Olive Harvey Middle
College and Simeon Career
Academy

cc: Janice Jackson, Chicago Public Schools CEO
Tomorrow Snyder, Stand for Children Illinois Regional Organizing Director

August 27, 2020

Dear Chicago Board of Education Members,

We thank you in advance for reading our statement and reflecting not only on our words, but on the words and actions each of you makes as a member of the Chicago Board of Education (BOE). How do your words and actions show the public—the students, the parents, the teachers, the leaders in Chicago Public Schools (CPS)—that you are committed to anti-racism?

Who We Are

This written comment is on behalf of Chicagoans for Anti-Racist Education (CARE), a community-led campaign comprised of parents, guardians, students, alumni, community members, and stakeholders committed to removing CPS racism. Our work began to specifically address inequity at our elementary school, which is named for Louis J. Agassiz, one of the founding fathers of anti-Black ideology and scientific racism.

CARE's first initiative was to call on CPS to remove the name of our school, a name that has caused harm for far too long to our student body, of which over 50% identifies as BIPOC. For over a century, Black and brown children have had to walk through the doors under the name of a man who thought they were less than, simply because of the color of their skin (If you are not familiar with Louis J. Agassiz, please take a look at the section "Louis Agassiz—America's Theorist of Polygeny" in *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen J. Gould).

While removing the name from the school building is a necessary statement and representative of action and support for our BIPOC families, it is also a catalyst for much deeper and vital work needed at our school, and across the district, to engage in authentic anti-racist teaching, learning, and community-building. As a group, we are also focused on ensuring that administration and staff, across the district, get support from CPS leaders and the BOE for ongoing professional development, curriculum, and policies dedicated to anti-racism.

Our Call to Action

Our group was formed in July, in the wake of two nationwide pandemics—racism and the coronavirus. On May 31, we received Dr. Janice Jackson's "A note about last night and where we go from here" email to the CPS community. We often return to her words (excerpts below) from that email as a call to action that helps guide our work:

- *"If we are going to progress as a society, this moment must lead us to confront racism—in all of its forms—on a daily basis."*
- *"I'm challenging our community—parents, teachers, students—to call racist behavior out when we see it. We've tolerated intolerance for far too long, and the time has come for us to act."*
- *"This work is not easy but that cannot be an excuse to delay progress. Black lives matter, and it's past due for us to prove it with action."*

CARE asks, when will the excuses to delay progress stop? When does the anti-racist work begin?

Operationalizing CPS' Equity Framework

Three years ago, the LSC at our school guided the community through the name change process as outlined in CPS Policy Section 302.2 ("Naming or Renaming of Schools") and voted to *not* move the name change process forward. At the time, this effort was met with resistance, but that resistance came not from our parent

community of which more than 50% voted to change the name. Rather, resistance was led by our school's principal, Mira Weber, who directed her predominately white staff to support her efforts to retain the name due to budgetary concerns and to protect the brand she had built. In other words: The financial needs of the school and her political capital were used as excuses to fail to meet this basic level of support for our BIPOC community.

In 2017, the Office of Equity did not even exist at CPS. Now, in 2020, with the newly released Equity Framework, there is an opportunity to go through the renaming process with oversight and accountability from Dr. Maurice Swinney and his team. While the school has CPS' written support for removing the name from our school, we have yet to see this support manifest in actions and oversight. In less than a month, the two community "listening forums" will be held on the renaming process and we have no assurance from Principal Weber that there will be a professional mediator leading the forums and we are unclear as to what the focus of these forums is. CPS, in written communication from Dr. Swinney, has said the name will be removed and Principal Weber, in written communication to the school community, has said that the new name will be selected through a student-led inquiry process. What, then, will be discussed during these community forums?

How will CPS ensure that anti-racism is at the forefront of these forums?

We call on the BOE to ensure that CPS applies the Equity Framework and leadership to this renaming process at our school. We ask for Dr. Swinney and his team to provide a professional mediator for these forums to ensure no further harm is done to the BIPOC families at our school. In 2017, Principal Weber stated it was a "divisive, arduous, toxic task of searching for a new name" and stated, "My proposal to move our community forward most expeditiously is to vote no on a formal name change and rather informally remove the Louis J and market ourselves rigorously as The Agassiz School." The leader of our school called the 2017 process toxic and publicly suggested a new name that is insulting and is an act of whitewashing. In 2020, we have the same principal leading our school, and she continues to emphasize the need to hear all voices and stated at the August 12th LSC meeting that "There is no right or wrong on this."

We wholeheartedly disagree. There is a wrong, which is why we are submitting this statement today. While we appreciate CPS' words, it is continuing to push a process, which CPS itself has already amended to fit this circumstance in this moment (refer to Policy Section 302.2 and the six "circumstances" for renaming listed in this existing policy). CPS must also rise to this moment and recognize that we will not be the only school looking to remove a name from a school named after a racist historical figure. **CPS must recognize that in order to operationalize the Equity Framework, it must be willing to work with each school individually and through its very specific set of circumstances.** Our school's past is relevant to the process CPS now asks us to undertake—especially in light of the fact that nothing at our school has changed with regard to our school leadership's commitment to our BIPOC since we last went through this process in 2017.

Confronting Our Past

In the last three years, our school has seen more disciplinary action taken against Black students—not less, despite the addition of "restorative practices." To that end, Principal Weber has not employed a full-time restorative justice coordinator despite that being best practice. Our school's test scores have declined significantly for our BIPOC, illustrating enormous opportunity inequity. Requests for deliberate expectation and actions around equity in our CIWP are met with "we're adding culturally diverse texts." The police responded to four calls at our school last year—all for Black students. In June of 2019, while Dr. Jackson stood in our

auditorium and delivered the keynote address to our 8th grade graduates, seven of the sixty-three graduates were not able to participate in the ceremony due to a point system created through a racist lens. We assume it will come as no surprise to you that those seven students were mostly Black and/or students with IEPs. We also assume that these injustices listed above, while only a snapshot, are outcomes of bias application of inherently racist systems prevalent in many schools across the district.

How does a principal lead a school through this process when systems of white supremacy are at the forefront of the school?

To date, Principal Weber has not yet voiced support in removing the school's name. She has said she will create a student-led inquiry for selecting a new school name, which will commence on the very first day of school and run through October when the students will present names to our LSC for vote. However, when asked directly to state, "I support renaming the school," she demurs. When asked directly if she would allow for professional mediation during required "listening forums," after acknowledging the potential harm for our BIPOC, she demurs. When asked directly if she would allow homerooms to choose "Agassiz minus the Louis J." as one of the name suggestions, she demurs. She has not denounced the name, yet Dr. Swinney has.

We have emphasized to CPS the urgency with which the school's name should be removed in order to prevent further harm to our BIPOC and to unite our community around the process of selecting a new name—a unification our principal is wholly ill-equipped to facilitate. **As a result of Principal Weber's reluctance, we are also pressing CPS' Office of Equity to provide complete oversight—both of the student-led inquiry and beyond.** Our primarily white staff is in need of vetted and qualified professional development in anti-racist education in order to carefully lead our students through this inquiry. Our principal has not given any indication that has taken place, nor that it will. Our administration is in dire need of anti-bias training and education. **Our school is in need of a local officer of equity who can provide the lens through which our administration and staff should be implementing every part of our curriculum, discipline, and culture.** If we are to truly be an equitable school, we must insist that our school's leadership is committed to equity—not simply in words, but in actions. Again, we assume that all of these vital needs at our school are ones needed at all schools across CPS.

We also respectfully ask this Board to translate words into actions. CPS carved the name Agassiz into our stone and CPS can remove it—now. CPS is asking us to rise to this moment and we are attempting to do just that. In order to rise up to this moment, CPS must take action not simply describe it. Our students deserve nothing less. Removing the school name can happen separately from choosing a new name.

One School, One District

The Office of Equity and the Board of Education have an opportunity to apply the Equity Framework and leadership to this one movement at one school. This work can, and should, help guide the district's commitment to anti-racism. There is much work to be done at the systemic level in terms of policy and curriculum and we continue to hone in on the translation of the commitment we see in words, into actions at all levels in CPS.

We were struck by the ability of the majority of public speaking spots at the August BOE meeting to be co-opted to amplify one very specific set of voices, especially during a time in which systemic racism is at the forefront of our society regarding issues such as policing in schools and white supremacy. CARE is mindful of the comments made by Member Elizabeth Todd-Breland and Member Amy Rome regarding "opportunity hoarding" and how white parents need to be voices for all children, not just their own children. **While this written statement hones in on the current focus of renaming our school and all the supports needed to**

implement this process, we feel strongly that how CPS handles this issue at our school sets precedence for its anti-racist work across the entire district.

On June 1, in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police and the protests that followed, CPS released, "Say Their Names," a listing of resources to help parents and educators foster conversations about race as well as "how to take action for racial justice." In it, CPS quotes Angela Davis, "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist" and goes on to say, "Safeguarding our young people means that we all must do the work to think and act equitably, show up for our Black students and colleagues, interrogate our own biases, and live an actively anti-racist life."

Yet, here we are today, just hours after the Chicago Board of Education disregarded the voices of its Black students, who spoke passionately about how unsafe police made them feel in school, and voted to retain the Chicago police within our schools. (We thank Member Todd-Breland and Member Rome for their dissension and powerful statements.)

So, when does the anti-racist work begin?

CARE is calling on CPS to take action as part of the district's commitment to anti-racist work by doing the following:

- Remove the racist name from our school now. There is no excuse to delay progress. This name of a scientific racist is still carved in stone on our building and is visible in written form across school and district digital platforms.
- Provide oversight at our school to lead our administration, staff and students through a name-change inquiry that, if not conducted thoughtfully, could re-traumatize our BIPOC students.
- Ensure that a trained mediator is present at all community/listening forums at our school. This mediator should communicate the goal and process of the forum, as well as actively facilitate the discussion.
- Evaluate school leadership at every CPS school to ensure those entrusted with our students' education are committed to doing so from a position of anti-racist systems and action.
- Provide anti-racist professional development to all administrators and teachers in the district.

CARE is calling on the BOE to hold CPS accountable to its own calling for a commitment to anti-racist actions in every school across the district.

As CPS itself said on June 1, "At this time, we must focus on our shared humanity, and prioritize learning and talking about the root causes of the current protests and the interracial activism. This is a time to come together, listen, learn, share in grief and in hope, and act for a more just, equitable, and racially conscious world."

Sincerely,

CARE (Chicagoans for Anti-Racist Education)

cc: Dr. Janice Jackson, Dr. Maurice Swinney, Mr. Liam Bird