

Listen. Plan. Empower.

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS HIGH SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION



## IN 2005, THE AMC RIVER EAST THEATER

ON E. ILLINOIS STREET INSTALLED AUTOMATED TICKET KIOSKS. CUSTOMERS PUSH THE BUTTON FOR THE FILM THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE AND THEN PAY WITH CASH OR A CREDIT CARD.

The kiosks are good for movie-goers, who no longer have to wait in a ticket line. They're good for the theater, which will save money in the long run. And they're good for the engineers, software designers, and business people who can sell this technology all over the world. ***The only person it's bad for is the man or woman who used to take your \$9 and give you a movie ticket.***



The AMC Theater ticket kiosk is an apt metaphor for the 21st Century US economy. Those who design the ticket kiosks—or perform any other skill that can't be automated or outsourced to Bangalore—will live better than ever. And the others?

***Therein lies the challenge for the Chicago Public Schools:*** It's no longer good enough to produce only ticket sellers.

“The Chicagoland area offers many entry level jobs for our young people. Unfortunately, too many of our students leave our high schools inadequately prepared for the job opportunities that do exist.”

Joseph A. Williams, Chairman of Target Group, Inc.

## CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS HIGH SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

**WHAT:** A multi-year (10+) effort to transform CPS high schools to ensure that they prepare students for success in college and the workforce.

**WHY:** Because the system is not preparing most kids for life after graduation.

- Roughly one half of CPS students graduate from high school and only one half of those attend college.
- Ninety percent of CPS students attending City Colleges need remedial math.
- The majority of students with a B average score less than 20 on the ACT (out of 36)—below the national average and not good enough to get into a third-tier college.

**HOW:** The Chicago Public Schools will transform high schools using six basic levers of change:

- Increase what's expected of students by everyone: principals, teachers, parents and students themselves.
- Hire, develop, and support great principals.
- Hire, develop, and support great teachers.
- Empower schools as the center of change—not the Central Office, but motivated principals and teachers.
- Ensure that every student finds a great fit in a great school.
- Prepare students to succeed in 9th grade, the crucial transition year during which almost half of the system's dropouts are lost.

“One dropout is too many—and 10,000 a year is an economic and social crisis that will cost us billions of dollars each year. Let’s be honest: All the poverty programs in the world will never match the impact of a quality education.” —Chicago Mayor, Richard M. Daley

**INCREASE WHAT’S EXPECTED OF STUDENTS BY EVERYONE: PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS THEMSELVES**

**WHAT:** Demand rigor and measure what matters.

**WHY:** Because most students aren’t doing well, and even “doing well” turns out to be not good enough. As one CPS parent wondered, “How can my daughter get all A’s and B’s and not know anything? What’s going to happen when she gets to college?” The system is rife with low expectations.

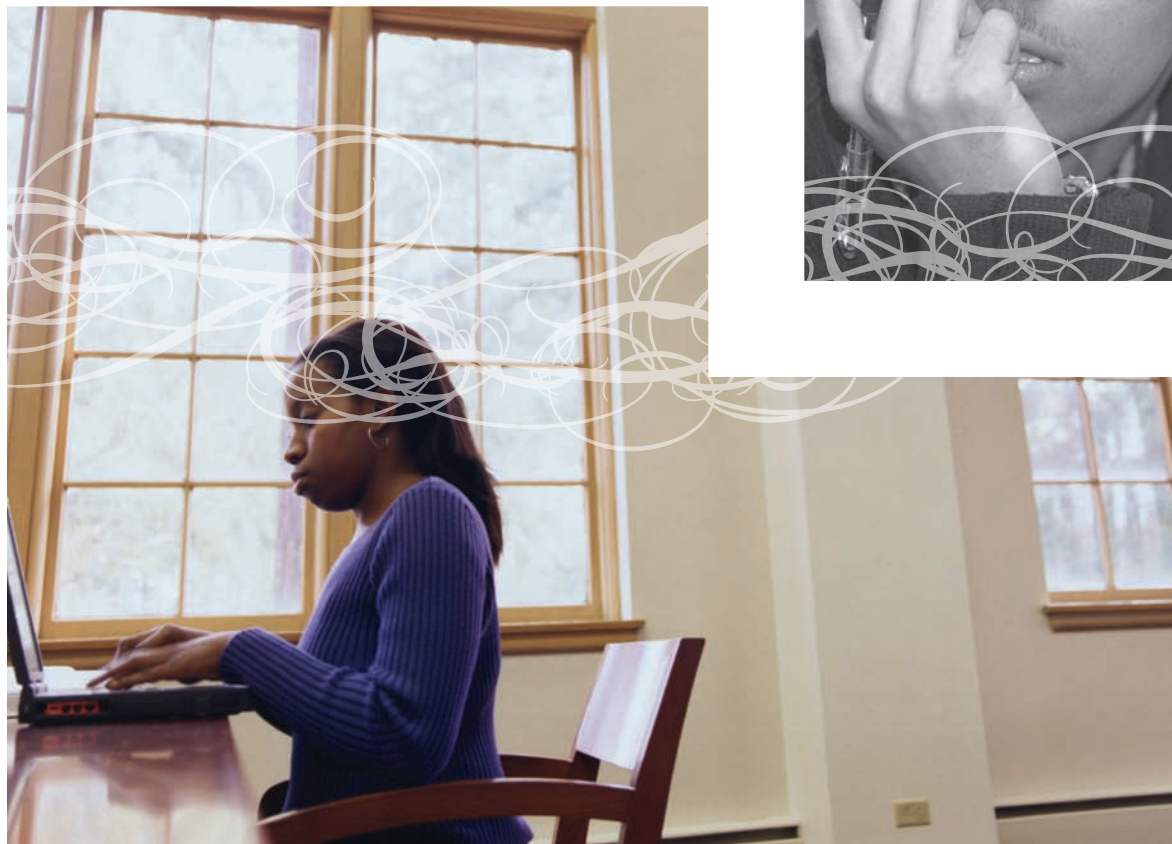
**HOW:** Roll out a School Scorecard that provides real information to families—more than just test scores. For example: *What percentage of graduates are going on to college? How many students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes and how do they do on the AP exams? What proportions of students are participating in extracurricular activities?*

*Is the school clean?* Because families care about that, too.

*How does the school rank on each of these measures relative to other schools in the system? And what kind of improvement is it making year over year?*

**A GOOD FIRST STEP:** CPS is one of the first urban districts with access to college placement data.

**ANOTHER FIRST STEP:** High School Scorecards launched in Fall 2005. Comprehensive data now made available to parents and students for each CPS High School accepting freshmen. Scorecards can be found at: <http://www.cps.k12.il.us/schools/scorecard/>



**HIRE, DEVELOP, AND SUPPORT GREAT PRINCIPALS**

**WHAT:** Ensure we have a great leader in every school.

**WHY:** Great schools require great leaders. To run an urban high school, you need to be an outstanding educator—and also a visionary, a financial manager, personnel manager, social worker, and community outreach specialist. With increasing retirements and the changing demands of the job, CPS will have to develop a new wave of leaders, from inside and outside.

**HOW:** Pending retirements will create the necessity and opportunity for LSCs to hire a new generation of school leaders. We need to identify and develop our existing talent and offer them experiences to grow as leaders. At the same time, we’re casting a broader net to identify new talent—including those who will bring unique experience and fresh perspective to the system.

Finding, hiring, developing, and supporting the right principals—and then trusting them to run their schools—will reinforce the core transformation principle that the school is the center of change.

**IT’S ALREADY STARTED:**

- *In 2004, CPS created the Office of Principal Development to attract and support potential school leaders.*
- *Area Instructional Officers now spend 30 percent of their time identifying and developing principal candidates.*

“Principal leadership that understands the total developmental needs of the child will be integral in driving the success of the High School Transformation Plan”

—Dr. Donald R. Pittman,  
Chief Officer of High School Programs

“Strong principal instructional leadership inspires greatness in teachers, allowing children to achieve their highest potential.”

—Nancy Laho, Chief Officer,  
CPS Office of Principal Preparation and Development



## EMPOWER SCHOOLS AS THE CENTER OF CHANGE

**WHAT:** Provide more autonomy for schools demonstrating achievement and support for schools that are not.

**WHY:** A “one-size-fits-all” approach will not work in a district with over 100 high schools. Yet the system should set consistent expectations for school and student performance and provide needed supports.

**HOW:** Principals must be empowered to work creatively with their faculty to respond to the unique needs of their students and community. The scorecard will define success; principals and teachers will figure out how to get there.

**The change is already underway.** The AMPS program (Autonomous Management and Performance Schools) gives high-performing schools freedom and flexibility in exchange for accountability. The system has enough to do without messing with success. Ten high schools have earned this autonomy so far.

## HIRE, DEVELOP, AND SUPPORT GREAT TEACHERS

**WHAT:** Ensure we have great teachers in every classroom and give them the structure, tools and support that they need to build a successful long-term career at CPS.

**WHY:** Without great teachers in the classroom—with the support they need to work effectively with all students—then everything else is a waste of time and money.

**HOW:** Leave no teacher behind: Develop two or three comprehensive English, math and science instructional systems for schools to choose from. These systems will provide deep support to teachers through curriculum plans, classroom materials, tests, professional development and high-quality, personalized coaching.

**It's already underway:** A team of CPS teachers and administrators has selected comprehensive English, math and science instructional supports to be available at 15 high schools in the fall of 2006. Schools will have the opportunity to opt into this program if it's right for them.

“We’re not just taking something and shoving it at teachers and telling them, ‘Do this.’ We’re asking teachers to decide which option will work best for their students.”

—Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins, CPS Chief Education Officer

“The High School Transformation initiative recognizes the importance of supporting educators in the classroom”

—ETC Coordinator, Prosser Vocational High School

“The AMPS program is incredibly helpful for giving principals the freedom and flexibility to focus on the core issues in their schools.”

—CPS Principal

## ENSURE THAT EVERY STUDENT FINDS A GREAT FIT IN A GREAT SCHOOL

**WHAT:** Give students and their families better information about schools (such as the new school scorecard) and enable them to pick the right high school for their needs from a diverse and growing portfolio of high quality high schools.

**WHY:** It is not good enough to have islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity. Some high schools are terrific; most struggle to succeed. Over half of CPS students do not attend their neighborhood school, but struggling students and those who live near low-performing schools have the least choice and the most limited access to high-performing schools.

**HOW:** Make more high quality high school options and opportunities available and accessible to all 8th grade students via Renaissance 2010

Ensure the range of high school options meets the diverse needs of CPS students and includes alternative options for students who need flexibility, have fallen behind or have dropped out.

Simplify and clarify the application process—described by parents and students as disempowering and “too complicated.”—to make it easier for all students and families to play an active role in high school selection.

**Renaissance 2010 is underway:** This initiative will open 100 new public schools and close those that aren’t working. Arne Duncan says, “We plan to open as many as 30 more schools over the next five years. These schools will cover the whole range of choices—selective enrollment, military academies, international baccalaureate, career academies, vocational education, math and science, world languages, and performing arts—in each area of the city.

“Neighborhood schools are the backups to the backups.”

—CPS Parent

## PREPARE AND SUPPORT STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN 9TH GRADE

**WHAT:** Improve the preparation of students entering high school and give them more support during the crucial first year.

**WHY:** Because it is the crucial ninth grade year during which almost half the system’s dropouts are lost. Students on track to graduate in their freshman year are far more likely to graduate than their off-track peers. (81% of on-track freshman graduate vs. 22% of their off-track peers.)

Too many 9th grade students are neither academically nor socially prepared to do high school work. Almost half of all freshmen have a GPA of 2.0 or below.

**HOW:** Support elementary schools to ensure a focus on algebra, writing, and independent learning skills in 6th to 8th grades.

Provide high-quality summer transition programs that improve students’ academic and social readiness for high school.

Strengthen the system of academic and social supports for ninth grade students to help them stay on-track and engaged.

Encourage all freshmen to participate in a meaningful activity—connecting them to both the school and an adult.

“Fifty percent of my students come in unprepared academically and socially.” —CPS Teacher



“This Transformation plan will give students the opportunity to develop the academic and technical skills that will prepare them for post-secondary education and satisfying and productive careers.”

—Ted Dallas, Vice President, Chicago Teachers Union

## CONCLUSION

We've done a lot of listening—to students, parents, teachers, and principals.

Along the way, we heard Anterio Jackson's story. Anterio is a CPS high school student. Both of his parents had drug problems. When they left Chicago, Anterio stayed behind, relying on the help of friends, community, teachers, coaches—and his own inner strength. When someone asked Anterio how he felt about an upcoming ACT test, he laughed and replied, "I've overcome so much in my life, you think I'm going to let a test stop me now?"

And so it is with the High School Transformation. We, too, have some big "tests" ahead. It's simply not acceptable to have students leaving CPS—whether they've graduated or not—without the skills they need to succeed in life. This Transformation Plan is a big step toward passing those tests. This is a long-range plan for systemic change, not a silver bullet that will solve every challenge overnight.

It is a thoughtful plan with ambitious goals for what every Chicago Public School has the potential to be. And it begins by empowering the people who matter most:

The students and parents who will choose a learning environment that will work for them;

The teachers who will have the materials and tools they need to reach every student;

And the principals who will lead all of this—every day in every school.

Nothing will come easily, but strong institutions, like our inspiring students, do not let tests stand in the way.



"Eighty-five percent of our students are from low-income households. Education is their best chance to earn a decent living and compete in the world, so our goal is to graduate every kid prepared for success in college, work and life."

—Arne Duncan,  
CEO of Chicago Public Schools

"As a union, we have fought long and hard to improve the learning environment and working conditions of Chicago's public schools. We embrace the High School Transformation plan as a chance to put into place programs that work for our children

—Marilyn Stewart, President,  
Chicago Teachers Union





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