



Board of Education CITY OF CHICAGO

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Dear CPS Community:

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe. I am writing to you today to provide an update on some of the work CPS has done and is doing to address the ideas and feedback you shared at our Workforce Development and Equity Committee meeting in December. With the goal of creating a diverse workforce, CPS has committed in its Five-Year Vision to hiring more African American and Latinx teachers. Thank you again for taking the time to help us reimagine a diverse teacher pipeline in support of this goal.

As you may recall, the CPS Talent Office collected and analyzed the feedback that was shared in our meeting. You can find the original comments on the Board of Education's website by clicking [here](#), and a summary of the analysis is provided below for your reference. The Talent Office also committed to using the key themes and questions from your comments to drive additional stakeholder engagement and use that feedback to develop program and policy proposals. You can also find below some of the work that Talent, in collaboration with many other CPS departments, has started since our meeting last December, in addition to work that has accelerated and work that is planned for the future. Your input and feedback has informed much of this work and is aligned to the prevalent themes that emerged from our conversation, such as: developing programs, like Career & Technical Education (CTE) pathways, to help students overcome barriers to becoming a teacher and cultivate interest in the teaching profession; supporting students to and through the teacher pipeline and highlighting the strong linkages between the pipeline and teacher retention; and making sure students' perspectives are incorporated and inform the development of new programs and policies.

What we heard at the meeting in December:

Significant financial, social and cultural barriers to pursuing higher education:

- Almost every group cited significant financial barriers (cost of college, fear of assuming debt, lack of access to adequate scholarships/financial aid) faced throughout the teacher pipeline that cause attrition
- In addition to financial barriers, many groups spoke to the institutional barriers (navigating higher education systems to become teachers) that exist and deter students from teaching
- More than half of the discussion groups said students lack access to sufficient pathways and opportunities to cultivate their interest in teaching
- Several groups pointed to the need for better access to information on teaching via counselors and other in-school sources. One group suggested developing a toolkit for students interested in pursuing a teaching career

Teacher pipeline and retention issues are deeply connected:

- Many groups noted that connections with current teachers can be a significant influencer, both positive and negative
- A handful of groups mentioned specifically concerns with work/life balance as a teacher
- Lack of support for educator mental health was also mentioned by some groups
- One group cited that having no Black teachers at a school serves as a negative influencer for students
- One group noted the need for a comprehensive network of support that includes peers, teacher cohorts and community based organizations (CBOs)

We need to listen to students about their decision to pursue a career as a teacher (or not):

- More than half of the discussion groups said students lack access to sufficient pathways and opportunities to cultivate their interest in teaching
- Several groups noted how student perceptions of teacher struggles, frustrations and lack of appreciation negatively impact their desire to become teachers
- The prospect of mirroring the career trajectory of former CPS teachers that are now leaders in the district such as Dr. Jackson and LaTanya McDade was noted as a positive influence

How your ideas and feedback have impacted the district's work:

New Work Started since December:

- Joined a state level working group to develop proposed legislation to increase the Minority Teacher of Illinois Scholarship, helping address financial barriers
- Partnered with Profound Gentlemen, an organization devoted to supporting and developing male educators of color, to improve supports for current educators
- Began developing teacher pathway toolkits so that High School counselors and post-secondary coaches can better help students and families map out a post-secondary pathway to a teaching career.
- Worked with Chicago State University to explore ways to deepen our pipeline partnership, including coordinated student recruitment, strategic student teaching partnerships, and employment opportunities for current students in their teaching program.
- Conducted focus group with high school students in Early Childhood Education and Teaching CTE programs to learn from and increase student voice and participation in our teaching pathways work

Work That Has Been Accelerated:

- Participation in state level advocacy work (with Advance Illinois) to improve teaching pathways and improve access for students of color into the profession
- Creating intentional 2 year to 4 year college pathway opportunities, improving the coordination between the City Colleges system and Illinois public universities

- Deepened our involvement in CPS's College Compact initiative, focused on addressing the cultural and social barriers that CPS alumni confront in higher education

Next Steps:

- Establishing a district-wide network of future teachers clubs and apprenticeship programs
- Partnering with the Chicago Teachers Union to identify and elevate the school-based best practices for recruiting, supporting, and retaining a diverse teacher workforce
- Expanding partnerships with community based organizations and nonprofits to increase the availability of academic enrichment, work-based learning, and mentoring opportunities for students interested in a teaching career.
- Continued expansion of CTE teaching programs at CPS high schools, expanding from the current 6 schools to an additional 5 schools over the next 2 years.

This is a sample of the work that your ideas and feedback in December helped to shape. This work has not stopped as a result of COVID-19, and there are additional initiatives currently in development. The Talent Office, and other CPS departments, will continue to engage stakeholders and catalyze inclusive partnerships to develop the programs, policies, and supports needed to build an equitable workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities.

As a Board Member, I appreciate the CPS team's work and opportunities to dialogue with, and learn from, all of you as critical catalysts for this work. I look forward to continuing to engage CPS students, parents and caregivers, teachers, staff, and administrators, as well as, union, higher education, nonprofit, philanthropic, and community partners. I am inspired by your collective wisdom and committed to collaborative efforts to reimagine and develop a diverse teacher pipeline that supports the district's commitment to hire more Black and Latinx teachers and retain and empower talented educators.

The Workforce Development and Equity Committee will send out updates on new initiatives and ways to stay engaged as they develop. In the meantime, to connect and share ideas related to this work, please email BOEWDEC@cps.edu. I also invite you to sign up for my Board of Education Office Hours, to continue the conversation: <https://www.cpsboe.org/meetings/office-hours>

Thank you for your continued commitment to CPS and your partnership in this work!

Sincerely,



Elizabeth S. Todd-Breland
Workforce Development and Equity Committee Chair
Chicago Board of Education