

# Research Agenda

## for Chicago Public Schools: Three-Year Plan, 2016-2019



# CPS Research Agenda

Chicago Public Schools believes that in today's global economy our students need high quality education that will prepare them for success in college, career and civic life. One of the most critical ways for the district to ensure that we are serving our students at the highest level is through a consistent and organized approach to research.

The CPS Research Agenda is designed to identify priority areas of interest for district leadership and explore potential new lines of inquiry to inform district policy and practice, while also highlighting gaps in our knowledge base. The agenda will be used to provide research results that are directly useful to CPS decision-making and produce evidence around the effectiveness of the district's theory of action. The research findings generated will remain relevant to long-term policy issues and help the district actualize a research-to-practice cycle of policy making.



The following Research Agenda follows the Three-Year Vision for Chicago Public Schools. The district has three commitments for the years 2016-2019. The commitments are (1) academic progress, (2) financial stability, and (3) integrity. The Department of School Quality Measurement and Research has used these commitments as a springboard to outline our research priorities so that we can ensure that our work, and the work of our research partners, is as beneficial to CPS stakeholders as possible.

The Research Agenda will help external research partners as well as internal departments to understand the value of research, streamline systems, create policy, proactively work together, and conduct research that complements district priorities. Focusing primarily on academic progress, the hope of the Agenda is to build capacity through the district to change policy and practice in ways that support students and improve outcomes.

## Core Beliefs

The CPS Core Beliefs are the foundation of the CPS Mission - to provide a high quality public education for every child, in every neighborhood, that prepares each for success in college, career, and civic life.

### Education Must be Holistic

Success in life requires more than academic skills.

### High Academic Standards are for All Children

In today's global economy, young people need more than a high school diploma to thrive.

### Academic Rigor Must be Coupled with Support

All children, regardless of background, can learn well with the right academic and social-emotional support.

### Diversity Must be Celebrated

Embracing diverse viewpoints and experiences can equip our students with the flexibility and creativity to adapt to a changing world.

### School Options Must Serve All Children Well

Providing a range of options lets families choose the programs and schools that best meet their children's needs and interests.

### Equity is a Moral Imperative

The prosperity of our city tomorrow depends on how well we respect, nurture and educate our children today. We need young people who are skilled, ambitious, creative, caring and collaborative and devoted to the well-being of their communities.



## Research Agenda at a Glance: Academic Progress

Theory of Action	Drivers of Change
<p><b>High Quality, Rigorous Instruction</b> is the Foundation of a Holistic Education</p>	Improving Curriculum & Instruction
	Ramping Up Instruction
	Strengthening Special Education
	Laying a Stronger Foundation in pre-K
	Improving High Schools
	Improving Postsecondary Success
<p><b>Talented, Empowered Teachers and Leaders</b> are a Catalyst for Student Learning</p>	Teacher Preparation & Recruitment
	Teacher Development & Retention
	Administrator Preparation & Recruitment
	Administrator Development & Retention
<p><b>Safe and Supportive Schools</b> Create an Environment for Optimal Learning</p>	Students learn best when they feel safe, both physically and emotionally
	Eliminating health-related barriers to learning will optimize student academic success
	Improve Relations with Authorities and School Security
	Improve School Infrastructure

Theory of Action:  
**High Quality, Rigorous Instruction is the  
Foundation of a Holistic Education**

Driver of Change: **Improving Curriculum & Instruction**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Align CPS curriculum with Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards
2. Bring together the most experienced educators from all subjects and grade levels to support the development of a pre-K to 12 curriculum for all schools
3. Provide professional development to teachers

Driver of Change: **Ramping Up Instruction**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Expand civic learning through Ready to ENGAGE
2. Change graduation requirements to allow a deeper exploration of the arts
3. Beginning with the Class of 2020, require one semester of computer science to graduate
4. Increase access and participation in world and native language programs

Driver of Change: **Strengthening Special Education**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Strengthen the standards, oversight and professional training related to special education referral, evaluation and eligibility
2. Intensify training and guidance for special education teams and staff
3. Improve professional development for special education teachers

Driver of Change: **Laying a Stronger Foundation in  
Pre-Kindergarten**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Increase the availability of full-day pre-kindergarten
2. Focus on quality instruction and comprehensive services
3. Decreasing barriers for families
4. Community awareness of pre-kindergarten

Theory of Action:  
**High Quality, Rigorous Instruction is the  
Foundation of a Holistic Education**

Driver of Change: **Improving High Schools**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Simplify high school application and enrollment process
2. Strengthen quality instruction with a strong core curriculum, effective instruction and classroom assessments
3. Utilize university and corporate partners for neighborhood high schools by working with principals
4. Expand high quality college and career programs to more high schools
5. Support student advocates to help improve their schools

Driver of Change: **Improving Postsecondary Success**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Train high school counselors in college and career advising
2. Ensure that every student has a postsecondary plan
3. Intensify college and career counseling for “mid-tier” students
4. Collaborate with colleges to improve student retention

Theory of Action:  
**Talented, Empowered Teachers and Leaders  
are a Catalyst for Student Learning**

Driver of Change: **Teacher Preparation & Recruitment**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Recruit educators with credentials in shortage areas
2. Strengthen student teaching
3. Actively recruit CPS student teachers for teaching positions
4. Extend early offers to the best teaching candidates with credentials in shortage areas
5. Provide intensive support for schools with high turnover and teacher applicant shortages

Driver of Change: **Teacher Development & Retention**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Encourage CPS teachers and paraprofessionals to earn new credentials
2. Develop teacher leaders

Driver of Change: **Administrator Preparation & Recruitment**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Partner with the Chicago Public Education Fund to create the Chicago Principal Partnership
2. Recruit the best teacher leaders to become future assistant principals
3. Prepare assistant principals as future leaders
4. Support local school councils in selecting strong principals

Driver of Change: **Administrator Development & Retention**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Improve mentoring for aspiring and early career principals
2. Expand the independent schools Principal Program for Experienced Leaders

Theory of Action:  
**Safe and Supportive Schools Create  
an Environment for Optimal Learning**

Driver of Change: **Students learn best when they feel safe, both physically and emotionally**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Establish school-based leadership teams dedicated to improving school climate
2. Integrate the teaching of social-emotional skills with all subject areas
3. Guide schools to adopt “restorative practices” to improve student discipline

Driver of Change: **Eliminating health-related barriers to learning will optimize student academic success**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Train staff to identify students with chronic conditions and react appropriately to emergency situations
2. Provide students with direct health services, such as vision and hearing diagnostic screenings and STI screenings
3. Provide students and families with opportunities to enroll in health insurance through public benefits
4. Train staff to ensure CPS students feel safe and supported in their school environment (especially students that identify as LGBTQ)
5. Provide students with access to healthy food, including (if relevant) through the Supplemental Assistance for Needy Families program (SNAP)
6. Establish school-based leadership teams dedicated to improving school wellness
7. Integrate the teaching of health into all subject areas
8. Guide schools to include early childhood students in health and wellness programming
9. Train staff to teach students to develop tools to build healthy relationships and self-care through exposure to sexual health education
10. Guide schools to provide students with access to 60 minutes of daily physical activity at school in alignment with the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program model
11. Support schools in implementing Healthy CPS, an integrated approach to policy implementation and best practice adoption to ensure a safe, supportive and healthy learning environment for students

Theory of Action:  
**Safe and Supportive Schools Create  
an Environment for Optimal Learning**

Driver of Change: **Improve Relationships with Authorities  
and School Security**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Intervene with most at-risk students to promote positive behavior
2. Expand services to students at 'options' schools and programs
3. Transform the primary role of school security officers from enforcers to mentors
4. Sustain and expand the Safe Passage program

Driver of Change: **Improve School Infrastructure**

*Key Strategies:*

1. Invest in capital improvements that enhance learning
2. Expand a new model for building maintenance and repair
3. Connect every classroom to high-speed internet
4. Ensure that every elementary school has a quality playlot
5. Enhance opportunities for growth outside of school hours





## Priority Research Questions: Academic Progress

Theory of Action	Drivers of Change	Key Research Questions
<p><b>High Quality, Rigorous Instruction</b> is the Foundation of a Holistic Education</p>	<p>Ramping Up Instruction</p>	<p><i>Increase access and participation in world and native language programs</i>                      What are the impacts of bilingual education on student engagement in school? What effects do we see connected to the Seal of Biliteracy? What are indicators of successful implementation of bilingual curricula?</p>
	<p>Laying a Stronger Foundation in pre-K</p>	<p><i>Focus on quality instruction and comprehensive services</i>                      What does “quality instruction” mean in a pre-k setting? How can we measure / assess what quality instruction is? What are the key ingredients in terms of teacher preparation, professional development, and school leadership that connect to quality instruction in pre-k classrooms?</p>
	<p>Improving High Schools</p>	<p><i>Strengthen quality instruction with a strong core curriculum, effective instruction and classroom assessments</i>                      What do we know about the middle school transition, and how the CPS model impacts students between 5th and 8th grade? While many elementary schools are K-8, there are also academic centers and other programs that mimic a “middle school” experience. Does the K-8 model result in gains during the transition, or does it simply limit loss? Given our current trajectory of growth, it appears we may soon see a leveling off of growth - are there ways to decrease that possibility and set up our middle grades students for high school success?</p> <p><i>Utilize university and corporate partners for neighborhood high schools by working with principals</i>                      Can we identify the factors that make organizations such as GROW Community successful at impacting quality of neighborhood schools by engaging the community? Can we develop a scalable model of community-driven improvement?</p>
	<p>Improving Postsecondary Success</p>	<p><i>Ensure that every student has a postsecondary plan</i>                      Concurrent with the rollout of a new initiative – Learn, Plan, Succeed – we should also be thinking about how to identify and quantify impacts of the initiative, as well as implementation factors that matter</p>

# CPS Research Agenda



<p><b>Talented, Empowered Teachers and Leaders</b> Are a Catalyst for Student Learning</p>	<p>Teacher Preparation and Recruitment</p>	<p><i>Strengthen student teaching</i> What teacher preparation programs, or what qualities of teacher preparation programs, best set teachers up for successful careers in CPS? What do we know about the experiences of student teachers in the district? Are we developing teachers who are capable of closing the achievement gap?</p>
	<p>Teacher Development &amp; Retention</p>	<p><i>Develop teacher leaders</i> <i>Improve mentoring for aspiring and early career principals</i> What types of professional development and training will enable our teachers to provide instruction in such a way that we start to see the achievement gap begin to close? What resources can we provide administrators to empower them to lead their schools in closing the achievement gap?</p>
	<p>Administrator Preparation &amp; Recruitment</p>	<p><i>Integrate the teaching of social-emotional skills with all subject areas</i> CPS has been implementing multiple SEL curricula and interventions in recent years; which ones work? How do we know they work? Which have the highest ROI? Which are the most scalable? How can we determine which SEL programs are serving our students well?</p>
<p><b>Safe and Supportive Schools</b> Create an Environment for Optimal Learning</p>	<p>Students learn best when they feel safe, both physically and emotionally</p>	<p><i>Intervene with most at-risk students to promote positive behavior</i> What early indicators can be identified (profile of student) to understand the likelihood of them dropping out or eventually attending an options school? What interventions can be utilized early to either prevent or better prepare for transition?</p>
	<p>Improve Relations with Authorities and School Security</p>	<p><i>Intervene with most at-risk students to promote positive behavior</i> What early indicators can be identified (profile of student) to understand the likelihood of them dropping out or eventually attending an options school? What interventions can be utilized early to either prevent or better prepare for transition?</p>

## CORE BELIEF: **Equity is a moral imperative**

- How does integration or lack of impact student outcomes?
- What have been successful models of school integration (locally and nationally)?
- What have been unsuccessful models of school integration (locally and nationally)?
- What is CPS doing well in this field?
- How can CPS improve?



## Research Agenda at a Glance: **Financial Stability**

Theory of Action	Drivers of Change
<p><b>Achieving financial stability</b> will ease the uncertainty the recent budget crisis has created and allow us to devote our full attention to what matters most: educating children and investing in their future</p>	Obtain a more equitable system for school funding in the state
	Leverage our Purchasing Power
	Concentrate Financial Expertise



## Research Agenda at a Glance: **Integrity**

Theory of Action	Drivers of Change
<p><b>CPS strives to keep our commitments, achieve results and strengthen relationships</b> through clear, honest communication and respect for the expertise in our diverse communities</p>	Develop parent and community leadership
	Seek input from all our stakeholders on district policies
	Expand parent universities
	Support principals with the engagement of parents and community volunteers
	Strengthen local school councils with recruitment and training
	Increase community access to the Board of Education