



Should Chicago Have an Elected Representative School Board? A New Review of the Evidence

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Pauline Lipman, PhD
Eric (Rico) Gutstein, PhD
Rhoda Rae Gutierrez
Tirzah Blanche

University of Illinois at Chicago

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Contact:

Pauline Lipman, PhD | plipman@uic.edu | 312-413-4413
Eric (Rico) Gutstein, PhD | gutstein@uic.edu | 312-413-2410

University of Illinois at Chicago
Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education
1040 W. Harrison St., M/C 147
Chicago IL 60607
<http://ceje.uic.edu/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chicago has never had an elected school board, unlike 98% of school districts across the US, and all other districts in Illinois. Over the years it had a series of arrangements, including City Council appointments and nominating commissions. In 1995, the state legislature gave the mayor full authority over Chicago Public Schools (CPS), including the appointment of the Board of Education. After 20 years of mayoral control, the appointed Board's policies have become increasingly contentious, and parents, community and education organizations, academics, civil society leaders, politicians, and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) have called for an elected representative school board. In 2012, 87% of 80,000 Chicago residents voted in 13% of the city's precincts for an elected school board in a non-binding referendum. A similar referendum is on the February 24, 2015 ballot in 37 of Chicago's 50 wards. These referenda and the 2013 closing of 50 schools have brought to a head the question of an elected Board of Education for Chicago.

We wrote this report to provide information to elected officials, educators, parents, and the public about the record of the mayor-appointed Board and its policies. Since 91% of CPS students are students of color and 86% qualify for free or reduced lunch, our analysis particularly emphasizes the effects on educational equity of the Board's policies and actions.

This report examines the following questions:

- What does the research say about mayoral control of schools?
- What is the assessment of the Board of Education's major policies and its track record?
- What are the opportunities for public accountability and participation?
- What might be accomplished with an elected board, and how could it be representative and promote public participation?

To address these questions, we reviewed and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data including CPS and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) data on various measures, national test scores, and a broader set of indicators of academic achievement, opportunity to learn, and effects on schools and communities. We examined Board policies and initiatives related to high-stakes tests and accountability, selective enrollment schools and programs, school closings, charter and Academy of Urban School Leadership contract schools, distribution of resources, Board efficiency and

financial management, teacher turnover, and the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative.

Summary of Findings

1. **There is no conclusive evidence that mayor-appointed boards are more effective at governing schools or raising student achievement. The record of Chicago's appointed Board of Education underscores this finding.**
2. **Under mayoral control, opportunities to learn have become more unequal as CPS consolidated a two-tier school system. The Board prioritized selective programs and schools while neighborhood schools serving low-income students of color lost resources and bore the major impact of misuse of tests to enforce punitive accountability and narrowed curriculum, and to close schools.**
3. **Under the mayor-appointed Board, racial disparities in educational outcomes persisted and in some cases widened.**
4. **The Board's policy of closing neighborhood schools has not improved education for the majority of affected students and has had harmful consequences, particularly for African American communities, students, and teachers who were disproportionately impacted.**
5. **The Board's privatization agenda has not generally improved education. Charter and contract schools are on the whole doing no better and are more punitive than neighborhood public schools. Privately operated schools are also further removed from public accountability. However, the Board turned over one-quarter of the district's schools to private operators.**
6. **Chicago's Board engaged in questionable and risky financial arrangements and was a poor steward of public resources.**
7. **Mayoral control and Board structures and processes limit public input and democratic accountability. The Board has been markedly unresponsive to outpourings of public opposition to its**

policies and essentially indifferent to advice and proposals of parents, teachers, and others with expert knowledge and who have a primary stake in students' education.

Recommendations

1. Chicago should move to an elected and representative school board.
2. The Board's operations should be transparent and publicly accountable.
3. The Board should establish structures and practices that strengthen democratic public participation in district initiatives and decisions.
4. The Board should draw on sound educational research and educator, student, and community knowledge to develop, propose, and evaluate policy.
5. The Board should prioritize equitable educational opportunities and outcomes in all actions, policies, and decisions.

After 20 years of mayoral control in Chicago, the research paints an alarming picture—Board policies and actions have resulted in a school district that is more unequal on nearly every measure we examined. In sum, high stakes accountability practices, school closings, selective programs, privatization, and CPS budget priorities have exacerbated historical educational inequalities. The Board's policies under mayoral control are educationally insupportable. This presses us to ask: Whose interests does the Board serve? Financial and political interests, or the majority of CPS students?

Fundamentally, Chicago needs an overhaul of its education policies. An elected board will need to embrace a new framework for student assessment and improvement of neighborhood schools, one that prioritizes the full development of all students and is grounded in educational research. To achieve this transformation will require the participation and wisdom of an engaged public, especially parents, educators, and students. An elected board that is representative of the community it serves is no guarantee—but it would be a significant step to strengthen and improve public education in Chicago.



INTRODUCTION

Chicago has never had an elected school board. Over the years it had a series of arrangements, including City Council appointments and nominating commissions. Immediately prior to 1995, the mayor selected Board members from a pool put forward by a nominating committee composed of 23 parent and community representatives from elected Local School Councils (LSC)¹ across the city and five mayor-appointed individuals. Unlike 98% of school districts in the US and all other school districts in Illinois, Chicagoans have never had the opportunity to elect and hold accountable those who make decisions about public education. The question of accountability and democracy in CPS became more pressing as Mayors Daley and Emanuel transformed Chicago Public Schools into a portfolio, or market-based, system with a variety of public and privately run schools and with business systems of evaluation, accountability, and school management. The closing of 50 schools in 2013 brought the question of a democratically elected Board of Education to a head.

In 1995, the Illinois State Legislature passed legislation to put the mayor in charge of Chicago Public Schools. The 1995 Amendatory Act (an amendment to the 1988 School Reform Act) gave the mayor authority to appoint a five-member Board of Trustees and a CEO to lead the school district. The rationale was that centralizing authority in the mayor's office would drive reform and improve efficiency in CPS. In 1999, the revised Amendatory Act expanded the Board to seven. Since 1995, the policies of the appointed Board have become increasingly contentious. After two decades of mayoral control, there are calls by parents, community and education organizations, and the Chicago Teachers Union for a shift to an elected representative school board in Chicago. In 2012, 87% of 79,588 voters in 327 precincts across the city voted in favor of an advisory referendum supporting an elected school board.² A similar advisory referendum is on the February 2015 ballot in 37 of Chicago's 50 wards.

This report addresses the question: Should Chicago have an elected representative school board? We wrote the report to provide information to elected officials, educators, parents, and members of the general public about the record of the mayor-

appointed Board and its policies. Since 91% of Chicago Public School students are students of color and 86% qualify for free or reduced lunch³ (a proxy for low income), our assessment of the Board's record particularly emphasizes the effects of its policies on educational equity.

The report examines the following questions:

- What does the research say about mayoral control of schools?
- What is the assessment of the Board of Education's major policies and its track record? We focus on high-stakes tests and accountability, selective enrollment schools and programs, academic outcomes as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), school closings, charter and AUSL contract schools, distribution of resources, efficiency and financial management, teacher turnover, and the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative.
- What are the opportunities for public accountability and participation?
- What might be accomplished with an elected board, and how could it be representative and promote public participation?

The report concludes with recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

Many factors, in addition to governance, contribute to successful education systems,⁴ and there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between school boards and school improvement. However, school boards are responsible for the policies and outcomes of their school districts. They are responsible for deciding on priorities, budgets, policies related to curriculum and instruction, support for teachers, opening and closing schools, and so on. Therefore, we evaluate Chicago's appointed Board on the results of its decisions, particularly from the standpoint of equity—that is, how well the Board's policies support school improvement for *all* students, especially those historically underserved.

Researchers use *opportunity to learn* as a measure of the extent to which students have access to necessary school resources, high-quality school facilities, highly qualified teachers, rigorous and relevant curricula, higher-order thinking activities, safe school

¹ Local School Councils are elected local school governing bodies composed of a majority of parents and include community members, teachers, non-teaching staff, and the school principal.

² Chicago Board of Elections (2012).

³ Chicago Public Schools (2015b).

⁴ Henig (2009).

environments, and so on.⁵ We examine all data from the perspective of equal opportunity to learn and equitable outcomes, specifically in relation to racial disparities.

For this report, we updated our previous review of research on appointed school boards.⁶ To look at the record of Chicago's mayor-appointed board, we used the most recent publicly available CPS data, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) data, and other published research. (Our discussion of longitudinal quantitative data is based on the range of years provided by official sources.)

To examine academic achievement, as measured by test scores, we turned to the NAEP and to its Trial Urban Districts Assessment (TUDA) comparative data in math (2003-2013) and reading (2002-2013). The NAEP, commonly known as the "nation's report card," is, according to the US Department of Education, "the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas."⁷ We use NAEP scores, among other data, to assess Chicago's outcomes by race over time. We do not use Illinois State test score data because the state has recalibrated and changed its tests several times, thus longitudinal state data are not reliable.⁸

Although we examined test scores as one measure of student achievement, most education experts agree that standardized tests do not comprehensively or accurately assess student learning,⁹ and instructional practices designed to raise test scores are not necessarily aligned with what is best for students. Thus, in addition to test scores, we examined a broader set of indicators of academic achievement, opportunity to learn, and effects on schools and communities. These include graduation and dropout rates, school expulsion rates, educational and other impacts of school closings on students and communities, charter school expansion, teacher turnover, distribution of resources, and opportunities for democratic public participation in education decisions.

⁵ Darling-Hammond (2004); Oakes, Joseph, & Muir (2004); Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton (2006).

⁶ Lipman & Gutstein (2011).

⁷ US Department of Education (2009).

⁸ For example, see Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago. (2009).

⁹ Newmann, Secada, & Wehlage (1995); American Psychological Association. (2010).

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Public schools are part of the foundation of a democratic society. They are charged with educating and preparing the next generation to develop to their full potential and to participate in the civic life of their communities and the broader society. The role of school boards in this process is to provide "leadership, policy direction, and oversight to drive school improvement."¹⁰ In fulfilling this role, it is the responsibility of school boards to ensure that schools advance the public interest.

Historically, elected school boards have been a central feature of local democracy in the US. Underlying their election is the belief that the democratic process is a means for community members to express and implement a vision of the common good. Local school boards are the political institutions that are closest to voters. As researchers Allen and Plank summarize, "Public education remains the policy domain in which citizens [residents] have the greatest opportunity for democratic participation and democratic control."¹¹ Elections of school board members, open public school board meetings, and elected Local School Councils are opportunities for all community members to have a voice in education policies that affect them and the well being of the community. This is why the vast majority of school boards in the US have been, and continue to be, elected by and directly accountable to their constituencies.

However, in the past two decades, elected school boards have been targets of criticism by an assemblage of business leaders, think tanks, venture philanthropies and the advocacy groups they fund, and various policy makers who claim that elected boards are ineffective in leading school reform, particularly in urban districts. These critics also contend that elected school boards allow "interest groups" to influence policy (specifically singling out teacher unions), are not accountable to the community at-large, and lack fiscal discipline.¹² Especially in urban districts, they have pushed for mayoral control of school systems "in which a city's mayor replaces an elected school board with a board that he or she appoints as a strategy to raise urban school performance."¹³ Mayoral control is commonly part of a package of reforms that includes top-down accountability, school closings, markets/school choice

¹⁰ Hess (2008, p. 1).

¹¹ Allen & Plank (2005, p. 511).

¹² Feuerstein (2002).

¹³ Wong & Shen (2013, p.1).

(particularly charter schools), test scores to evaluate teachers, and application of business methods to school leadership and operations.

Over the past decade, mayoral control has spread to large urban districts, with the promise of improved student learning, higher school-completion rates, fewer dropouts, and better test scores. Mayoral control is a central plank of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's initiatives, especially competitive *Race to the Top* federal funds for education.¹⁴

Still, in the US today, most school boards are elected by municipal voters. According to the Education Commission of the States, Over 98% of US school districts have elected school boards, including more than three quarters of the 25 largest districts, and 35 states have only elected boards.¹⁵

MAYORAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

In 1991, Boston became the first US city to shift school governance to mayoral control. In 1995, Chicago followed suit. Twelve urban school districts have some form of mayoral control.¹⁶ All are districts with a majority low-income students of color. Of the almost 900 school districts in Illinois, Chicago is the only one with a mayor-appointed board.¹⁷

Justifications for Mayor-Appointed School Boards

Four main reasons are frequently cited in favor of mayor-appointed school boards:¹⁸

1. Urban efficiency: Mayors are best equipped to efficiently coordinate municipal and educational services.
2. Accountability for results: Because mayors are high-profile elected officials subjected to media scrutiny, they are more responsive to popular demands and more accountable to the public. When schools are not making progress, the public knows whom to blame.
3. Alignment of schools with business goals: Because the city's business climate and corporate economic development are tied to the quality of its school system, mayors are in the best position to align educational goals with business interests.
4. Streamlined education systems: Mayoral control streamlines educational systems by aligning organizational goals, curriculum, rewards and sanctions, professional development of teachers and principals, and classroom instruction with academic achievement.

In addition, Board of Education members in Chicago have argued that Chicago is an exception to other Illinois school districts. They contend Chicago needs a board composed of people with legal, financial, and management skills to run CPS's large, complicated \$6 billion operation.¹⁹

¹⁴ Duncan (2009, March 31).

¹⁵ Education Commission of the States (2015). Where there was ambiguity, we contacted individual state boards to confirm these numbers.

¹⁶ Education Commission of the States (2015). Updated information by Pauline Lipman, 2015. The cities are Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Hartford, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Providence, Trenton, Washington, DC, and Yonkers, NY.

¹⁷ Education Commission of the States (2015).

¹⁸ Chubb & Moe (1990); Kirst (2007); Shippy (2000); Viteritti (2009); Wong & Shen (2003).

¹⁹ Chicago Tonight (2015, January 12). Interview with Board member Jesse Ruiz.

Business leaders have enthusiastically supported the shift to mayoral control and appointed school boards. They favor a management model that puts a single executive in charge who works closely with them.²⁰ Mayoral control is a key mechanism to advance a business-oriented school reform agenda of charter school expansion, testing, and business management of school districts.²¹ Chicago is a well-known example of the dominance of business ideas and practices in education.²²

Effectiveness of Mayor-Appointed Boards – What Do We Know?

Research on mayoral control and mayor-appointed boards is limited and inconclusive. Hess's 2008 research survey found that there were few rigorous systematic studies of the effect of appointed boards on school improvement.²³ The research that does exist provides no conclusive evidence supporting mayoral control. Researchers at the Institute on Education Law and Policy at Rutgers University-Newark found that while mayoral control does have some benefits (public attention to education, increased funding, and stability), there is "no conclusive evidence that governance changes increase achievement."²⁴ Hess's survey of over 25 years of research on school boards and research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy²⁵ confirm there is little evidence that mayor-appointed boards are more effective. In 2010, Larry Cuban, nationally respected education expert, said simply, "there is no connection at all [of mayoral control] with academic achievement."²⁶

A 2013 report by Wong and Shen, *Mayoral Governance and Student Achievement*, is frequently cited to support the claim that mayor control has improved academic achievement. The report is published by the Center for American Progress and the Broad Foundation for Education (the latter has spent \$600 million on education since 1999 in part to promote "innovative governance models" including charter schools, portfolio districts, and recovery schools districts like New Orleans.²⁷) We closely examined this new report and found four significant problems:

1. Not grounded in peer-reviewed research—the authors cite just one peer-reviewed publication, a report of a public poll.
2. Methodological flaws. The National Education Policy Center (NEPC)²⁸ found Wong and Shen's fiscal analyses of mayor-led cities contained inappropriate comparisons and lacked reliable and valid evidence that mayoral control influences the amount or distribution of resources. The NEPC found that, "The paper does not provide or explain the statistical methods or provide the findings essential to supporting the authors' claims" (p. 1). We found that Wong and Shen's discussion of student achievement highlighted positive findings in a few districts, but offered limited discussion of mayor-led cities where gains were not found (e.g., Cleveland) and of other cities that saw strong gains without mayoral control (e.g., Charlotte). These issues call into question whether "mayoral control" is appropriately credited with the improvements identified in the report.
3. Misleading conclusions that cast a more positive light on mayor control than the data show.²⁹
4. Confounding correlation with causality. Wong and Shen correctly state that although their data "suggest significant correlations between mayoral control and certain staffing and financial outcomes" they "cannot necessarily conclude that mayoral control was the primary cause of these outcomes," (p. 13). Yet, they infer that mayoral control *is* the cause of academic gains. There is even less basis to make a causal argument in the case of human learning which is a far more complex activity than staffing, for example.

Some cities with mayoral control have posted increases in scores on state standardized tests.³⁰

²⁰ Viteritti (2009).

²¹ See for example, Center for Reinventing Public Education (<http://www.crpe.org>); Center for American Progress (<https://www.americanprogress.org>); Broad Foundation (<http://www.broadfoundation.org>).

²² Shipps (2006).

²³ Hess (2008).

²⁴ Moscovitch et al. (2010, August, p. 2).

²⁵ Center for the Study of Social Policy (2005, p. 14).

²⁶ Alpert (2010).

²⁷ Broad Foundation (2015, February 2).

²⁸ Bulkley, K. E. (2013).

²⁹ For example, Wong and Shen claim that New York, under mayoral control, improved its performance on the NAEP relative to the Large City (LC) average in percent of students "proficient or above" by race, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, and English language proficiency. Wong and Shen concluded that in 2011 (the latest data they used), New York scored higher than the LC average on 15 measures, lower on 10, and there were 3 measures for which there were no data. However, had the authors used identical methods to examine NYC's position relative to the LC average in 2003 (when New York joined the NAEP Trial Urban Districts Assessment), they would have found that in 2003, just when mayoral control began, New York scored higher than the LC average on 22 measures, and lower on 1 measure, with 5 ties. In other words, from 2003 until 2011, under mayoral control, New York actually *declined* on these measures relative to other urban districts.

³⁰ Wong & Shen (2013).

However state tests are problematic because states have been pressured to progressively lower the bar to make AYP under No Child Left Behind.³¹ On the NAEP, some cities with mayoral control score above and others below those with traditional governance.³² In short, there is no clear evidence that student achievement, as measured by standardized test scores, improves under mayoral control and appointed boards, and Kenneth Wong, a proponent of mayoral control, conceded that it does not reduce the racial “achievement gap.”³³ (As we discuss below, this actually widened in Chicago.)

Case studies that suggest some positive impact of appointed boards on test scores emphasize the trade off in loss of broader involvement in democratic processes, particularly the participation of African Americans and Latinos.³⁴ This loss is particularly serious for Chicago where 85% of the student population is African American and Latino. Recent research also points to the important role of community participation in school reform.³⁵

Finding 1: There is no conclusive evidence that mayor-appointed boards are more effective at governing schools or raising student achievement. The record of Chicago’s appointed Board of Education underscores this finding.



³¹ Civic Committee (2009); Rado (2010, October 18).

³² Henig (2009).

³³ Wong (2009).

³⁴ Chambers (2006).

³⁵ Renée & McAlister (2011).

ASSESSMENT OF CHICAGO'S MAYOR-APPOINTED SCHOOL BOARD

Under mayoral control, Chicago became known nationally for top-down accountability, high stakes tests, and mass school closings. At the same time the Board expanded a top-tier of selective enrollment schools and greatly increased the number of charter and privately run turnaround schools. In the following sections, we examine the Board's record, focusing on: high-stakes tests and accountability, selective enrollment schools, test scores as measured by the NAEP, graduation and dropout rates, school closings and privatization, distribution of resources, financial management, teacher turnover, and the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative.

Opportunity to Learn

In this section, we examine all data from the perspective of equal opportunity to learn and equitable outcomes, specifically in relation to racial disparities.

High-Stakes Tests and Accountability

The hallmark of the first decade of mayoral control was a regimen of high-stakes testing that was used to prescribe a system of central-office, mandated interventions. The Board increased the stakes with the expansion of selective enrollment schools in the late 1990s, with admission based heavily on student test scores. In 2002, CPS began using low test scores as a rationale to close schools.

Beginning in 1996, the Board mandated strict accountability for low-scoring schools and students, placing schools on probation and retaining students who failed standardized tests. Eighth graders who did not pass the tests could not graduate with their classmates, and CPS assigned students 15 or older to remedial Academic Preparation Centers geared to test preparation. Fear of probation pushed low-scoring schools to focus on intensive test drill and practice,³⁶ and CPS required some schools to adopt scripted instruction for all students (a model designed for special education students). There was also evidence that to raise test scores, some schools triaged instruction to focus on students on the cusp of meeting performance targets.³⁷

Robert Hauser, Chair of the Committee on Appropriate Test Use of the Board of Testing and

³⁶ Duffrin (1999); O'Day (2002); Woestehoff & Neill (2007); Lipman (2004).

³⁷ Lipman (2004); O'Day (2002); Wong (2009).

Assessment at the National Research Council, summarized: "The National Research Committee concluded that Chicago's regular year and summer school curricula were so closely geared to the ITBS [Iowa Test of Basic Skills] that it was impossible to distinguish real subject mastery from mastery of skills and knowledge useful for passing this particular test."³⁸

These policies contradict the consensus of assessment experts that using standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions about individual students is inappropriate and inequitable,³⁹ particularly when all students do not have an equal opportunity to learn.⁴⁰ Yet, based on a single test, tens of thousands of Chicago students were sent to summer school, retained in grade for as long as three years, barred from their 8th grade graduation, and assigned to remedial high schools with a restricted curriculum. Retention did not result in academic improvement for most affected students. While citywide test scores went up, students retained in 1997 were doing no better in 1999 than previously promoted students, and in many cases were doing worse.⁴¹ Nearly one-third of retained eighth graders in 1997 dropped out by fall 1999.⁴²

Despite these harmful outcomes of high-stakes testing, the Board continued to increase required standardized tests. Preparing for and taking tests took up a bigger chunk of the school year. Warnings about the overreliance on and misuse of standardized tests continued, including by the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy,⁴³ the National Academy of Sciences,⁴⁴ and the American Educational Research Association.⁴⁵ Still, by 2013, district-mandated tests had increased to 25. After student and teacher boycotts and parent organizing against over-testing, CPS announced that it would reduce the number of district-mandated tests to 10 for the 2014-15 school year.⁴⁶

The Board's accountability policies used data to mandate practices that have little educational value, narrow education, and are unsupported by research,

³⁸ Hauser in Moore (2000, p. 29).

³⁹ Heubert & Hauser (1999).

⁴⁰ Darling-Hammond (2004); Oakes, Joseph, & Muir (2004).

⁴¹ Roderick, Bryk, Jacob, Easton, & Allensworth (1999).

⁴² Roderick, Nagaoka, Bacon, & Easton (2000).

⁴³ Rhoades, & Madaus (2003).

⁴⁴ National Academies (2009).

⁴⁵ American Education Research Association (2000).

⁴⁶ Ahmed-Ullah (2013, August 6).

but are used to close schools. These include the Board's questionable school utilization formula that was used to close more than 60 schools;⁴⁷ the frequent changing of the school quality rating policy over the past decade; and school ratings that do not include educational components that many parents hold dear—arts, experiential learning, smaller class size, resources, joy of learning, portfolio-based assessment, after school programs, and so on.⁴⁸

The consequences of these policies have primarily impacted African American, Latino, and low-income students.⁴⁹ In 1996 CPS placed 109 schools on probation. They were overwhelmingly African American, and the average poverty level of the 71 elementary probation schools was about 94%.⁵⁰ The Board spent millions of dollars on outside probation partners, but by 2013, almost 2.5 times as many schools were on probation as when the policy began—159 elementary schools (more than one-third of CPS elementary and middle schools) and half of the district's high schools.⁵¹ The students and schools who experienced probation, scripted instruction, standardized-tests drills, and basic-skills education were almost entirely African American and Latino. As a whole, top-down high-stakes accountability reduced learning opportunities for these students and consolidated a lower tier of education in CPS. In 2000, *Parents United for Responsible Education* won a civil rights complaint against CPS for adverse discriminatory impact of the retention policy on African Americans and Latinos. However, CPS continued the policy despite strong evidence that retention is costly, harmful, and ineffective.

Schools that post low test scores face severe consequences in CPS. Since 2002, these scores have been used to enact school closings and reconstitution⁵² (sometimes coupled with a highly contested school utilization formula).⁵³ While CPS places a strong emphasis on these performance measures to determine closures or reconstitution, these metrics are constantly changing,⁵⁴ raising doubts about their use to determine the fate of schools. School and community leaders have also linked closing schools based on test scores and privatization, as evidenced by the takeover of public

schools by the education management organization Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL).⁵⁵ (We discuss this in more depth below.)

Selective Enrollment Schools and IB Programs

In the late 1990s, the Board began expanding a top tier of selective enrollment schools. The Board created six new selective enrollment high schools, mainly in affluent or gentrifying areas. CPS provided the schools with new or renovated buildings, state-of-the-art resources, and a rich, intellectually challenging array of courses and co-curricular opportunities.⁵⁶ Selective enrollment schools benefit a small percentage of CPS students and are almost 2.5 times more white and three times more well off than the district as a whole (see Figure 1). Currently 11.7% of CPS high school students attend CPS' ten selective enrollment high schools. In 2013-14, CPS was 9% white and 15% non low-income, but the selective enrollment high schools were 21.9% white and 44.3% non low-income.⁵⁷ These schools also received an additional \$4.7 million beyond their per-pupil budget allotment for 39 teacher positions and 3 aides. This was from general education funds.⁵⁸ The expansion of selective enrollment schools led to a loss of high-scoring students in neighborhood schools, undermining the performance rating of neighborhood schools.

In sum, the Board's expansion of selective enrollment schools has benefitted a disproportionate percentage of white and more affluent students. At the same time, the consequences of high-stakes testing and district sanctions narrowed opportunities to learn and disproportionately negatively impacted low-income students of color. These policies moved CPS further toward a two-tiered system along lines of race and economic status.

⁴⁷ Greenlee et al (2008); Fleming et al (2009); Apple to Apples (2012, December).

⁴⁸ Lipman, Vaughan, & Gutierrez. (2014).

⁴⁹ Moore (2000).

⁵⁰ Parents United for Responsible Education (1999).

⁵¹ Ahmed-Ullah (2013, September 27).

⁵² Duffrin (2006, March 1).

⁵³ Vevea & Lutton (2013, May 16).

⁵⁴ Sanchez & Karp (2014, August 24).

⁵⁵ Ahmed-Ullah (2014, April 23).

⁵⁶ Williams (2000).

⁵⁷ Chicago Public Schools (2015a).

⁵⁸ Chicago Public Schools (2014a).

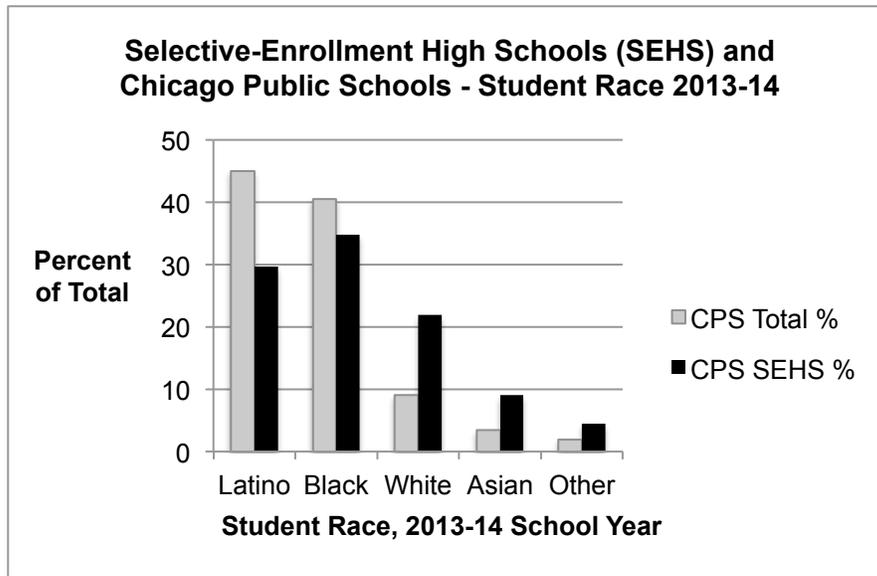


Figure 1: Comparison of Selective Enrollment High Schools and Chicago Public Schools by Race, 2013-2014.

CPS is also expanding its International Baccalaureate Program (IB) to 36 schools.⁵⁹ The IB program has two components—the prestigious and selective IB Diploma Program, and the cornerstone of CPS’ IB expansion, the new, and largely unproven, IB Career Certification program. This latter program is specifically for non-college bound students and is geared to work preparation.⁶⁰ IB programs receive additional CPS resources and staff. CPS has both “wall-to-wall” IB schools (whole school) and IB programs within schools. CPS’ IB expansion requires further investigation into what percent of IB students will be in each program (diploma and vocational), what percent of district students will be in IB overall, and what the selection process actually is. Overall, CPS’s IB programs currently serve 3.75% of the district’s 400,000 students.⁶¹ Although the quality of these programs will need to be assessed over time, they continue the Board’s pattern of investing in selective and specialty programs that serve a small percentage of students while disinvesting in neighborhood schools as a whole (see next section). Specialty programs in schools also increase within-school tracking, an educational practice which research shows produces unequal opportunities to learn.⁶²

Distribution of Resources

Under mayoral control, the Board has diverted resources away from traditional public schools to selective enrollment, charter, and turnaround schools, despite the fact that most CPS students attend traditional neighborhood schools. The 2013 renovation of Jones College Prep selective enrollment high school in Chicago’s gentrified South Loop neighborhood made it the most expensive public high school ever built in Chicago⁶³ with a cost of more than \$115 million,⁶⁴ and possibly \$127 million because of cost overruns.⁶⁵ Of CPS’ \$423 million FY2015 capital budget, nearly a quarter was directed to three selective enrollment high schools, all on the north side of the city.⁶⁶ CPS announced in fall 2014 that Hancock High School, on Chicago’s Southwest side, will be converted to a selective enrollment high school, and CPS will assign Hancock’s students to three other neighborhood high schools in the area. The district has slated \$10 million to go toward Hancock’s conversion in the fall of 2015.⁶⁷

Neighborhood schools have also experienced cuts in their operating budgets. When CPS moved to a competitive per-pupil budgeting system in 2014, it made every school and principal compete for students against each other in an educational market place in which some schools are advantaged over others (see

⁵⁹ Chicago Public Schools (2014b).
⁶⁰ Harris (2014, February 6).
⁶¹ Chicago Public Schools (2014b).
⁶² Oakes (2005).

⁶³ Novak (2014, December 29).
⁶⁴ Chicago Public Schools (2013b).
⁶⁵ Novak (2014, December 29).
⁶⁶ Lutton (2014, May 2).
⁶⁷ Perez (2014, October 22).

also charter and AUSL sections below). In July 2014, *WBEZ* radio reported that of the 26 schools that experienced budget cuts of more than one million dollars, 24 were neighborhood high schools. They also experienced the most position cuts.⁶⁸ In 2014-15, 504 neighborhood public schools saw budget cuts of \$72 million. However, per-pupil budgeting only partly explains neighborhood school budget cuts. In 2013-2014, neighborhood elementary schools were projected to increase enrollment but had budget cuts and neighborhood high schools were projected to lose enrollment slightly but had big budget cuts. *Catalyst Chicago* points out, “instead, their budgets were affected by overall cuts imposed in order to help the district balance its budget.”⁶⁹

The Board also shifted funds from traditional neighborhood schools to charters and AUSL.⁷⁰ In fiscal year 2013, charter schools received 90% of all CPS funds for new school openings.⁷¹ A Chicago Teachers Union analysis of CPS Board reports found that in 2013 the Board leased buildings to 33 charter school campuses for \$1 a year.⁷² In a 2013 analysis, *Catalyst Chicago* found that district budget cuts disproportionately impacted neighborhood schools and benefited charters (see Figure 2).⁷³ Overall, in CPS’ 2013-2014 budget, traditional schools received a cut of over \$100 million while charters received an increase of \$80 million.⁷⁴

Teacher Turnover and Decline of African American Teaching Staff

CPS has a high rate of teacher turnover, particularly affecting schools serving low-income African American and Latino students. The context for this is the unequal opportunity to learn that makes conditions of teaching and learning more difficult. In 2009, the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) reported “within five years, the typical CPS school loses over half of its teachers. Many schools turn over half of their teaching staff every three years.”⁷⁵ About 100 mostly low-income African American and Latino schools lose a quarter or more of their teaching staffs every year. Further, the study

⁶⁸ 19 of the 25 schools losing 10 or more positions were neighborhood high schools, Vevea (2014, July 3).

⁶⁹ Karp (2013, August 7).

⁷⁰ Hood & Ahmed-Ullah (2012, February 6). CPS gives the Academy of Urban School Leadership an additional \$300,000 and \$420 per student, per year, for each elementary school it runs, and \$500,000 and \$500 per student, per year, for each high school.

⁷¹ Program Number 009546 (2013). Data available in the Budget by Program tab of the CPS FY13 Budget Interactive Reports.

⁷² Caref, Hains, Hilgendorf, Jankov, & Russell (2012).

⁷³ Karp (2013, August 7).

⁷⁴ Martire, Otter & Kass (2013); Raise Your Hand Illinois (2013).

⁷⁵ Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo (2009, p. 1).

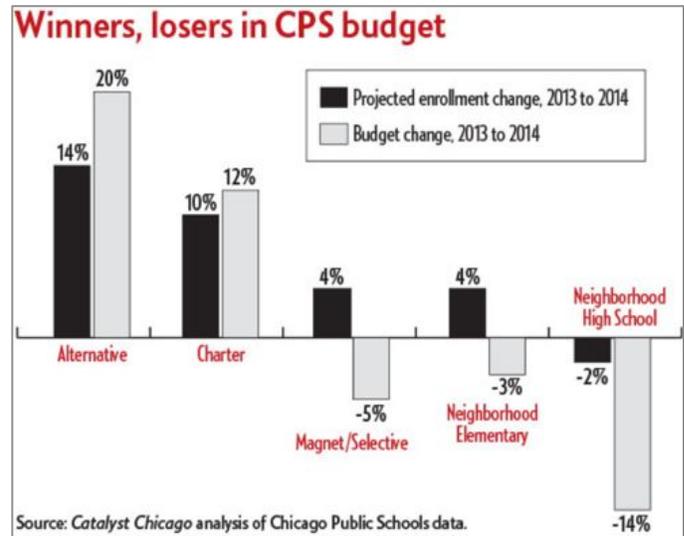


Figure 2: Projected Enrollment Change and Budget Change by CPS School Type from 2013 to 2014. Graph reprinted with the permission of *Catalyst Chicago*.

found that teachers are less likely to stay in schools that are predominantly African American than schools with other racial/ethnic compositions.

A 2014 *Catalyst Chicago* analysis found teacher turnover at turnaround schools, in particular, is higher than other comparable schools and CPS as a whole: “In all but one of the 17 schools turned around between the 2006-2007 and 2010-2011 school years, half or more of the teachers are gone by the third year of the turnaround.” This is particularly concerning because under Mayor Emanuel, the Board approved 23 turnarounds.⁷⁶ While some teacher mobility is to be expected, high rates of teacher turnover disrupt sustained professional development, program continuity, and meaningful child-adult relationships. This is educationally problematic because in schools that struggle with insufficient resources and support, teacher instability makes it more difficult to strengthen teaching and learning.

From 2000 to 2014, the district lost a large and disproportionate percentage of African American teachers. CPS’ African American teaching force declined 17.2% (from 40.6% to 23.4% of the teaching force) while the percentage of white teachers increased from 45.4% to 62.3%, an increase of 16.9% (see Figure 3). Calculations based on ISBE state report cards show that during this period the

⁷⁶ Karp (2014, May 7).

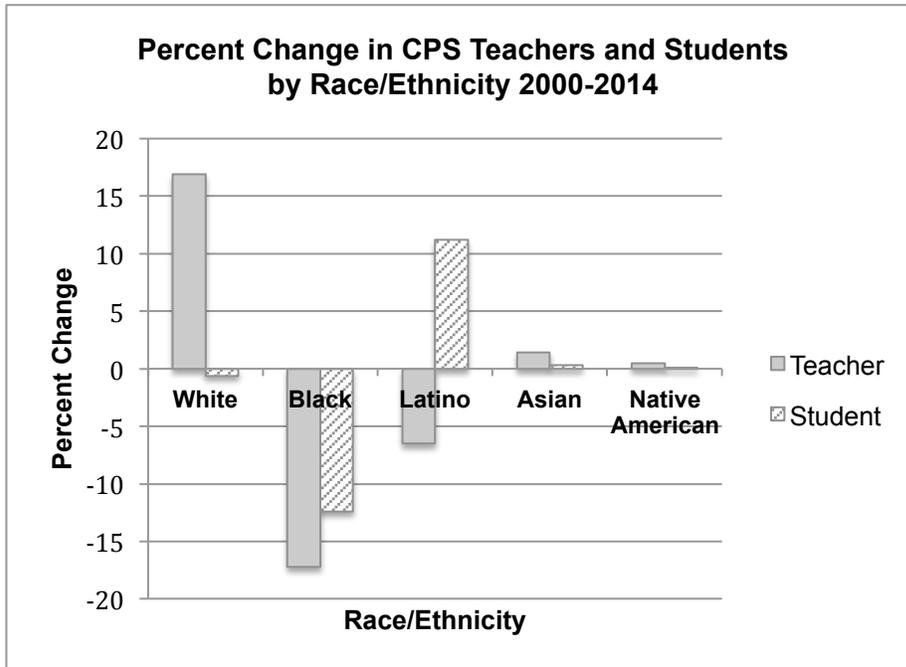


Figure 3: Percent Change in Chicago Public Schools Teacher and Student Race/Ethnicity From 2000 to 2014; Illinois State Board of Education Data.

district lost 4,385 African American teachers.⁷⁷ Because most schools closed in Chicago since 2001 were in African American communities with the heaviest concentrations of African American educators, these teachers were particularly affected by school closings.

One year after the 2013 closing of 50 schools, the CTU found 25% of all CPS schools with both a majority of African American students and teachers were closed. Of the schools that CPS closed and turned around, 71% had a majority Black teaching staff.⁷⁸

Research shows successful teachers of Black and Latino students understand and relate to their students’ communities and cultures, and motivate students to support learning.⁷⁹ Increasing the percentage of teachers from these communities is one important way to address this component of effective teaching. Thus, the 17% decline in African American teachers in a district whose population is nearly 40% African American is a step backward for equal opportunity to learn and effective instruction.

⁷⁷ Illinois Interactive Report Card (2011). This summary data includes information about teachers from CPS public schools, not charters. 2000-2014 is the range of years provided by ISBE.

⁷⁸ Caref, Hains, & Jankov (2014).

⁷⁹ Ladson-Billings (1994; 1995).

Chicago High School Redesign Initiative

A Board policy that showed promise was the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative (CHSRI). Before CPS embarked on a broad policy of closing neighborhood schools, the district embraced small high schools through CHSRI, creating 23 small, neighborhood high schools between 2002 and 2007. These were not special programs or selective enrollment but whole school initiatives. In August 2008, the Board ended the program with 17 of the original schools still in existence. Yet, a comprehensive 2010 report on CHSRI outcomes found that CHSRI schools offered a promising alternative for low-performing students in the city.⁸⁰

CHSRI small schools were “intended to provide educational opportunities for students in underserved neighborhoods—neighborhoods marked by significant educational need.”⁸¹ The report found that CHSRI schools did this. They served students who did not have “privileged backgrounds” or “strong academic records”⁸² and who would have likely attended traditional under-performing neighborhood high schools. Across the years, they were about 98% students of color. Yet the CHSRI students

⁸⁰ Spote & de la Torre (2010).

⁸¹ Spote & de la Torre (2010, p. 11).

⁸² Spote & de la Torre (2010, p. 2).

“performed as well or better than similar students in other similar CPS schools on a number of important outcomes.”⁸³ These outcomes included attendance, grades in core subjects, percentages of students on-track to graduate, and graduation rates.

Although the report found that CHSRI graduates as a whole were not yet “college-ready” (based on their ACT scores), CCSR researchers concluded: “The CHSRI schools have gotten at least part of the equation: their students persist in school and they graduate. This foundation should be recognized and built upon—and not forgotten—as schools continue to find ways to accelerate academic achievement for their students.”⁸⁴

CHSRI was a promising initiative to improve educational opportunities and outcomes in neighborhood public schools open to all students. However, the Board dropped CHSRI and directed resources to closing neighborhood schools, expanding charters, and opening turnaround schools.

Finding 2: Under mayoral control, opportunities to learn have become more unequal as CPS consolidated a two-tier school system. The Board prioritized selective programs and schools while neighborhood schools serving low-income students of color lost resources and bore the major impact of misuse of tests to enforce punitive accountability and narrowed curriculum, and to close schools.

Student Outcomes

There are few substantive changes in CPS’ quantitative educational outcomes since our 2011 report,⁸⁵ though Chicago has improved on some measures and declined on others. Our analyses reveal four main trends:

- Chicago has shown overall academic improvement similar to other urban districts, whether or not mayor controlled.⁸⁶
- Chicago’s graduation rates have increased and dropout rates have declined. This is similar to US schools as a whole.⁸⁷
- Although Chicago’s NAEP scores improved for all racial groups from 2002 to 2013, and graduation and dropout rates improved for all

racial groups from 1999 to 2014, Chicago continues to have large racial disparities on multiple measures of academic success.

- On *no* quantitative measure that we discuss here—test scores, graduation rates, or dropout rates—has CPS narrowed the disparity between Black and white students, or between Latinos and whites, since mayoral control began—and the disparity has increased on several measures, sometimes substantially.

NAEP Scores—CPS Compared with Large City Averages

Currently, there are 21 districts in NAEP’s “Trial Urban Districts Assessment” (TUDA),⁸⁸ including Chicago. NAEP compares TUDA districts to what it calls “Large Cities” (LC)—cities with over 250,000 residents. Average mathematics and reading scores in grades 4 and 8 have generally risen since 2002/3 for both LC and most TUDA districts.⁸⁹ Chicago’s improvement roughly parallels national data. On some specific measures (e.g., 4th grade mathematics), Chicago has narrowed the disparity with the LC average since 2003, while on other measures (e.g., 8th grade reading), Chicago’s disparity with the LC average since 2002 has increased. On no measure has Chicago caught up with the Large City average NAEP score overall. Thus, while Chicago, like other large cities, has improved its NAEP scores, overall it trailed the LC average in 2002/2003 and still trails today.

Racial Disparities in NAEP Results

The NAEP TUDA uses four scoring levels: *Below Basic*, *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* and records the percent of students by race for each level in 4th and 8th grade mathematics and reading. CPS students, across race, generally increased their percentages in the *At or Above Proficient* and *Advanced* levels but the percentages, for students of color, especially African Americans, are still quite low (see Figures 4-7).

⁸³ Spote & de la Torre (2010, p. 23).

⁸⁴ Spote & de la Torre (2010, p. 3).

⁸⁵ Lipman & Gutstein (2011).

⁸⁶ National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015).

⁸⁷ US Department of Education (2011, p.6).

⁸⁸ NAEP has specifically assessed test scores of 4th and 8th graders in some urban school districts since 2002 in reading and 2003 in mathematics.

⁸⁹ National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015).

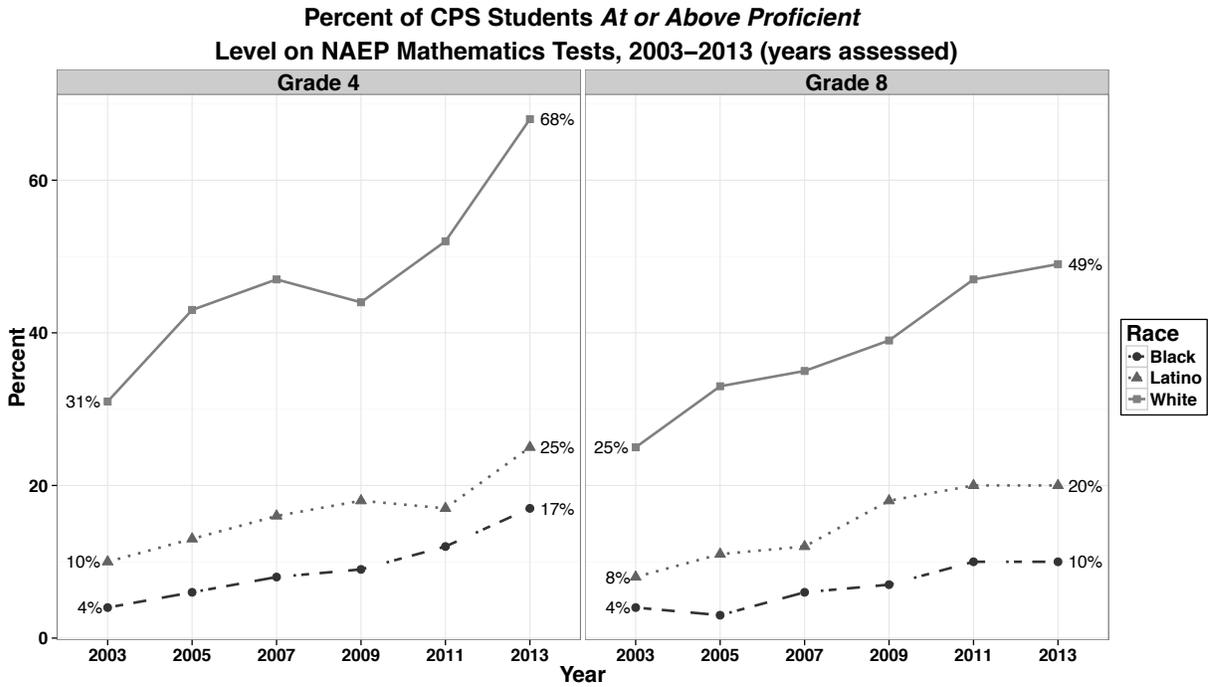


Figure 4. CPS Students by Race, *At or Above Proficient* NAEP Level in Mathematics, Grades 4 and 8, 2003-2013.

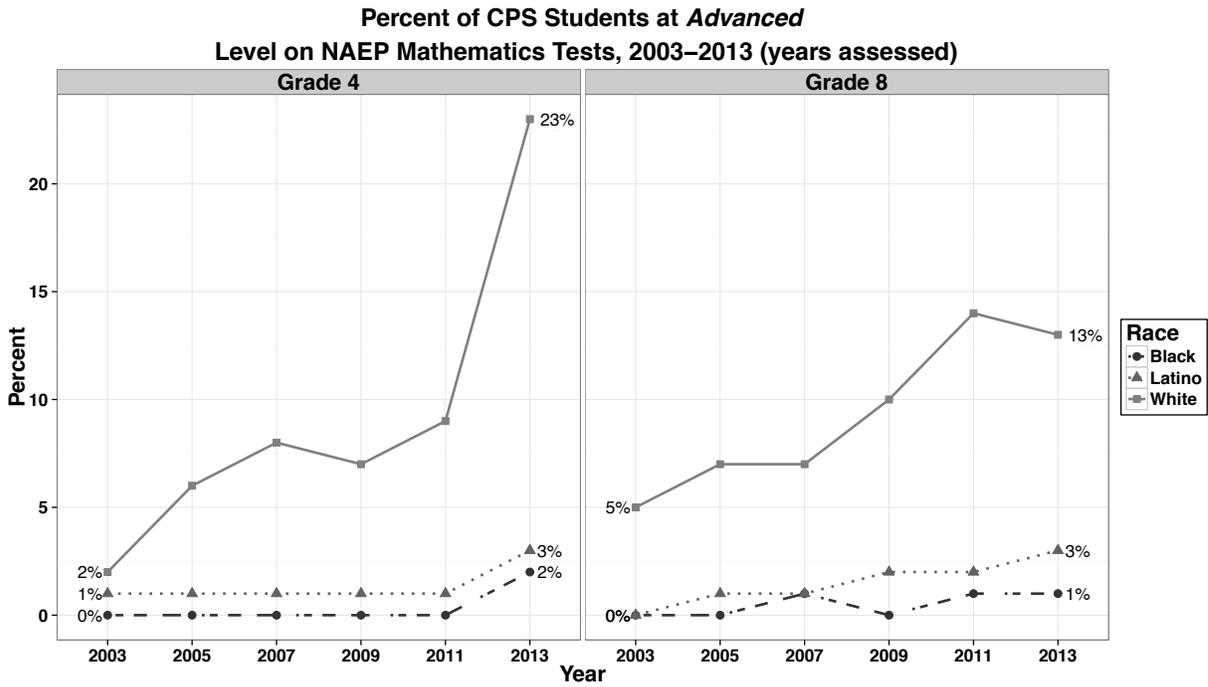


Figure 5. CPS Students by Race, at *Advanced* NAEP Level in Mathematics, Grades 4 and 8, 2003-2013.

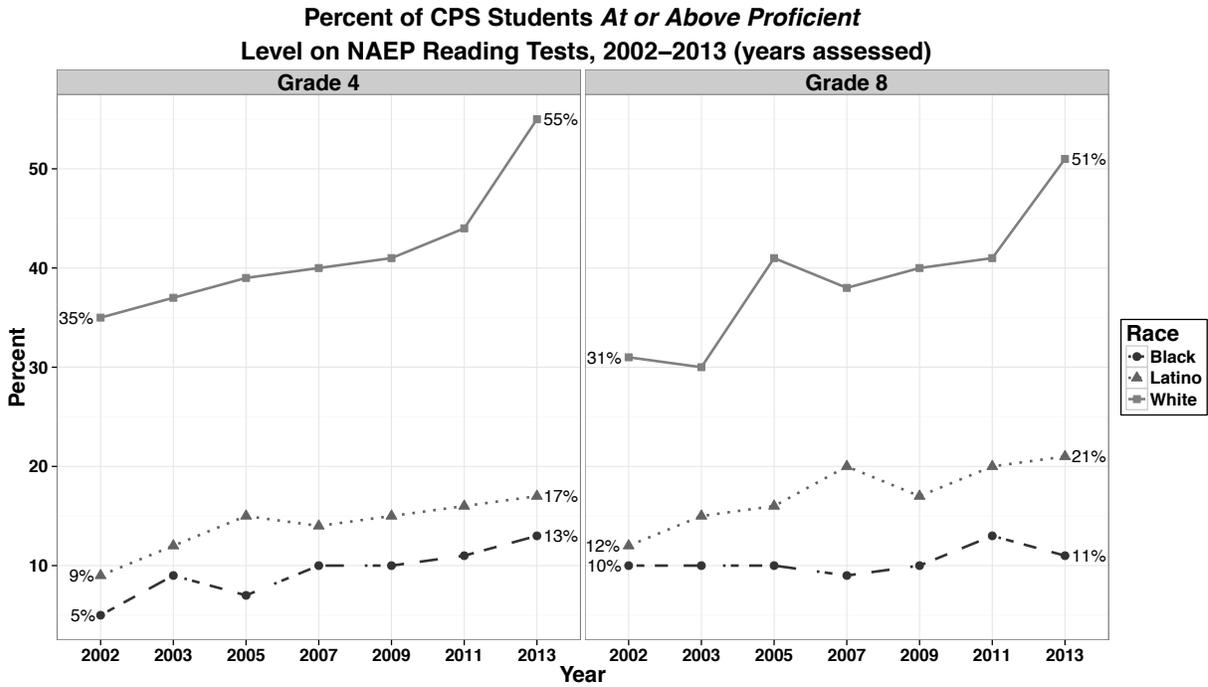


Figure 6. CPS Students by Race, *At or Above Proficient* NAEP Level in Reading, Grades 4 and 8, 2002-2013.

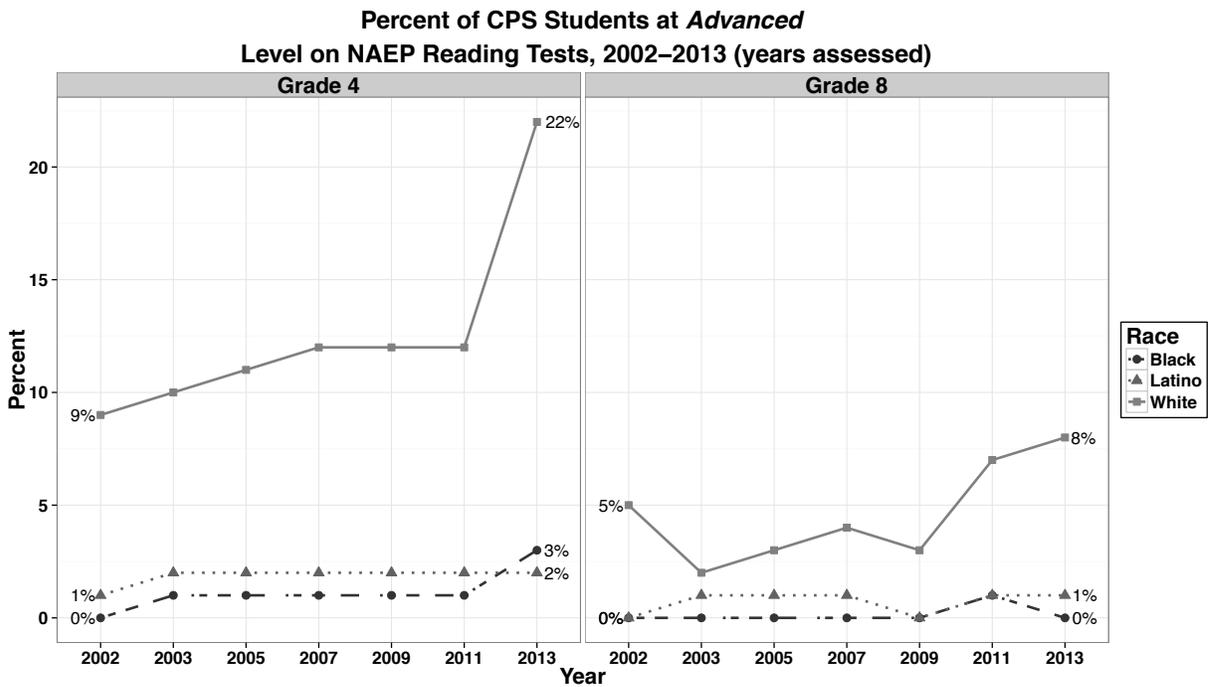


Figure 7. CPS Students by Race, at *Advanced* NAEP Level in Reading, Grades 4 and 8, 2002-2013.

In the context of CPS' inequitable learning, Chicago's Black-white and Latino-white disparities at these levels consistently increased since 2002/3, at times substantially. Furthermore, Black CPS 8th graders not only trail their white counterparts by large amounts, but are overall markedly underperforming. In 2013, 1% of Black 8th graders were at the *Advanced* level in mathematics (up from 0% in 2003), while in 2013, 0% of Black 8th graders were at the *Advanced* level in reading—the same amount as in 2003.

Dropout and Graduation Rates

Nationally, US high school graduation rates have improved and school dropout rates have declined since the 1970s, for all students and across racial groups. In a multi-decade study completed in 2011, the Department of Education wrote: “The general downward trend in event dropout rates over the nearly four-decade period from 1972 through 2009 observed in the overall population was also found among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.”⁹⁰ This is the case for districts under mayoral control and for the vast majority with elected school boards. CPS graduation and dropout rate⁹¹ improvements mirror the national trend, following a similar pattern as with NAEP scores.

However, racial disparities for Chicago students persisted or increased. Overall, in both graduation and dropout rates, the position between Latinos and whites has not changed—Latinos slightly trailed whites in the past and still do so by roughly the same amounts. For Blacks, however, the disparity with whites increased substantially on both graduation and dropout rates—while Blacks improved on both rates, they dropped farther behind whites since 1999.

In 1999, the dropout rate disparity between Black students (53.3% five-year cohort dropout rate) and white students (46.9%) was 6.4%. This grew to 13.7% by 2014 (Black students: 32.8%; white students: 19.1%). Similarly, in 1999, the graduation rate disparity between Black students (43.2% five-year cohort graduation rate) and white students (52.0%) was 8.8%. This grew to 16.6% by 2014 (Black students: 61.9%; white students: 78.5%). Thus, while Black, Latino, and white students in CPS all improved their dropout and graduation rates—similar to the rest of the US—in Chicago, Black students' position declined relative to whites and Latinos from 1999 until 2014, under mayoral control.

⁹⁰ US Department of Education (2011, p. 6).

⁹¹ Chicago Public Schools (2014d).

Finding 3: Under the mayor-appointed Board, racial disparities in educational outcomes persisted and in some cases widened.

School Closings

In 2004, the Board approved then-Mayor Daley's Renaissance 2010 (Ren 2010) plan to close 60-70 schools⁹² and open at least 100 new schools (two thirds charters and contracts) by the year 2010.⁹³ Ren 2010 was developed by the Commercial Club of Chicago, an organization of corporate leaders.⁹⁴ According to CPS, Ren 2010 was an initiative to “expand quality education options” to children in “the most underserved areas.”⁹⁵ After 2010, the board effectively extended the policy.

The policy of closing neighborhood schools continued with 100 schools closed, turned around, phased out, or consolidated by 2012, and culminated in the Board's 2013 vote to close a record-breaking 50 more neighborhood public schools—affecting 42,952 students.⁹⁶ Eighty seven percent of students affected were African American.⁹⁷ The Board, as well as CPS CEO Byrd-Bennett and Mayor Emanuel, determined these schools were underutilized and claimed the closures would consolidate scarce resources to “create a quality, 21st century education for every child.”⁹⁸

Academics

School closings have not improved education for the majority of affected students. A 2009 CCSR study found most displaced elementary school students transferred from one low-performing school to another with virtually no effect on student achievement. Eight of ten students displaced by school closings transferred to schools ranked in the bottom half of the system on standardized tests.⁹⁹ At the same time, teachers and community members claimed that schools closed for low performance had not been given the resources to succeed. Parents and

⁹² Lutton (2010, January 12).

⁹³ Chicago Public Schools (2011).

⁹⁴ Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago (2003).

⁹⁵ Chicago Public Schools (2011).

⁹⁶ Vevea & Lutton (2013, May 16). Further analysis by Eric Gutstein, February 10, 2015, from CPS (2013), *Working Draft SY13 School Actions Overview*. Available from author.

⁹⁷ Journey for Justice Alliance (2014); Lipman, Vaughan, & Gutierrez (2014); Layton (2014, May 13); de la Torre, Gordon, Moore, & Cowhy (2015).

⁹⁸ Chicago Public Schools (2013a).

⁹⁹ de la Torre & Gwynne (2009b).

educators in an area of the Midsouth,¹⁰⁰ where Ren 2010 was first focused, said they were “set up for failure.”¹⁰¹ Six years after Ren2010 began, almost 75% of Chicago school children still attended low-performing schools.¹⁰² Only 16 of the 92 new schools created under the policy reached the state average on test scores.¹⁰³

The academic impact of the 2013 school closures has yet to be fully assessed. However, preliminary information indicates that closures did not significantly improve academic outcomes for most displaced students. At the March 2014 CPS board meeting, CEO Byrd-Bennett presented her first report to the Board on displaced students and claimed, “We are stronger today than we were before and better positioned than we were before...Students impacted by the consolidations are making academic gains.” “Congrats to you and the team,” said Board President David Vitale. “Frankly, it’s an incredible success to date.” However, the CEO’s report shows that students in schools unaffected by school closings improved in attendance, GPA, and on-track to graduation as much as, or more than, those students in closed schools who moved on to other schools. Contrary to claims by CEO Byrd-Bennett and Mr. Vitale, gains for students from closed schools were “minute.”¹⁰⁴ (See Table 1. ¹⁰⁵)

When the Board approved the final list of 2013 school closings, CPS promised enhanced academic resources for students, among other improved learning conditions.¹⁰⁶ However, research by the Chicago Teachers Union found these promises were unevenly fulfilled. For example, CPS promised displaced students access to libraries in their designated receiving schools, however, only 38% of these libraries had librarians. Similarly, although CPS upgraded computer labs at receiving schools, only one fifth of receiving schools had technology teachers.¹⁰⁷

Recently released 2015 CCSR research on the 2013 school closings tracked where students were enrolled. While 93% of displaced students enrolled in schools with a higher performance rating than their closed ones (some only minimally so), only 21% of these

Table 1
Attendance, GPA and On-Track Rates for Students from 2013 Closed Schools and Non-Actions Schools

| | Student Status | Quarter 2 2013 | Quarter 2 2014 |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Attendance | Closed | 92.7% | 93.0% |
| | Non-Actions | 95.1% | 95.4% |
| GPA | Closed | 2.36 | 2.38 |
| | Non-Actions | 2.75 | 2.80 |
| On-Track | Closed | 47.7% | 48.0% |
| | Non-Actions | 57.4% | 59.9% |

students enrolled in top-rated schools.¹⁰⁸ This is notable given that past research by CCSR and others found students from closed schools only benefit academically if they are transferred to schools in the top quartile of academic performance.¹⁰⁹

Community Stability

Public schools are important anchors in communities, and waves of school closings have been destabilizing for communities already under stress.¹¹⁰ Under Ren 2010, evidence indicates that for affected students and schools, mobility went up¹¹¹ and travel distances increased. The Board closed some schools for low achievement, although they showed a record of improvement, and in some cases, documented that they lacked necessary resources.¹¹² Good neighborhood schools, particularly in Latino communities, were closed for low enrollment despite evidence presented by the school community that they were utilizing their facilities in educationally appropriate ways and that some of the best schools in the system had even lower enrollments.¹¹³ CPS transferred some students in the Midsouth to multiple schools in a few years as the district closed one school after another. Receiving schools were also destabilized by the influx of dislocated students.¹¹⁴ In 2008, *Catalyst* reported that more students were forced to travel long distances to attend low-performing schools when CPS closed neighborhood

¹⁰⁰ The Midsouth area is bounded by 22nd Street on the North, the Dan Ryan Expressway on the West, 55th Street on the South, and Lake Michigan on the East.

¹⁰¹ Lipman, Person, & Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (2007).

¹⁰² Karp (2010, Summer, p. 6).

¹⁰³ Karp (2010, Summer).

¹⁰⁴ Karp & Sanchez (2014, March 26).

¹⁰⁵ Chicago Public Schools (2013d).

¹⁰⁶ Chicago Public Schools (2013a).

¹⁰⁷ Caref, Hains, & Jankov (2014, p.1).

¹⁰⁸ de la Torre, Gordon, Moore, & Cowhy (2015).

¹⁰⁹ de la Torre & Gwynne (2009b); Dowdall (2011); Pacer (2013); Engberg, Gill, Zamarro, & Zimmer (2012).

¹¹⁰ Lipman & Haines (2007).

¹¹¹ de la Torre & Gwynne (2009a).

¹¹² Fleming et al (2009).

¹¹³ See Greenlee et al. (2008); Fleming et al. (2009).

¹¹⁴ Lipman, Person, & Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (2007).

schools, with African American families, in particular, traveling long distances.¹¹⁵

There is also concern about CPS losing track of students and their records in the turmoil of school closings. CPS devoted unprecedented resources to track students from the 2013 school closings, and in an open letter to the *Chicago Sun Times*,¹¹⁶ CEO Byrd-Bennett countered this concern, claiming that the district knew where all but seven children had gone. However, through a Freedom of Information Request, *Catalyst Chicago* learned that at least 434 students are missing from CPS records, and that CPS did not know their whereabouts at the time Byrd-Bennett published the open letter.¹¹⁷

School closings also led to spikes in violence in high schools and some elementary schools. CPS transferred students to schools out of their neighborhood putting them in physical jeopardy, despite parents' insistent warnings. For example, there were violent confrontations when Austin High School was closed in 2007 and students were transferred to Clemente; in 2008, when Englewood High School was closed and students were transferred to Robeson, Dyett, Hirsch, and Hyde Park High Schools; and in 2009 after Carver High School was turned into a selective enrollment military school and students were sent to Fenger High School.¹¹⁸

African American communities are hit particularly hard by the loss of neighborhood schools. In 2013, *Catalyst Chicago* looked at 14 predominately African American South and West Side communities and found an average of 54% of elementary students attended their neighborhood schools, while two-thirds of the students in other communities attended their neighborhood school.¹¹⁹ There are now no open enrollment high schools left in North Lawndale and just one in Bronzeville—both African American communities.

School closings have been concentrated in African American and Latino areas experiencing gentrification.¹²⁰ A closed neighborhood school can be the “last straw” pushing low-income residents out of their neighborhood and facilitating the process of turning it over to more affluent residents. Closing a school means the loss of community programs, trusted educators, increased student mobility, and

disruption of established parent-school connections.¹²¹ All these factors contribute to pressures on low-income families to move out of communities. The Board replaced successful schools serving working-class students with schools marketed to upper-middle-class parents in gentrifying areas.¹²²

The relationship of school closings to gentrification highlights the problem of a mayor-appointed board coordinated with business. Are the Board's decisions to close neighborhood schools and open new schools made on educational grounds or are they to benefit real estate and development interests and affluent families?

School-Community Relationships

Two large-scale studies of successful CPS neighborhood schools identified relationships with parents and communities as essential to substantially improve academic achievement.¹²³ Designs for Change researchers found that the most consistent feature of 144 high-achieving “inner-city” Chicago elementary schools that had been low performing was that “*all adults work as a team to improve education, including the teachers, parents, Local School Council, principal, and community agencies*” [emphasis original].¹²⁴ Similarly, the CCSR's extensive research on “successful school reform” in CPS¹²⁵ identified “parent, school, and community ties”¹²⁶ as one of the “five essential supports”¹²⁷ for school improvement.

Local School Councils are an important component of building school-community relationships and a means for parent input in local school decisions. (LSCs hire principals and approve school improvement plans and discretionary budgets.) Yet, under Renaissance 2010, the Board closed neighborhood schools with elected LSCs and opened charter and AUSL contract schools without them, diminishing the capacity of parent-community involvement to improve schools.

School closings broke deep personal connections parents and children had with their schools. Parents felt their closed neighborhood schools were like an extension of their family, and many were active

¹²¹ Weissmann (2002).

¹²² Lipman (2011).

¹²³ Bryk, Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton (2010); Designs for Change (2005).

¹²⁴ Designs for Change (2005, p. ii).

¹²⁵ Bryk, Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton (2010); Consortium on Chicago School Research (2010).

¹²⁶ Bryk, Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton (2010).

¹²⁷ This builds on the work of Designs for Change who originally developed this concept.

¹¹⁵ Myers (2008, November 12).

¹¹⁶ Byrd-Bennett (2014, August 1).

¹¹⁷ Karp (2015, February 3).

¹¹⁸ Brown, Gutstein, & Lipman (2009).

¹¹⁹ Karp (2013, April 3).

¹²⁰ Fleming et al. (2009); Greenlee et al. (2008).

volunteers. Unfortunately, many parents reported feeling excluded at their receiving schools.¹²⁸

Finding 4: The Board’s policy of closing neighborhood schools has not improved education for the majority of affected students and has had harmful consequences, particularly for African American communities, students, and teachers who were disproportionately impacted.

Privatization

Charter School Expansion

School privatization has been a central policy of Mayors Daley and Emanuel and their appointed school boards. Charter and contract schools receive public funds but are privately operated by non-profit organizations with some charter organizations contracting out management of the school to a for-profit operator. The Boards authorized 131 charter schools¹²⁹ while they closed, consolidated, phased-out, or turned around over 150 neighborhood public schools.¹³⁰ From 2003-2013, CPS increased spending on charters by \$488.4 million, a 612% increase.¹³¹

The academic performance of charter schools, in Chicago and nationally, is mixed but overall no better than traditional, neighborhood public schools. The largest US study of charter schools, conducted by Stanford University, found that five out of six charter school students performed no better—or worse—than students in matched neighborhood public schools.¹³² A 2013 follow-up study found Chicago elementary charter schools were performing identically to neighborhood schools in reading and slightly better in math.¹³³ A *Chicago Sun-Times* analysis found that, from 2013 to 2014, Chicago neighborhood schools improved significantly more in reading than charter schools and slightly more in math, while both charter and neighborhood schools overall performed about the same.¹³⁴ In a study of all CPS students who took Illinois state tests in 2013, Northwestern University and the *Chicago Sun-Times* found that charter high school students edged out neighborhood high school students on math and tied

on reading, but neighborhood elementary school students in grades 3-8 slightly out-performed charter school students in math and reading.¹³⁵ The bottom line: charters are not doing any better overall than neighborhood public schools.

Yet, charter schools have the advantage that their students select to attend. A 2014 study by the University of Minnesota Law School found that, after controlling for the kinds of students in various schools, Chicago’s charter schools underperform traditional schools on most measures—pass rates, reading and math growth rates, and graduation rates—even though their students self-select into charters.¹³⁶

The Board also diverted funds from neighborhood public schools to charter schools (see section on Distribution of Resources). In 2012, while Mayor Emanuel called for closing schools to reduce district deficits, Chicago signed a compact with the Gates Foundation to open 60 more charter schools over the next five years. That year, CPS budgeted \$350 million for its Office of New Schools, dedicated to developing new charter and contract schools.¹³⁷ In the FY2014 budget, the Board allocated additional funds for charter schools while it made major cuts to basic educational programs in neighborhood schools.¹³⁸ Many charters also get additional funding from local and national private philanthropies and investors.¹³⁹

A 2014 report found that although charters are closing the gap with CPS public schools on serving students with special needs, compared to neighborhood public schools, charters have larger percentages of students who require less intensive supports and significantly smaller proportions of students who require more extensive supports.¹⁴⁰ Noting the persistence of these patterns over the last eight years, the study’s authors conclude, “This suggests that these disparities are not temporary fluctuations, but rather endemic in the ways the two models of schools (charter and neighborhood) have developed in Chicago.”¹⁴¹

¹²⁸ Lipman, Vaughan, & Gutierrez (2014).

¹²⁹ Chicago Public Schools (2015b).

¹³⁰ Compiled from Vevea, Lutton, & Karp (2013, January 16) and review of Chicago Board of Education records.

¹³¹ Martire, Otter, & Kass (2013).

¹³² Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2009, June).

¹³³ Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2013, June).

¹³⁴ Golab, Schlikerman, & FitzPatrick (2014, August 29).

¹³⁵ Mihalopoulos (2014, April 15).

¹³⁶ Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity (2014).

¹³⁷ Create (2013, March).

¹³⁸ Martire, Otter, & Kass (2013).

¹³⁹ FitzPatrick (2013, February 10); Adeniji (2014, September 4); New Schools for Chicago (n.d.).

¹⁴⁰ Waitoller, Radinsky, Trzaska, & Maggin (2014).

¹⁴¹ Waitoller, Radinsky, Trzaska, & Maggin (2014, p.7).

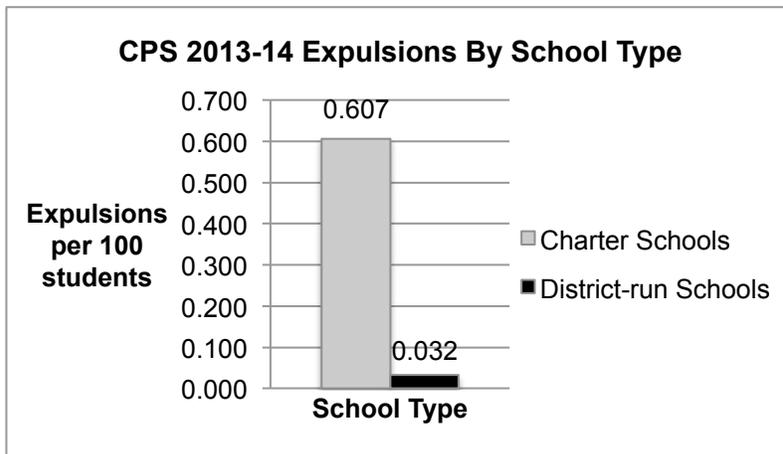


Figure 8: CPS 2013-14 Expulsions for Charters and CPS Public Schools.

In addition, charter schools exacerbate racial segregation in CPS. While 20% of traditional CPS schools had some degree of racial diversity in 2013, only 7% of charters had some diversity.¹⁴² Charter schools also have a lower percentage of African American and Latino teachers than CPS schools as a whole; they employ less experienced teachers, and they have substantially higher rates of teacher turnover.¹⁴³

Charter schools have much higher rates of expulsion than other CPS schools (see Figure 8). In 2013-14, 24 schools expelled more than 1.0% of their students—22 were charter schools.¹⁴⁴ In 2013-14, CPS schools expelled 111 students (of about 343,400 students), while charters expelled 331 (of slightly less than 54,600 students).¹⁴⁵ The charter expulsion rate (~0.607%) is roughly 19 times as large as that of district-run schools (~0.032%). If every CPS school were a charter, the district would have expelled over 2,400 students in 2013-14.

While the population of school-age children in Chicago has decreased since 2001, the declining enrollment of students in traditional public schools is also impacted by charter school expansion. *WBEZ* radio reported in 2012 that total enrollment in all Chicago Public Schools had decreased by 28,289 since 2000. Yet, neighborhood school enrollment decreased by more than 75,000, as charter school

enrollment increased by 47,381.¹⁴⁶ In 2014, approximately 56,900 Chicago students enrolled in charter schools, about 2,300 more than the previous year.¹⁴⁷

The Board's decision to expand charter and contract schools in areas where CPS has closed schools is a cause for concern (see Figure 9). The additional resources CPS and private funders provided to charter schools make them attractive to students from neighborhood schools whose budgets have been simultaneously cut. This raises the question: Has the Board's support for charter schools destabilized and drawn students away from neighborhood schools, leading them to be closed?

Contracting out to AUSL

On multiple measures, the Academy for Urban School Leadership has not demonstrated it is an effective alternative to quality neighborhood schools. The Board awarded the AUSL contracts to run 32 schools, 25 of which are turnaround schools concentrated in the West, Southwest, and South Sides of Chicago. (In a turnaround, a school is closed and reopened with a new staff and curriculum.) AUSL schools are funded with public dollars, but privately run, and do not have elected Local School Councils. Overall AUSL schools have a higher proportion of Black students than the district (74% compared with 40% in CPS) and a higher proportion of white teachers and substantially lower number of years of teaching experience compared to CPS overall.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity (2014).

¹⁴³ Caref et al. (2012) using charter teacher demographic data from ISBE Teacher Service Records, available at http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/teacher_service_record.htm

¹⁴⁴ Chicago Public Schools (2014e).

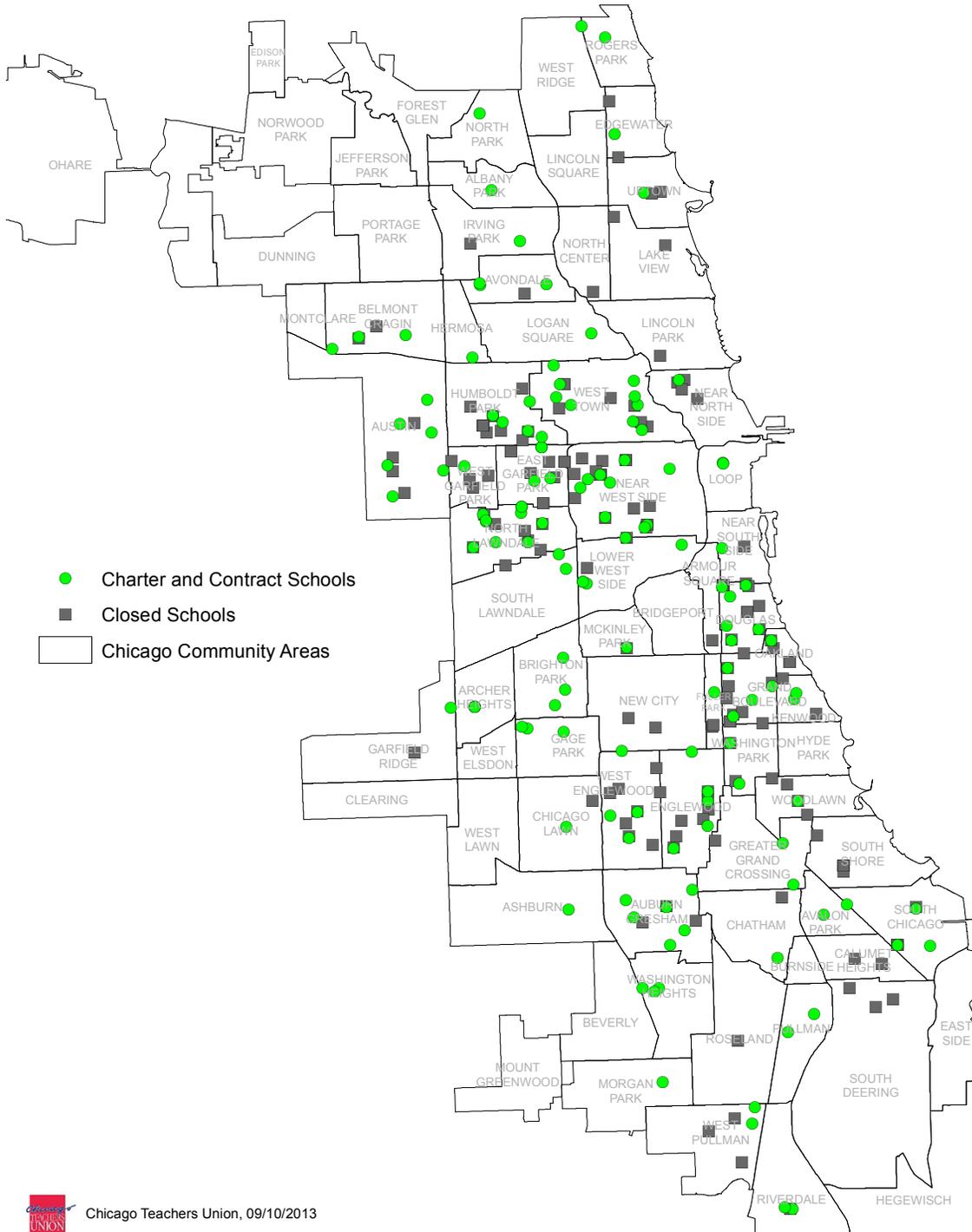
¹⁴⁵ Chicago Public Schools (2014e); Chicago Public Schools (2013e); this includes 8 students expelled by AUSL schools.

¹⁴⁶ Lutton & Vevea (2012, December 11).

¹⁴⁷ Chicago Public Schools (2013e); Chicago Public Schools (2014c).

¹⁴⁸ Karp (2014, May 7).

Closed Neighborhood Schools, New Charter and Contract Schools 1997 - 2013



 Chicago Teachers Union, 09/10/2013

Figure 9: Closed neighborhood schools, new charter, and contract schools, 1997-2013. Reprinted with the permission of the Chicago Teachers Union.

Although AUSL has additional funding from the Broad and Gates Foundations, results for their turnaround schools are mixed.¹⁴⁹ The CPS 2014-15 School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) placed 23 of AUSL's 27 elementary schools in the category of needing *Intensive Support*—the 4 exceptions are all AUSL Training Academies that receive extra resources. The SQRP also placed 3 of AUSL's 5 high schools as needing Intensive Support. (The other two high schools are Training Academies.)¹⁵⁰ In 2012, Designs for Change found AUSL had an additional average investment of at least \$7 million per school over five years, yet AUSL schools lagged behind comparable CPS neighborhood schools with strong Local School Councils.¹⁵¹ A 2014 analysis by WBEZ found that AUSL's five high schools, on average, suspended 42% of their students compared with 18% for charter and district high schools.¹⁵² In 2013-14, the AUSL Network schools suspended more students (in and out of school, unique suspensions) than any other CPS Network except one.¹⁵³ Despite claims that AUSL puts additional teachers in classrooms, many AUSL teachers struggle to meet student needs without additional support.¹⁵⁴

Finding 5: The Board's privatization agenda has not generally improved education. Charter and contract schools are on the whole doing no better and are more punitive than neighborhood public schools. Privately operated schools are also further removed from public accountability. However, the Board turned over one-quarter of the district's schools to private operators.

Board Efficiency and Financial Competence

One argument for mayor-appointed boards is that they are less prone to political influence,¹⁵⁵ and appointees from business and banking sectors are presumed to have the expertise to manage the district like a business and make sound financial decisions. However, the Chicago Board's record indicates the opposite. Board members have made irresponsible

and costly decisions and set policies more aligned with business than educational goals.

A November 2014 *Chicago Tribune* investigation found that from 2003-2007 district leaders entered into risky bond deals that dramatically increased the district's debt burden.¹⁵⁶ During this period, current Board President David Vitale—an experienced investment banker—oversaw CPS finances as the chief administrative officer.¹⁵⁷ In the early 2000s, under Vitale's direction, CPS turned to high-risk auction-rate bond deals for upfront money to fund school building and renovation projects. When the global economic crisis hit, the auction-rate bond market began to crumble, leaving CPS stuck paying high interest rates on these bond deals and exorbitant termination fees to exit the most onerous ones. According to the *Tribune*, CPS “stands to spend \$100 million” extra because it engaged in risky borrowing rather than use safer, more predictable fixed-rate debt as it had traditionally done. Despite evidence that the involved banks acted unscrupulously, if not illegally,¹⁵⁸ Mayor Emanuel, who appointed Vitale to the Board in 2011, claimed he will not try to recoup the losses from these loans.¹⁵⁹ Yet according to a Roosevelt Institute report, CPS could recover \$449 million if the city pursued legal action to renegotiate the deals without paying termination fees and retrieve the money already paid to banks.¹⁶⁰

Some CPS board members have engaged in business deals posing potential conflicts of interest. Board president Vitale was the former AUSL chair—but under Vitale's tenure, the Board designated AUSL the sole private operator of district turnaround schools. Furthermore, Tim Cawley, CPS' chief administrative officer since 2011, was AUSL's Managing Director of Finance and Administration. Emanuel's appointed board approved 23 turnarounds, more than doubling the number than when he took office.¹⁶¹ The Board also favored politically connected charter operator United Neighborhood Organization (UNO). Since UNO began operating charter schools in 1998, its charter

¹⁵⁶ Gillers & Grotto (2014, November 7); CPS used multiple financial products including auction-rate bonds, interest-rate swaps and floating bonds. A description of how these financial products work can be found at the *Chicago Tribune* website, <http://apps.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago-public-schools-bonds/>

¹⁵⁷ Gillers & Grotto (2014, November 10).

¹⁵⁸ Gillers & Grotto (2014, November 10). The authors note that the banks knew the auction-rate market was in trouble but sold CPS on bond deals anyway.

¹⁵⁹ Gillers & Byrne (2014, November 12).

¹⁶⁰ Roosevelt Institute (2014).

¹⁶¹ Karp (2014, May 7).

¹⁴⁹ Karp (2012, February 3).

¹⁵⁰ Chicago Public Schools (2014f).

¹⁵¹ Designs for Change (2012).

¹⁵² Vevea (2014, May 13).

¹⁵³ Chicago Public Schools (2014e).

¹⁵⁴ Personal communication, AUSL teachers (2015, February 5).

¹⁵⁵ FitzPatrick (2015, February 9).

network has grown rapidly with the support of CPS under both Mayors Daley and Emanuel.¹⁶² UNO's former CEO, Juan Rangel was campaign manager for Emanuel's first mayoral campaign.¹⁶³ Rangel was forced to resign from UNO in 2013 for nepotistic deals using state funds¹⁶⁴ and amidst an investigation charging UNO with defrauding investors.¹⁶⁵

Board appointee and venture capitalist, Deborah Quazzo, is founder and managing partner of GSV Advisors, which "provides advisory services to companies in the education and business service sectors."¹⁶⁶ A *Sun-Times* investigation found that before her June 2013 appointment, "the total [CPS] payout to companies that Quazzo invested in [had] come to about \$930,000." Since her appointment to the Board, Quazzo's companies have received an additional \$2.9 million in CPS business.¹⁶⁷

One of the Board's most questionable decisions regarding CPS finances was the decision to close 50 schools in May 2013. CPS grossly underestimated the cost to maintain the closed buildings. Cost overruns for the contract to maintain closed buildings tripled,¹⁶⁸ and CPS paid almost as much for gas and electricity to dozens of closed schools as it had when they were open.¹⁶⁹ Closed schools are also vulnerable to vandalism, costing, for example, \$18 to \$23 million to repair vandalized Ross Elementary.¹⁷⁰ This is concerning because evidence from school closings in other cities, made available to the Board prior to its decision to close 50 schools, showed that little money is saved by closing schools.¹⁷¹

School closing and cuts to instructional staff and school programs were premised on CPS's structural deficit in the FY2014 budget. But an analysis by the Center on Tax and Budget Accountability¹⁷² shows that an underlying cause of the district's financial problems was CPS' decision to underfund its pensions since FY1995. CPS diverted property tax revenues that, prior to 1995, went directly into the teachers pension fund, to other uses. The report notes that in "FY2014 CPS cut instructional positions because the

District is paying for its decision to underfund the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund (CTPF)...which resulted in the current pension funding ramp that grows annually at unaffordable levels."¹⁷³ The authors point out that the evidence shows that had CPS continued to pay into the pension fund as it had prior to 1995, the CTPF "would have been nearly 80% funded in FY2011, and the District may not have found itself in its current fiscal straits."¹⁷⁴

Finding 6: Chicago's Board engaged in questionable and risky financial arrangements and was a poor steward of public resources.

Public Accountability and Community Participation

A frequent critique, voiced by parents, teachers, and community organizations is that Board structures and processes significantly limit public participation, and that the public has little influence on Board decisions. The spectacle of annual school closings despite opposition of many thousands of parents, teachers, and students has left many Chicagoans cynical about the responsiveness and accountability of the mayor-appointed Board. Board members have seldom attended public hearings related to school closings, turnarounds, or other school actions for which they are responsible and have rarely heeded the recommendations and pleas of community members and educators despite evidence supporting their claims and proposals. In its decision to close 50 schools in May 2013, the Board ignored written recommendations of some hearing officers who based their reports on the testimony of hundreds of parents, students, and community members.¹⁷⁵

The structure, timing, and location of regular Board meetings minimizes public participation. Monthly meetings are held when most parents and community members are at work (Wednesdays, 10:30 AM); public participation is confined to two minutes per speaker, public commentary is limited to a fixed period no matter the issue or number of people wishing to speak, and public seating is limited. After a public comment period, the Board discusses behind closed doors. (Prior to mayoral control, the Board had several committees that met monthly and allowed multiple opportunities for the public to speak on key issues, but these were disbanded.)

¹⁶² Mihalopoulos (2014, September 22).

¹⁶³ Mihalopoulos (2012, January 14).

¹⁶⁴ UNO had received an unprecedented \$98 million state grant in 2009 to build eight schools, Mihalopoulos & Ahmed (2009, June 22).

¹⁶⁵ Mihalopoulos (2014, June 3).

¹⁶⁶ Chicago Public Schools (2013c).

¹⁶⁷ FitzPatrick (2014, December 22).

¹⁶⁸ Lutton, (2013, December 17).

¹⁶⁹ Smyser & Rogers (2014, December 2).

¹⁷⁰ Smyser & Rogers (2014, December 2).

¹⁷¹ Dowdall (2011, October); Audit (2012).

¹⁷² Martire, Otter, & Kass (2013).

¹⁷³ Martire, Otter, & Kass (2013, p. 1).

¹⁷⁴ Martire, Otter, & Kass, (2013, p. 2).

¹⁷⁵ Karp (2013, May 7).

Thwarted by the Board's lack of responsiveness and accountability, parents have resorted to extreme measures to make their concerns heard. In 2010, parents at Whittier elementary school became so frustrated by years of the Board's unresponsiveness to their appeals for a school library that they occupied their school field house for 43 days. In 2001, parents and community members in Little Village went on a 19-day hunger strike for a new open-enrollment high school, designed by the community. They held the hunger strike after years of petitioning the Board and after \$30 million earmarked for the school was diverted to build two new selective enrollment high schools in North Side neighborhoods.¹⁷⁶ Parents, students, community members, and teachers have resorted to picketing, holding candlelight vigils, sleeping out in front of CPS headquarters in winter, a hunger strike, civil disobedience and arrests, and building occupations to have their concerns heard.

There is substantial research demonstrating that the knowledge and experience of proven educators and engaged parents is essential to good educational decision-making.¹⁷⁷ Parents and educators have presented well-researched proposals for neighborhood k-12 alignment, new innovative community-based neighborhood schools, linkages with established community organizations, and new approaches to transform public schools.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the Board would benefit from the advice and initiatives of professional educators and those who know the students and live in communities served by CPS.

Yet, the evidence is that the Board has largely discounted this knowledge and community-generated proposals. Teachers have provided ample evidence of educationally inappropriate and damaging use of standardized tests and probation policies, yet the Board persisted with these policies. There is a record of teachers, parents, and students warning the Board that violence would erupt from plans to close specific schools and transfer students across neighborhood boundaries. The Board did not heed the advice of community members, and violence to students followed. Teachers and administrators in schools slated to be closed (or phased out) for low enrollment provided the Board with documentation that the buildings were being used appropriately and,

educational programs were of high quality.¹⁷⁹ School communities also proposed plans to improve their schools. However, in almost every case, the Board voted to close the schools. This record raises a fundamental question: How can the Board make informed policy decisions when it is not accountable to the public and its structures and practices prevent meaningful public participation?

The Board is also not representative of the public or CPS students. Under mayoral control, the Board has been weighted with corporate CEOs and lawyers, investment bankers, and real estate developers as contrasted with CPS students who are over 90% of color and nearly 90% low income. Board members generally do not live in the communities most affected by school actions, nor do they send their children to neighborhood CPS schools.

Finding 7: Mayoral control and Board structures and processes limit public input and democratic accountability. The Board has been markedly unresponsive to outpourings of public opposition to its policies and essentially indifferent to advice and proposals of parents, teachers, and others with expert knowledge and who have a primary stake in students' education.

¹⁷⁶ Russo (2003).

¹⁷⁷ Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton (2006); Renée & McAlister (2011).

¹⁷⁸ Examples include the Hazel Johnson School of Environmental Justice in Altgeld Gardens, Bronzeville Global Achievers Village, Whittier Elementary School parents' proposal for a library and community center.

¹⁷⁹ Greenlee et al. (2008); Fleming et al. (2009).

STEPS TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The vast majority of school districts in the nation have elected school boards which are accountable to the public that elects them. Direct election of Board members is a stronger form of public accountability than mayoral control because replacing board members when the public disagrees with their policies is more feasible than replacing a mayor solely based on education issues.

However, elected school boards have a variety of structures and methods of electing members with different consequences for democracy and representation of the public interest. Election by sub-districts or regions is more frequently found in large urban areas. Boards elected by sub-districts increase broad representation. They are more heterogeneous, bringing a more racially and economically diverse group of people into school policy making. In contrast, boards elected citywide tend to be homogeneous and disproportionately white, middle and upper class,¹⁸⁰ and tend to disadvantage working-class candidates and people of color.¹⁸¹ Boards elected citywide tend to pass more unanimous resolutions and may appear to operate more smoothly, yet evidence suggests that they are often more connected to (and potentially influenced by) special interests. Individuals need more money to run citywide campaigns and are therefore more likely to be associated with powerful business interests¹⁸² and thus less representative of all the students in the district.

Elected boards do not automatically improve schools. This depends on the policy decisions they make, their commitment to the best interests of all students in the district, and public involvement. In the 2011 version of this report, we described examples of elected boards making decisions that were responsive to parents and communities, particularly in the quest for greater equity.¹⁸³ Conversely, when elected boards make decisions that a substantial part of the community perceives to be damaging and

regressive,¹⁸⁴ the public can replace board members who they directly elect.

Critics have identified several problems with elected school boards: representatives may narrowly represent their constituencies rather than the interests of the whole school district; board meetings may become partisan and adversarial with localized interests predominating; elections are a weak form of democracy if there is little interaction with constituencies and if voters with less power have less access to elected representatives; voter turnout tends to be low; and those with less power and money are disadvantaged in running candidates.¹⁸⁵

However, experiences of elected boards point to structural and procedural steps that strengthen democratic participation and public accountability:¹⁸⁶

1. School board elections held at the same time as municipal elections have higher voter turnout.
2. Election by district or region of the city increases board racial and economic diversity.
3. Processes of open, deliberative democracy and engagement promote public participation—“we” rather than “I” thinking.
4. School boards elected as a slate committed to working together toward a common education program offer voters clear policy choices and decrease local self-interest in decision-making.



¹⁸⁰ Land (2002, p. 10).

¹⁸¹ Fraga, Meier, & England (1986).

¹⁸² Land (2002, p. 11).

¹⁸³ Lipman & Gutstein (2011).

¹⁸⁴ For example, the Tucson, Arizona Board's repeal of the Mexican American Studies Program in 2012 and the Colorado Springs, Colorado Board's screening of Advanced Placement history classes to make sure course materials promote patriotism and respect for authority, de-emphasizing the Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements.

¹⁸⁵ Feuerstein (2002); Chubb & Moe (1990).

¹⁸⁶ See Allen & Plank (2005); Allen & Mintrom (2010); Land (2002); Feuerstein (2002).

FINDINGS

1. There is no conclusive evidence that mayor-appointed boards are more effective at governing schools or raising student achievement. The record of Chicago's appointed Board of Education underscores this finding.

2. Under mayoral control, opportunities to learn have become more unequal as CPS consolidated a two-tier school system. The Board prioritized selective programs and schools while neighborhood schools serving low-income students of color lost resources and bore the major impact of misuse of testing to enforce punitive accountability policies and narrowed curriculum, and to close schools. The Board used educationally insupportable high-stakes tests to close neighborhood schools, put hundreds of schools on probation, and retain thousands of students in grade without demonstrated educational benefit. At the same time the Board diverted funds to expand a tier of world-class selective enrollment schools serving a small percentage of CPS students who are disproportionately white and non-low-income. The Board also abandoned a promising initiative to create high quality, small neighborhood open-enrollment high schools.

3. Under the mayor-appointed Board, racial disparities in educational outcomes persisted and in some cases widened. CPS made some progress in academic achievement and other measures, mirroring national trends in districts with—and without—elected school boards. However, on nearly every measure we examined, racial disparities between white students vs Black and Latino students persisted, and in some cases widened. Nationally, Black-white and Latino-white disparities on the NAEP decreased slightly, but in Chicago they increased at every subject and grade assessed by the NAEP.

4. The Board's policy of closing neighborhood schools has not improved education for the majority of affected students and has had harmful consequences, particularly for African American communities, students, and teachers who

were disproportionately impacted. Overall, students' education was not substantially improved, mobility increased, violence spiked, and there was a dramatic loss of Black teachers. Closing schools that were community anchors undermined neighborhoods already facing destabilizing conditions. School closings are related to gentrification, raising questions about whose interests are served by closing neighborhood schools.

5. The Board's privatization agenda has generally not improved education. Charter and contract schools are on the whole doing no better and are more punitive than neighborhood public schools. Privately operated schools are also further removed from public accountability. However, the Board turned over one-quarter of the district's schools to private operators. The board also diverted funding from neighborhood public schools to charter schools and schools operated by the Academy of Urban School Leadership, even though results for AUSL's turnaround schools are mixed and on some measures worse than traditional CPS schools, despite substantial extra funding.

6. Chicago's Board engaged in questionable and risky financial arrangements and was a poor steward of public resources. The Board pursued a risky investment strategy costing taxpayers millions of dollars, awarded contracts to companies in which Board members have interests and personal connections, and deliberately underfunded the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund, contributing to the district's huge debt.

7. Mayoral control and Board structures and processes limit public input and democratic accountability. The Board has been markedly unresponsive to outpourings of public opposition to its policies and essentially indifferent to advice and proposals of parents, teachers, and others with expert knowledge and who have a primary stake in students' education. Chicago is an outlier as more than 98% of US school boards and all other school boards in Illinois are elected. A school board that is neither representative of the student population of CPS nor directly accountable to the public particularly disenfranchises people of color who are the majority in the city and in CPS.

CONCLUSION

After 20 years of mayoral control, the research paints an alarming picture of inequity in Chicago Public Schools. The policies, actions, and budget decisions of Chicago's mayor-appointed Board have consolidated a two-tier school district that is more unequal on nearly every measure we examined and less accountable to the public.

Under mayoral control, Chicago became known for a system of data-driven, top-down accountability borrowed from business. Under this system CPS used questionable performance indicators to impose interventions not supported by educational research—retention in grade, school probation, and a narrowed curriculum geared to test prep. These consequences fell almost entirely on students and communities of color, especially African Americans. For thousands of children, these punitive policies shaped their entire K-12 education experience.

On the other hand, the Board created a top tier of selective enrollment schools concentrated mainly in gentrifying and affluent communities that serve a small percentage of disproportionately white and non-low-income students. With its expanded International Baccalaureate program, the Board continues to develop selective programs that serve a small proportion of students. These contrasting educational opportunities along lines of race and economic status beg the question: Is this the education system Chicagoans want?

Data driven accountability was tied to the Board's privatization agenda. Test scores and an unsound building utilization formula were tools to rank and close schools and turn them over to private management. The mayor-appointed board gave Chicago the dishonorable distinction of closing more neighborhood schools at one time than any other city in the US. This action, primarily impacting African American students, did not generally improve education, and had serious consequences not only for students, but for teachers, families, and communities, some of which have been left with few public neighborhood schools. As the Board hollowed out roughly a quarter of the district through school closings, phase-outs, consolidations, and turnarounds, it authorized roughly 175 privately run charter and contract schools. This shift of public schools to private interests moves Chicago Public Schools further away from democratic control of local schools.

Proponents of mayoral control argue that appointed boards are more efficient. This raises the question, efficient toward what ends? If the appointed Board can streamline decision-making without “interference” from the public, and the decisions it makes do not benefit public education—is this the efficiency Chicagoans want? If the board pursues policies that benefit private interests, not children, is this the efficiency the public wants?

Over two decades, the Board persistently pursued policies for which there is very little support in educational research and which have not achieved stated aims. It mandated actions which thousands of educators, parents, students, and community members opposed, and to which they offered viable alternatives. It engaged in risky, insider financial arrangements and failed to pay into the teachers pension fund, putting the district finances in jeopardy, yet the taxpayers who fund Chicago Public Schools cannot hold the Board directly accountable.

The Board's policies under mayoral control are so educationally insupportable that we are pressed to ask: Whose interests does the Board serve? The majority of CPS students, or political and financial interests?

Although elected school boards do not guarantee more equitable or effective educational policies, the evidence indicates that an elected Board, representative of Chicago's economic and racial diversity and less tied to big money interest, is a necessary condition for Chicago Public Schools to move toward high quality, sustainable public schools for all students. It is especially troubling that mayoral control effectively disenfranchises a population that is majority people of color and low income. Do those who oppose elected school boards for large urban school districts advocate that democracy is only appropriate for some populations?

Fundamentally, Chicago needs an overhaul of its education policies. An elected board will need to embrace a new framework for student assessment and improvement of neighborhood schools, one that prioritizes the full development of all students and is grounded in educational research. To achieve this transformation will require the sustained participation of an engaged public, especially parents, educators, and students. Fortunately, Chicagoans have demonstrated that they are up to the task. Tens of thousands have attended school closings hearings over the years to defend and offer proposals to improve their neighborhood schools. Parents,

students, and teachers have organized for alternatives to the overuse and misuse of testing, to question faulty budgets and school utilization formulas, and to draft proposals for innovative neighborhood schools. Their energy and dedication to their neighborhood schools, and their accumulated wisdom and experience, are potent resources for change that the appointed board has largely discounted. Chicagoans have an opportunity to build on this public commitment to move Chicago Public Schools to higher ground. An elected Board of Education that is representative of and committed to the community it serves, would be a significant step to strengthen and improve public education in Chicago.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Chicago should move to an elected and representative school board.

- The people of Chicago should elect the Board of Education and its composition should be representative of the broad community and population of students in the school district.

Anything short of a fully elected board continues the current disenfranchisement of Chicagoans.

2. The Board's operations should be transparent and publicly accountable.

- Board meetings should be held when the working public can attend, at an accessible location.

3. The Board should establish structures and practices that strengthen democratic public participation in district initiatives and decisions.

- The Board should work with members of the school community, including Local School Councils, in a deliberative process of local school and district improvement.

4. The Board should draw on sound educational research and educator, student, and community knowledge to develop, propose, and evaluate policy.

5. The Board should prioritize equitable educational opportunities and outcomes in all actions, policies, and decisions.



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