STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD HIGH SCHOOLS FOR A STRONGER CHICAGO
Generation All envisions a city in which:

• Chicagoans recognize that educating all of our children is a shared responsibility necessary for all students to reach their potential so that our city can thrive.

• Neighborhoods are anchored by top-quality public high schools that have the active support of the wider community.

• All public high school students graduate and are prepared to become engaged, educated and capable adults—contributing to the vitality of their families and communities, our city and the world.

Since the fall of 2014, Generation All has worked with a diverse steering committee to determine what's needed to revitalize our city's high schools.

We hope that this action plan for education equity will foster more conversation and action, helping to expand the growing community of Chicagoans who will support its implementation.

Our goal is ambitious—but achievable—if we tap into the ingenuity, energy and hardworking spirit that make Chicago great. Visit our website to find out what you can do.

Generation All was founded as a partnership of The Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union, with generous support from the Ford Foundation.

Learn more about Generation All at generationallchicago.org or on Facebook and Twitter.

A Note of Thanks

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations who helped to develop the bold and powerful vision behind this plan to give all public high school students in Chicago access to a quality education. The Generation All team is especially grateful for the leadership and commitment of the founding partner organizations: The Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union and the Ford Foundation.

Thanks to the members of the Generation All steering committee for the many evenings you spent learning, discussing, exploring and planning with us. We appreciate your consistent participation, trust in the process, candid conversations and most of all, the knowledge and experience you brought to this effort.

Thank you to the advisory council members for sharing your tremendous expertise with our staff, the steering committee and the public through the Generation All speaker series. You were invaluable partners in helping to put ideas in context and provide a research base on which to build our recommendations.

Thank you to Peggy Mueller, former senior program officer at the Trust, for imagining the possibility of Generation All and beginning this work. We are grateful for the mentoring and guidance you gave us throughout this journey.

Finally, a special note of appreciation to the Ford Foundation for its generous funding, and to Fred Frelow, senior program officer, for your unwavering support, guidance and belief in this work.

The Generation All Team

Abbey D. McLaren  Associate Program Officer
Misuzu Schexnider  Associate Program Officer
Beatriz Ponce de León  Executive Director
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Steering Committee .................................................. 2  
Guiding Principles ................................................................................. 3  
Executive Summary ............................................................................... 4  
What Is at Stake?  
   *Our City* ......................................................................................... 7  
Why Neighborhood Public High Schools?  
   *They Serve All Students* ................................................................. 8  
   *Neighborhood Public High Schools: Fast Facts* ......................... 10  
What Is the Problem?  
   *Outdated Thinking and Policies That Backfire* ......................... 14  
What Can We Do About It?  
   *An Action Plan That Puts Neighborhood Public High Schools Front and Center* .................................................. 18  
   *Solution 1: Practice* ................................................................. 20  
   *Solution 2: Policy* ................................................................. 32  
   *Solution 3: Public Engagement* .................................................... 36  
An Invitation ..................................................................................... 42  
Appendices ....................................................................................... 43  
   *Appendix A: Examples of Disparities in Two Very Different High Schools* ......................... 43  
   *Appendix B: The Generation All Planning Process* ..................... 44  
   *Appendix C: Chicago Public Neighborhood High Schools 2015-16* ......................... 46  
Notes ................................................................................................. 47
MESSAGE FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Fellow Chicagoans,

Generation All is a citywide initiative with a bold yet simple vision: to unite us all in revitalizing our neighborhood public high schools.

Neighborhood public high schools are part of Chicago’s education ecosystem and play a critical role in our city. They educate almost half of Chicago’s public high school students and are the only schools open to all students living within their attendance areas. They cannot be ignored.

For Chicago to raise its standing as a cultural, social and economic force, all of our city’s students must have access to a top-quality education. We must ensure that more young people are prepared for responsible adulthood, contributing to their communities, the economy and civic life. We must design and provide a high school education that fosters their personal and academic development, both in and out of the classroom. Strong neighborhood public high schools can be like powerful charging stations for young people, grounding them in their communities, connecting them to the wider world and preparing them for formal and informal learning after high school and ultimately for meaningful careers.

Efforts to improve high schools are underway across the nation. In New York and Newark, educators, civic leaders and parents are calling for comprehensive community schools. In fall 2015, a $50 million private investment launched XQ: The Super School Project to challenge communities to design and create models for the new American high school, one responsive to the needs of today’s youth and the global economy. The White House held the Summit on Next Generation High Schools in November 2015, the first-ever White House convening focused on strengthening U.S. high schools. Each of these initiatives is based on the idea that to seize the opportunities of the 21st century, our country must close achievement gaps and educate all of our students well.

Since the fall of 2014 we have consulted researchers, students, parents, community residents, educators and policymakers to assess what’s working well in education across the country and in Chicago’s high school system in particular. We have identified the most pressing problems and worked collaboratively to devise practical, innovative solutions. This document captures our solutions in an action plan for updating our system of neighborhood public high schools for the benefit of students, their communities and our city as a whole.

We invite you to join us in this effort to put neighborhood public high schools front and center, building a better Chicago—a Chicago that flourishes economically, culturally and socially—when it ensures that all high school students, whatever their ZIP code, have guaranteed access to a high-quality public education.

Best,

The Generation All Steering Committee
### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Generation All initiative is informed by principles that are fundamental to a system of highly effective neighborhood public high schools. These principles are based on research in education and adolescent development and supported by the experience of experts in the field. They underlie the recommendations in this report and will continue to guide our work moving forward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Community vitality and school success go hand in hand.</strong> High-quality neighborhood public high schools are essential to a vibrant city and generate more productive and enriching communities. Conversely, students’ families and neighborhood residents and organizations are essential partners in building strong, healthy school communities. All of Chicago will benefit when we can guarantee that every student has access to an excellent neighborhood public high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Equitable, adequate and sustained investment is essential to the success of our neighborhood public high schools.</strong> Schools are required to serve students regardless of the challenges that come from inconsistent funding and deep budget cuts. As in any organization or business, predictable sufficient funding is necessary for effective planning and programming. And policymakers benefit from actively seeking the perspectives of students, educators and others when making decisions about resource allocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Young people prosper when they feel they are part of a safe and supportive community.</strong> Students reach their potential when they experience shared goals and expectations, and full support from their families, communities and schools. When they feel physically and emotionally safe and intellectually challenged and supported, students are free to be fully engaged learners, thinkers and creators. The holistic development of youth is at the heart of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Students benefit from learning environments that welcome everyone.</strong> Students in every ZIP code should enjoy the wealth of cultural and socioeconomic diversity in Chicago. Environments that are more diverse can lead to increased empathy and less prejudice, and can expand informal networks that build social capital. Young people enjoy interacting with people from contexts different from their own. If that cannot happen inside the school building, then students should have robust opportunities, through external partnerships, to interact with students from their own and other neighborhoods and backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Learning takes place anytime, anywhere.</strong> Learning happens both inside and outside classrooms when students’ knowledge, understanding and skills are challenged by new experiences. Young people especially need opportunities to connect their learning with the larger world and to see themselves in that world. Students need deep and broad learning to enable them to apply knowledge learned in one context to another, giving them lasting skills for life and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Educational improvement efforts must be grounded in research and practice.</strong> We know what quality education looks like and how to support teaching and learning that benefit all students. Much is also known about adolescent learners and how to support their academic, intrapersonal and interpersonal development in the 21st century. The shifts we undertake in this effort must be based on this knowledge as well as on what is known about how to organize and support highly effective institutions across an entire system of schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our city’s future prosperity depends on the quality of the education our young people receive today. In an information economy, young adults need deep understanding in the subjects they study as well as the ability to think analytically, solve problems creatively, communicate clearly and lead collaboratively. When an outdated and inequitable education system leaves students unprepared to participate in a complex and constantly changing world, we all pay the price. And we will all reap the benefits of a system that prepares all children well.

Chicago public high schools have made great strides, with the five-year graduation rate rising from 57 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2015. But the percentage of students considered “college ready,” based on their ACT scores, is only 28 percent. According to a 2013 study, 75 percent of CPS high school students aspire to earn at least a four-year college degree, but a 2014 study predicted that only 17 percent of CPS ninth-graders would earn a bachelor’s degree within six years of high school graduation. While this disparity cannot be attributed solely to the quality of public education, public high schools have a role to play in the solution.

The public long has demanded higher-quality high schools, and since 2005, CPS has responded by dramatically increasing the number of high school options. Many high schools now require certain grades and test scores or at least an application for admission. This strategy has inadvertently created a tiered system of public high schools that sorts students by their prior achievement and socioeconomic backgrounds.

While some students have benefitted, many others have not. Expanding school options has diverted resources from neighborhood high schools, which serve just under half the city’s public high school students and a majority of low-income students of color, putting them on an unequal playing field.

The choice system hurts families at every economic level. It has created a culture of uncertainty and competition as families struggle to find the best schools for their children. Students who can’t land a spot at a selective enrollment school often feel like failures. Some turn to charters as a solution, but those spots are not guaranteed. If they can afford it, many families flee to the suburbs, where admission to a good neighborhood high school is a certainty. This further reduces the number of middle-class families in Chicago.

We do not have to dismantle Chicago’s high school system, but we must reinvest in neighborhood high schools so that they are among the high-quality choices. It’s time for a sustained, coordinated citywide effort to give all of our young people a fair chance to reach their potential and to contribute their skills and talents to the life of our city.

Generation All’s Action Plan for Putting Neighborhood Public High Schools Front and Center

A level-headed look at Chicago’s public high schools reveals that there is much work to be done. Rather than proposing quick fixes, Generation All proposes a long-term plan that works to re-establish neighborhood high schools as quality learning centers and anchor institutions in their communities.

The Generation All action plan focuses on three key areas: practice, policy and public engagement. We invite all Chicagoans, from parents and students to community members, business leaders, educators and policy makers, to play a role in shaping a system of high-quality, highly desirable neighborhood public high schools across the city.
“People sometimes assume incorrectly that equity in education means all students are the same or will achieve the same outcomes. In fact, equity in education indicates all students have access to a high-quality education, regardless of where they live, who their parents are or what school they attend. In this sense, equity in schooling ensures that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions.”

– Pasi Sahlberg, PhD, Visiting Professor of Practice in Education, Harvard University

**SOLUTION 1: PRACTICE**

Make neighborhood high schools safe, supportive, exciting places of learning that prepare students for the future.

1a. **Strengthen teaching and learning.** To prepare students for the new and higher-level skills demanded by today’s complex world, high schools must engage them in instruction that is challenging, relevant and connected to their lives. Young people need to master deep knowledge in specific subjects and build their abilities to express ideas, work collaboratively, think critically and solve problems. This kind of instruction enables students to take ownership of their learning both in and out of the classroom.

1b. **Invest in teachers and principals.** Educators need new levels of support for organizing instruction that promotes students’ participation in creative problem-solving, engaging thinking and effective communication—and their ability to apply these skills in multiple settings. Time for educators to learn and work together will enable them to deepen their knowledge and skills in the subjects they are teaching and make learning both challenging and student-centered.

1c. **Make neighborhood high schools centers of their community.** Through the “community schools” approach, schools build partnerships with universities, social service agencies and other organizations to offer supports and opportunities for students and families that the school can’t provide on its own. These might include tutoring, afterschool clubs or mentoring for students, and GED classes or parenting workshops for adults.

1d. **Offer comprehensive college and career advising in all neighborhood high schools.** All students benefit from post-secondary-education advising. It helps them explore their options for college, careers and work; navigate the admissions process and secure scholarships and financial aid; and develop the mindsets to complete their education or enter the workforce.

1e. **Make schools safe and supportive for students and adults.** Young people learn more when they feel safe in school—physically, emotionally and academically. Teachers need to feel supported, too, through trusting, productive relationships with colleagues, administrators and students. Restorative practices and policies are an effective approach to creating positive school climates, developing the social and emotional skills adults and youth need, both in and out of school. Supports are needed to expand these and other efforts to develop a positive school culture.
SOLUTION 2: POLICY

Adopt policies that strengthen neighborhood public high schools and expand learning opportunities for their students.

2a. **Put a hold on the closing and opening of public high schools** until there is an inclusive, citywide planning process that considers neighborhood needs. For many years, decisions about where to open and close schools in Chicago have been made behind closed doors without a clear and publicly expressed rationale or a long-term, citywide plan.

2b. **Make school evaluation less punitive and more focused on problem-solving and growth.** School staff are under pressure to raise standardized test scores quickly, which can result in a narrow focus on test preparation. A better accountability system would focus on continuous improvement rather than quick results.

2c. **Adopt a more equitable funding formula for Chicago's public schools.** Chicago lags behind other cities in accounting for differences in student needs, such as those caused by homelessness, immigration or extreme poverty. A funding policy that enables neighborhood high schools to better serve their students and raise academic achievement is a critical first step to attracting families back to their neighborhood schools.

SOLUTION 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Generate public and political support for neighborhood high schools.

3a. **Create opportunities to learn about neighborhood public high schools directly from staff, students and families.** Encouraging people in the school community to share what they are working on, where they need help and how they envision their school's future is a meaningful way to engage community members.

3b. **Raise the profile of neighborhood public schools.** Citywide and local communications campaigns can help draw positive attention to neighborhood high schools and the good things happening in them.

3c. **Design innovative and practical ways for community groups, businesses and residents to support neighborhood high schools.** These systems might include a “friends of” group for every school, matching each school with a corporate sponsor, a website that connects schools with volunteers or funding a coordinator for each school to recruit partners. Every neighborhood high school needs a wealth of partnerships to support its students.

There are no easy solutions for making Chicago's high school system work for everyone. This action plan is a start. We envision this plan not as a short-term initiative but as the beginning of a movement that must be sustained and developed in the years to come.

Whether you are a high school student, a parent of a school-aged child, a young adult interested in bettering your community, an elected official, a city employee, an educator, a foundation program officer, a community organizer, a CEO, a retiree or a nonprofit director, you have a role to play. We invite you to join us. Visit the Generation All website to find out how you can get involved.
Our city’s future prosperity depends on the quality of the education our young people receive today. In a complex, information-based economy, young adults need to think analytically, solve problems creatively, communicate clearly and lead collaboratively. When an outdated, inequitable education system leaves students unprepared for the demands of today’s workforce, we all pay the price. And we will all reap the benefits of a system that prepares all children well.

Chicago public high schools have made great strides, with the five-year graduation rate rising from 57 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2015. But the percent of students considered “college ready,” based on their ACT scores, is only 28 percent. According to a 2013 study, 75 percent of CPS high school students aspire to earn at least a four-year college degree, but a 2014 study predicted that only 17 percent of CPS ninth-graders would earn a bachelor’s degree within six years of high school graduation. This gap between students’ aspirations and their actual academic achievement reminds us that we are not fulfilling our duty to give all students a fair shot at a bright future.

The racial and ethnic disparities among the city’s young adults are especially striking. For example, the percentage of 20- to 24-year-old men who were neither employed nor in school in 2014 was almost three times higher for Latinos than for non-Latino whites, and more than six times higher for blacks. While this cannot be attributed solely to the quality of public education, public high schools have a role to play in the solution.

The current climate of unbridled school competition has diverted resources away from neighborhood high schools, which serve a majority of low-income students of color, putting them on an unequal playing field and exacerbating our city’s social inequality. The result is a system of high schools deeply segregated by race, class and opportunity that perpetuates the glaring disparities among Chicago’s young people. (See Appendix A: Examples of Disparities in Two Very Different High Schools.)

Education is not limited to the classroom, and providing great learning experiences and support for high school students makes an enormous difference to students, especially those young people living in poverty. Many school and youth programs have dramatically influenced the trajectory of young people’s lives. But whether students have access to them in their schools or neighborhoods is left to chance, because there is no citywide system to ensure that they do.

Strong neighborhood public high schools can disrupt disparities by providing high-quality learning opportunities for students both in and out of the classroom, grounding them in their communities and connecting them to the wider world. Strong neighborhood high schools also increase neighborhood cohesion, helping to build stable, safe and vibrant communities.

It’s time for a sustained, coordinated citywide effort to give all of our young people the chance to reach their potential and to contribute their skills and talents to the life of our city.

WHAT IS EDUCATION EQUITY?

Equity in education means that every student has a fair chance to get a high-quality public education. It is based on fair and just access to high-quality learning opportunities and resources for all students, enabling them to complete high school prepared for college or careers and lifelong learning.

Equity also means that a basic standard of education is offered to all students, regardless of circumstances, it means leveling the playing field so that students’ personal and social circumstances—such as poverty, race, language or learning challenges—do not prevent them from reaching their potential.

Education equity is achieved when all students and schools have access to what they need to succeed. This will vary by school and by student or groups of students.
WHY NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS?
THEY SERVE ALL STUDENTS.

Generation All defines Chicago neighborhood public high schools as schools that guarantee enrollment for students living within the school’s attendance boundaries. Students do not have to fill out a special application, win a lottery or qualify to attend the school.

Traditionally, neighborhood high schools enrolled the vast majority of young people who lived within their enrollment boundaries. They were large, comprehensive schools that served the students nearby. In many cases, these schools were also the center of community activity, engaging neighborhoods through sports, performances or other public events.

Since 2005 the proliferation of new schools and specialty programs has decreased enrollment at many neighborhood high schools and left them with fewer resources and a higher concentration of students facing the greatest challenges, including poverty, homelessness and learning disabilities. Yet many of these schools continue to play vital roles in their individual communities and collectively in our city. And they remain the only schools that guarantee enrollment, providing access regardless of prior achievement or special needs.

See Appendix C for a list of Chicago neighborhood public high schools in the 2015-16 school year.

For the 2015-16 school year, neighborhood public high schools serve 42.5 percent of CPS high school students, more than any other school type.

Neighborhood Public High Schools Serve the Largest Share of CPS High School Students
Source: CPS

Chicago Public Schools 20th Day Enrollment (2015-16)
Total High School Enrollment: 111,167

- Neighborhood Public High Schools: 42.5%
- Charter High Schools: 21.7%
- Other District-Run or Contracted Schools: 35.2%
- Citywide (no attendance boundary): 10.7%
- Magnet: 3.6%
- Options: 9.2%
- Selective Enrollment: 12.3%
Types of Chicago Public High Schools

In the 2015-16 school year, 192 total high schools serve over 111,000 Chicago Public School students.

### Neighborhood
A school that guarantees enrollment to students residing in its attendance boundary, regardless of lottery or test scores. Two neighborhood schools, Curie and Senn, also have magnet programs within the school. One school, Hancock, is turning into a selective enrollment school in 2015-16 starting with the ninth-grade class. Some neighborhood high schools have programs within the school such as Career and Technical Education or International Baccalaureate that require a minimum test score to enter.

### Charter
A school operated by a publicly funded, independently run organization; they have greater flexibility in their operations. Charter schools require students to apply and use a lottery to determine enrollment when applications exceed available seats.

### Option
Commonly referred to as alternative high schools; students attend option schools in order to complete their high school degree when they’ve been unsuccessful at other schools. Some option schools are run by Chicago Public Schools, some by a charter school provider and others are outsourced to for-profit companies.

### Citywide
A school that has no neighborhood boundaries. Citywide schools often require students to score above a certain threshold or use lotteries that prioritize students with higher test scores; some may make a portion of their seats available to students who live nearby. Some citywide schools serve a role similar to that of a neighborhood high school and may face similar struggles.

### Selective Enrollment
A school that only admits students with the highest test scores and middle school grades relative to other students from their tier. (Neighborhood tiers are determined by socioeconomic factors as determined by census tracts.) In school year 2015-16, 13,413 students applied for 3,600 available selective enrollment seats.

### Magnet
A school that specializes in a particular subject area such as fine and performing arts, world languages or math and science. Originally designed to create racially integrated schools, magnet schools use a lottery and selection criteria, such as an audition or minimum test score, to choose their students.

### Special Education
A school with specialized curriculum and programs to serve students with more severe disabilities.

### Contract
A school that is operated by a private entity under contract with CPS to provide a specific type of educational experience. The two contract high schools are Chicago High School for the Arts and Chicago Tech Academy, which use an audition and a lottery, respectively, to admit students.

---

*These types of schools only enroll students who score above a certain threshold or use lotteries when applications exceed available seats.*
Since 2005, the number of schools has increased 39 percent, although total high school student enrollment has only increased by 2 percent. At the same time, the share of high school students who attend neighborhood public high schools has dropped from 69.3 percent to 42.5 percent.

**As New High Schools Opened, the Share of High School Students Attending Neighborhood High Schools Decreased**  
Source: CPS

---

The share of high school students who have disabilities is highest at option high schools. The share of students with disabilities is also high at some neighborhood public high schools.  
Source: CPS

---

**Top 8 high schools with the highest concentrations of students with disabilities**  
Highlighted schools are neighborhood high schools  
Source: CPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Students with IEPs</th>
<th>Share of students with IEPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camelot Safe Garfield High School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Tilden Career Community Academy High School</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>39.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil G Hirsch Metropolitan High School</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Robeson High School</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope College Preparatory High School</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Raby High School</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>29.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy B Jefferson Alternative High School</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick A Douglass Academy High School</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>29.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While 42.5 percent of CPS high school students attend neighborhood schools, only 26 percent of CPS high school students attend the neighborhood school that serves the area in which they live. This is the district’s average neighborhood buy-in rate. However, many schools have much higher buy-in rates.

The buy-in rates at many schools are not following the general downward trend, some for many years. Other schools’ buy-in rates have stayed constant or have begun to show an upward trend in recent years.

Source: CPS

### Schools Deviating from the District Average Neighborhood Buy-In Rate

Source: CPS
The accelerated opening of new Chicago public high schools since 2005 has led to declining enrollment at many neighborhood high schools. Still, these schools, which serve students of all abilities and backgrounds, continue to play an important role in our city and have the potential to provide universal access to a high-quality education.

Almost 50 percent of Chicago public high school students attend neighborhood high schools. Admission to some top-performing Chicago high schools demands a nearly flawless transcript and a stellar score on an exam, while admission to others requires luck in a lottery. Only Chicago’s neighborhood public high schools are open to all students living within their attendance boundaries. The only way to guarantee that every young person has access to a top-quality education is to ensure that every neighborhood high school is able to provide one.

In Chicago—a city of neighborhoods—neighborhood high schools play an essential role as “anchor institutions.” They host athletic and cultural events that draw neighbors together. Some serve as community centers, providing continuing education for adults as well as social services and recreation for young and old. Others house health centers open to students and the community.

When students attend their neighborhood high schools, parents can more easily connect with teachers and contribute as school volunteers and leaders. Parents and their children also build more and better relationships with other parents and children in the community, strengthening social ties and building neighborhood cohesion and trust. And research shows that in communities with social cohesion and a collective willingness to intervene for the common good, there are lower rates of violence.

Strong neighborhood public high schools can also be powerful catalysts for community development, attracting families and businesses and raising the economic prosperity of a neighborhood.

A school system built on expanding choice increases burdens on the least-privileged families and students and does not always guarantee a better education. Although some education leaders contend that creating more choice for students is the solution, choice has made attending a good school a greater burden for poorer families and has not always resulted in their children attending a better school.

Using 2008-09 data from Chicago eighth-graders about to enter high school, a recent study shows that students from lower-income neighborhoods dispersed to dozens of schools in search of better school options, often commuting alone for miles. While the majority ended up at schools that were better than their neighborhood schools, 15 percent of students who chose to leave their neighborhood school went to a school that was objectively worse than the school near home, based on freshman “on track” rates, a measure of the percentage of ninth-graders on-track to complete high school within four years.

In addition the study found that students from neighborhoods with median incomes below $25,000 dispersed to an average of 13 different schools, enduring the longest commutes. Students in more affluent neighborhoods had an average commute of about 1.7 miles, versus those from poorer neighborhoods, who had an average commute of 2.7 miles, with 25 percent traveling more than 4 miles. Ten percent of the low-income students traveled more than 6 miles.

Only 30 percent of students from low-income neighborhoods went to the same schools as their neighbors, compared to 60 percent of students from more affluent neighborhoods. The study also found that students from disadvantaged neighborhoods were 35 percent more likely to be the only person from their neighborhood at a particular school.

Traveling far across the city every day, possibly alone, only adds to these students’ burdens. Distance from home and isolation from neighbors at school may decrease the likelihood of participation in extracurricular activities.
Support is growing for neighborhood public high schools. In a number of communities throughout the city, from Englewood to Brighton Park to Lakeview, families are working to revitalize their neighborhood public high schools. The reasons range from the desire for a greater sense of community to the need for a safe school option nearby. These families are partnering with teachers and principals, community organizers, elected officials and local business leaders to support and strengthen their neighborhood schools and to gain the support of the wider community.

Providing strong neighborhood schools is a matter of fairness. For some students, the neighborhood high school is simply the only option. According to a 2015 study, many low-income families do not apply to charter or selective enrollment schools because of distance, cost or safety concerns. Some cannot afford even the reduced student fare to travel elsewhere in the city via public transportation. Other families feel it is not safe for students to leave the neighborhood for school. Neighborhood high schools are often the only schools open to students with special needs, including those who have learning disabilities and recent immigrants who are learning English; such students are less likely to attend a selective school.

The city’s efforts to improve high schools must include all of our students. We must shift our collective focus from expanding school options to strengthening the high schools that are open to all. Living anywhere in the city of Chicago should guarantee that a student can attend a high-quality high school. The quality of a student’s school should not be determined by ZIP code.

“We think of children in poor neighborhoods as ‘stuck.’ But they’re not stuck in one geographic place. They’re stuck navigating a complicated and far-flung school system.”

- Julia Burdick-Will, PhD, Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins University’s Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and School of Education
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
OUTDATED THINKING AND POLICIES THAT BACKFIRE

Since 2005, Chicago has vigorously increased the number of public high schools as a way to meet the demand for high-quality secondary education, devoting many resources to the effort. Today, CPS offers almost 200 high schools, including selective enrollment, magnet, International Baccalaureate, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), military and charter schools.

The number of city high schools has grown much faster than student enrollment. In 2005, Chicago had 138 high schools and 109,132 students in grades 9 through 12. In 2015, CPS reported that the city had 192 high schools, a 39 percent increase, while student enrollment had increased by a mere 2 percent, to 111,167.¹³

“Until a child’s background does not determine how well they do in our schools, we know we have work to be done.”

– Pedro Noguera, Distinguished Professor of Education, UCLA, and Director, Center for the Study of School Transformation

Expanding school options has inadvertently created a tiered system of public high schools that sorts students by their prior achievement and socioeconomic backgrounds. Some of the new schools base admission on test scores and grades, excluding many students and limiting their choices across the system. Families in extreme poverty are concentrated in neighborhood schools, as demonstrated in a 2015 study that compared one charter school and one neighborhood high school on Chicago’s South Side. While the median income in 2007 was $25,000 for charter high school parents, it was just $5,000 for those whose children attended their neighborhood high school—roughly 70 percent of their parents or guardians were unemployed.¹⁴ Although more research is needed to explore the impact of expanded choice on Chicago’s high schools and their students, the growing evidence is beginning to align with Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research on the need for a focus on equity and quality in order for the most struggling students to make academic gains.¹⁵

Expanding school options has created the impression among families that the neighborhood public high school is a last resort. Even in communities where neighborhood high schools have improved significantly and now offer a quality education, families often reject the schools simply because they are neighborhood high schools and presumed inferior. In some neighborhoods, schools have found ways to build support, improve academics and maintain or increase enrollment, yet they continue to fight long-standing negative perceptions, affecting their ability to attract students.
Expanding school options has created a culture of uncertainty and competition as families struggle to find the best schools for their children. Under the present choice system, students who can’t land a spot at a selective enrollment school often feel like failures. Some turn to charters as a solution, but those spots are not guaranteed. If they can afford it, many families whose children aren’t admitted to their school of choice pay for private schools or uproot themselves and flee to the suburbs, where admission to a good neighborhood public high school is a certainty. This further reduces the number of middle-class families living within the city.

The rapid and largely unplanned opening of new high schools since 2005 also has undermined existing high schools. Since the total number of ninth- to 12th-grade students in CPS has remained relatively flat, opening new selective enrollment and charter high schools has caused declining enrollment at neighborhood public high schools. And public and private funds that could have gone into improving neighborhood schools have often been funneled into new schools, leaving neighborhood schools with fewer resources.

The theory that competition will force neighborhood public high schools to improve is yet to be proven. According to a 2012 OECD study, “it seems that choice schemes do provide enhanced opportunities for some advantaged parents and students who have a strong achievement orientation, but also harm others, often more disadvantaged ... families.”

In Chicago proponents of the choice system point to increases in average ACT scores across the whole CPS high school system to demonstrate that competition stimulates improvement in neighborhood schools. But this analysis does not consider the lack of evidence showing cause and effect, the self-selection involved in choosing charter and other school options, and the unintended consequences of the choice system such as sorting of students by ability across schools.

While average ACT scores rose from 16.8 to 17.3 across the whole CPS district between 1999 and 2015, the difference between averages at the lowest- and highest-scoring schools also widened, reflecting an increasing achievement gap. These data are an indication that competition has not lifted all schools and that it has caused a widening gap among high- and low-achieving students.

### Inequity of Education Outcomes, as Measured by ACT Scores, Has Increased Over Time in CPS

Each dot represents a school’s average ACT score for that year.

![Graph showing ACT scores over time](image-url)
Competition leaves many neighborhood public high schools with a high concentration of students with poverty-related and academic challenges.

Neighborhood public high schools serve a disproportionate number of students who are homeless or are struggling with emotional trauma, learning disabilities and other poverty-related challenges. Particularly in poorer neighborhoods with high violence rates, choice has resulted in steadily shrinking enrollments and low academic achievement, rather than spurring improvement.

Chicago’s selective enrollment high schools admit only extraordinarily high achievers, resulting in a “brain drain” from neighborhood schools. And, despite uneven academic performance, charter schools tend to attract students in part on the assumption that newer schools are better; these students usually come from families with the ability to navigate the charter application process. This leaves the neighborhood schools with a higher percentage of struggling students, many at the bottom in academic performance.

Some advocates of school choice argue that giving students more school options will help alleviate segregation because students can attend school outside their neighborhoods. However, a growing body of research in the United States and other countries shows a link between certain kinds of school choice systems and increased inequality. A study of the choice model of schools in New York suggests that students living in low-income neighborhoods have fewer high-quality schools nearby to choose from. Because proximity to a school matters for most people, many students are unable to attend higher-performing schools.¹⁸

Throughout the world, greater choice in school systems tends to result in increased segregation and social and academic stratification from school to school. In Chicago, the more we track students by ability and wealth through a school choice system that abandons the neighborhood public high school, the more we limit the educational experiences of our most vulnerable youth. This unjust system is detrimental to our city.

Internationally, the highest-performing education systems (in Canada and Finland, for example) are those that combine quality with equity. A relentless focus on supporting high-quality education in every school, bar none, is what these nations have in common. Schools do not compete, and the most effective educational systems are not even ranked. The results are a reduction in school failures and the higher educational attainment and success not only of individual students but also of society as a whole. Ultimately, this focus on education equity and quality contributes to economic growth and social development.¹⁹

Chicago needs to ensure that its system of choice does not widen disparities or exacerbate segregation.

Focusing on strengthening Chicago’s neighborhood public high schools is not about eliminating the choice system; it’s about ensuring that choice policies are wisely crafted to ensure equity. Neighborhood public high schools belong among the high-quality choices and need support to achieve that reality.

### WHAT IF CHICAGO HAD AN EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN WHICH ALL FAMILIES HAD THE CERTAINTY OF A HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD THAT GUARANTEED ENROLLMENT TO THEIR CHILDREN?

—

- An equitable education system in Chicago would make high-quality learning experiences, both in and out of the classroom, available to all students.
- An equitable education system would ensure that schools would have the tools, resources and supports to enable their students to succeed. And ultimately,
- An equitable education system would lay the foundation for a more prosperous and vibrant city.
FOR CHICAGO TO THRIVE, OUR NEIGHBORHOODS MUST BE ANCHORED BY TOP-QUALITY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS.

The Generation All Action Plan focuses on three ways to get there: **Policy, Practice, and Public Engagement.**

---

**POLICY**

Adopt policies that strengthen neighborhood public high schools and expand learning opportunities for students.

---

**PRACTICE**

Make neighborhood high schools safe, supportive, exciting places of learning that prepare students for the future.

---

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Generate public and political support for neighborhood high schools.
WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?  
AN ACTION PLAN THAT PUTS NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS FRONT AND CENTER

A level-headed look at Chicago’s public high schools reveals that although schools are making academic gains, there is much work to be done—work that will take time and substantial resources. Rather than proposing quick fixes, Generation All proposes a long-term plan that works to re-establish neighborhood public high schools as quality learning centers and anchor institutions in their communities.

All of Chicago benefits when our neighborhood high schools are safe, strong and vibrant resources in their communities, preparing students to reach their potential.

The Generation All action plan focuses on three key areas: practice, policy and public engagement. These three areas play an essential role in ensuring that all Chicago students have access to a high-quality public high school in their neighborhood. Generation All invites Chicagoans, from parents and students to community members, business leaders, educators and policy makers, to play a role in shaping a system of high-quality, highly desirable neighborhood public high schools and a brighter future for our city.

**SOLUTION 1: PRACTICE** Make neighborhood public high schools safe, supportive and exciting places of learning that prepare students for the future.

**SOLUTION 2: POLICY** Adopt policies that strengthen neighborhood public high schools and expand learning opportunities for their students.

**SOLUTION 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT** Generate public and political support for neighborhood high schools.
STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD HIGH SCHOOLS ARE SOURCES OF HOLISTIC YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING.

What does it take for a school to power up youth development and learning?

- Research-based school improvement
- Anytime, anywhere learning
- Diversity and integration
- Safe and supportive environments
- Equitable, adequate, sustained resources
- Community and school interdependence
**SOLUTION 1: PRACTICE**

Make neighborhood public high schools safe, supportive and exciting places of learning that prepare students for the future.

The research is clear about what high school students need to become fully contributing members of society and of the contemporary workforce: deep knowledge across a broad array of subject areas, opportunities to interact well with others and experiences that ensure students complete high school prepared for college, careers and lifelong learning.

All high schools should foster adolescents’ unique and growing abilities to think, learn and engage with the world. In addition to rigorous and expansive learning opportunities in school, adolescents need critical support systems and opportunities for learning beyond instruction and outside school.

High-quality high schools should offer:

- A curriculum that supports broad and deep learning, including inquiry-based learning and critical thinking. Deep learning enables students to apply knowledge learned in one context to another, giving them skills for lifelong learning necessary in the rapidly changing job landscape.

- Access to advanced coursework, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics, in addition to electives necessary for college and career readiness.

- Supportive, safe and orderly school environments that encourage and reinforce positive classroom behavior.

- Support for students' physical, emotional and social development because academic achievement depends on overall health and well-being.

- Opportunities for adolescents to articulate ideas, as well as to work in groups and collaborate.

- Curricular materials and technology systems that support learning and help teachers organize and implement high-quality instruction in an effective and coherent way.

- Opportunities not only to learn about the political process but to effect change and grow in personal leadership.

- Opportunities for students to connect to their own communities and citywide activities, where they build relationships with other students and adults of different backgrounds.

- A wide range of extracurricular and out-of-school activities such as sports and clubs, which develop students’ passions and leadership skills.

As the Equity and Excellence Commission of the U.S. Department of Education maintains, any improvement in education starts with high standards of learning for all students and a commitment to do what it takes to get each and every one of them there. All high-performing countries make that their central commitment to education; the United States and Chicago must do so, too.

“Research over the past decade consistently shows that education in the arts contributes to significantly decreased dropout rates, improves students’ likelihood of entering college, increases civic engagement and ultimately promotes financial success throughout a person’s lifetime. Arts education also strongly correlates to substantially better student engagement, academic performance and test scores.”

– Illinois Arts Alliance 2009
1a. Strengthen teaching and learning by making instruction challenging, student-centered and connected to young people’s lives and communities.

Schools are tasked with preparing students for a tomorrow that will require them to be engaged citizens, responsible adults and dynamic leaders. For students to gain deep knowledge across a wide array of subject areas and have the broadest array of opportunities for careers in their future, they must engage in thoughtful, purposeful thinking, collaboration, problem-solving and reflection. Neighborhood public high schools should be known for developing the whole student, designing experiences that will develop students’ creativity as well as social, emotional and cognitive skills.

In addition, neighborhood public high schools and their students should be grounded—but not isolated—in their communities. Neighborhood high schools have the particular advantage of engaging their students in opportunities for learning and contributing to the surrounding community. Beyond their regular classes but in conjunction with their academic learning, students should have ample opportunities to develop themselves through sports, internships, student exchanges, service learning and other out-of-school activities that are integrated into their academic learning as much as possible. With a city as diverse and culturally rich as Chicago, neighborhood public high schools should be a portal through which students can widen their experience with a variety of cultures and communities.

Learning is not confined to the classroom. Teens can learn through civic action projects, volunteer work, artistic endeavors, scientific investigation and internships. Experiences that allow high school students to take on more adult roles can strengthen the reasoning, creativity and interpersonal skills needed for a productive career. Solving real-world problems, which may require research, writing or mathematics, can make the purpose of their classroom learning clearer and boost their motivation for schoolwork.

Real-world learning can take place after school at a museum, science lab or any other cultural institutions or workplaces. It can be part of the classroom curriculum, as teachers—perhaps working with a nonprofit organization—lead students to research and take action to solve problems in their schools or neighborhoods. Learning can take place online through innovative websites such as the Chicago City of Learning and LRNG—a new digital learning platform—and online communities, which allow students to pursue interests from computer coding to fashion design, receive guidance from adult mentors or collaborate with peers across the city or region.

Neighborhood public high schools already provide a few of these opportunities to some students. But every student needs opportunities for out-of-school learning, especially those from low-income neighborhoods, who are often isolated from the professional world and the city’s cultural riches.

Many students also desire to make a difference in improving the lives of their loved ones, their block or their city. By connecting the learning inside the classroom to real-life issues just down the block or across the city, students can see the greater ramifications of what they’re learning and connect with peers from different backgrounds. This strategy lays the groundwork for young people to become civically engaged adults.

“A student who is motivated in the classroom is more likely to be engaged in the community, and positive community experiences in turn improve engagement and performance in school. This is why we need to create opportunities for students to contribute to their communities outside of school.”

~ XQ: The Super School Project website
Thanks to technology and the Internet, students today have access to learning opportunities that seemed unimaginable until recently. And many of these opportunities are pursued outside of school: Teens are writing fan fiction and submitting it to websites, watching YouTube videos to learn new skills and forming peer networks online to discuss and critique one another’s work.

University of California, Irvine, researcher Mizuko Ito and other researchers call this kind of activity “connected learning.” Connected learning is a model of learning that uses technology to fuse young people’s interests and friendships with academic learning using hands-on experiences and networks. Education researchers are interested in how connected learning can expand opportunities for learning and self-expression, as well as how it relates to more formal academic achievement. They are also concerned that the digital divide will widen the “opportunity gap” between students who grow up with ready access to digital tools and resources and those who do not. Connected learning may help to close that gap.

Many programs, such as Intel’s Clubhouse Network and the Digital Youth Network, offer connected learning for students. But most of these are community-based programs, says Mindy Faber, co-director of the Convergence Academies program in Chicago. Few are offered in public school settings with students, teachers and administrators designing and using connected learning.

The Convergence Academies program hopes to change that. With its “digital atelier” spaces staffed by digital media mentors and open to students during and after school, the program aims to channel students’ interest in digital media in ways that develop important 21st-century skills—while also closing the digital divide for students from poor families.

One of the hurdles faced by program leaders, such as those at Tilden Career Community Academy, was how to provide a structure that exists outside the traditional school domain yet still fosters deeper, richer learning. At Tilden, program leaders have created a website listing multiple challenges for students to explore during their time in the digital atelier. Each challenge is a miniature lesson created by one of the mentors to introduce a skill or a new digital tool, such as “Critique a Photo,” “Create a Story from Random Images” or “Arrange a Beat in Garageband.”

Each challenge indicates a number of “leaderboard points” that can be earned when students complete the task. Students can redeem these points for rewards, such as gift cards, or to earn a chance to use resources in the digital atelier (such the 3-D printer or YouTube). The leaderboard is posted prominently in the digital atelier and is also visible on the website, with students ranked by the points they’ve earned.

Informal learning opportunities in a game-based “challenge” format have led to greater student engagement and participation, said Nathan Phillips, assistant professor of English education and a youth media expert at University of Illinois at Chicago, who has spent several hours observing in the digital atelier.

“I have seen students taking up new challenges that lead them to become interested in new tools or in developing new skills,” says Phillips. “For example, students who spend time on Adobe Illustrator drawing characters ... identify new tasks for themselves that leverage these skills for new projects, like creating a poster.”

The academic gains made by Tilden students suggest a connection between learning in the digital atelier and learning inside the classroom. Schools are missing a key opportunity to engage their students if they aren’t leveraging these kinds of informal learning experiences as well as more formal ones, Faber says.

“We see something very powerful that happens with these approaches to skill development in informal settings,” she says. “We like the challenge of taking a theory like connected learning and bringing it to life in a school. Nobody’s doing that—and it’s crazy that nobody’s doing that.”

Condensed from an article by Dennis Pierce for the Convergence Academies at Columbia College Chicago

SOLUTION 1: PRACTICE
WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

- Organizations with expertise in technology or online learning provide hardware, software and advanced professional development to neighborhood high school teachers on the resources available for classroom use, after-school activities and independent student learning.

- The CPS central office works with school, community, volunteer and civic organizations to coordinate internships for students during the school year as well as in the summer.

- Online learning providers, such as Chicago City of Learning and the LRNG platform, work directly with neighborhood public high school teachers and students to help students access learning experiences on content ranging from coding to financial literacy and architecture to fashion design.

- Nonprofit organizations with expertise in youth development and civic engagement, such as Mikva Challenge, collaborate with students and staff to make sure that curricula and school policies reflect the concerns of the students.

- Librarians from the Chicago Public Library experienced in working with teens partner with high schools to provide workshops on research skills and Internet and media literacy.

- Museum and cultural institutions that provide youth and school programming consider neighborhood public high school students first when recruiting participants.

- Teachers develop at least one unit in every discipline that culminates in a learning activity with an out-of-school partner.

- Youth development and technology organizations create a central information source about learning opportunities throughout the city.

- Parents, students and other community residents lead tours of their neighborhood for school staff to learn the culture, history and assets of the community. For example, the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce leads trainings for adults and students to organize these types of tours at their own schools.

- The CTA provides transit cards or shuttle service for students in neighborhood schools so they can participate in activities outside their neighborhoods.
It can be difficult for adolescents to figure out the practical steps that are needed to pursue a career goal or make their big dreams come true—especially if they are from neighborhoods where there are fewer career professionals around to ask for advice.

As an English teacher at Harper High School, Imran Khan realized that his students lacked the exposure to the professional world that builds subtle but essential knowledge of the strategies and social skills that are needed to negotiate the path to fulfilling work. “There were kids who had rarely traveled beyond a four-block radius of their homes,” he says.

He and a colleague at the West Englewood school, special education teacher January Miller, arranged in-depth field experiences for students at businesses, universities and theaters, paid for from their own pockets. They soon noticed an uptick in grades and attendance, and they weren’t the only ones. “We started to have reports from other teachers on how much better these students were doing,” Khan recalls.

As Khan and Miller began raising money for more trips, teachers at other Chicago high schools wanted in on the project. In 2010, the two left Harper to launch Embarc, a nonprofit aimed at teaching students how to succeed in careers and life through a three-year course, now offered to over 600 students at 10 Chicago neighborhood high schools.

Embarc provides a curriculum and teacher-training and organizes monthly “journeys” for each class, mostly to workplaces around the city. But students don’t just sit and observe. They might write computer code at Microsoft and pitch advertising slogans at Leo Burnett. They interview CEOs, artists, athletes and engineers about their choices and struggles. Career exploration is less the goal than learning what it takes to be successful, regardless of the chosen path.

Embarc teacher Darrin Collins at Phillips Academy High School in Bronzeville, who also teaches science, says the program has made a huge difference in his class of 25 seniors. Their GPAs improved, and their desire to attend college has “increased dramatically,” he says. “The fact that they get to interact with professionals and go behind the scenes lights a flame in them. They see a purpose in their coursework.”

On a trip to a high-end catering company, Collins’ students learn about the culinary, financial and logistical aspects of the business, and create their own catered event alongside managers and chefs. As several girls cut and roll gnocchi, they pepper the pastry chef with questions. Why did she choose that job? What was her training like? What was most difficult to learn? As a result of experiences like these, which build familiarity with professional vocabulary and concepts, many of Collins’ seniors say Embarc has made them more willing to talk with people they don’t know. One student says the skill will help them get to know roommates and professors in college and make a good impression on job interviews. “We’ll be able to tell about ourselves and keep the conversation going.”

Despite the fact that Embarc intentionally recruits students with C or D averages, 97 percent of Embarc students have graduated from high school to date and 93 percent have enrolled in college. As Chicago sets off on a path toward ensuring that every neighborhood high school equips our students for a bright future, experiences like the ones Embarc provides will need to be more common and widespread. Social skills like communication, adaptation to new situations and networking are all essential strands of learning—and an effective curriculum intertwines these strands with academic content in creative and effective ways.
1b. Invest in teachers and principals, prioritizing time for them to learn, plan and collaborate.

As professionals who are closest to the core work of schools, teachers and principals play a vital role. Their professional knowledge, experience, judgment and participation are essential to revitalizing our neighborhood public high schools and to the future of our city. Guiding young people to gain deep and broad knowledge in the disciplines and master 21st-century skills like teamwork and creative problem-solving are already changing how teachers and principals do their jobs. Classrooms that fully foster these skills operate differently than classrooms of the past.

Teaching that prepares all students for success in a complex and rapidly changing world requires teachers to learn new strategies, design lessons with colleagues and reflect together on what is working or not working as they attempt new approaches in the classroom. Teachers also need time to analyze students’ work and discuss with colleagues how to help students improve further. Educators must also deepen their knowledge about the subjects they teach, about how students learn and about how to build on the assets of students. This takes time and resources.

Principals need training and practice to learn how to best implement effective approaches to teaching. A study of Chicago high schools found that strong principal leadership and a positive learning climate were associated with schools with stronger instruction and student achievement. Within these high schools, principal leadership had a positive influence on student success because of how it shaped professional communities and teacher development. Teachers, principals and other administrators build the learning environments of our neighborhood schools, but often feel that they’re missing the tools they need. For them to do their best work, we need to support them and invest resources in their continued professional development and growth.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Principals and programmers who create class schedules at each neighborhood public high school ensure that teachers who teach the same course share a common preparation period so that they can plan lessons together and reflect on how to improve instruction.

> Universities partner with neighborhood public high schools to provide expertise in academic content areas and pedagogy to guide teachers’ professional learning.

> Neighborhood public high school principals participate in leadership development groups to share successes and collaboratively solve problems that arise as they work to improve instruction.

> All neighborhood public high schools offer seminar periods that shorten the formal school day for students, enabling them to participate in different types of learning, and allow time for teachers to learn and plan together. These “seminar days,” which can be weekly or biweekly, are common at many selective enrollment high schools.

> Teachers regularly seek feedback from students on classroom activities. They use that feedback to inform their professional development, perhaps involving students in its design or delivery.

> CPS central office and network chiefs collaborate with teachers and principals to make time for professional development to meet school-based goals.
1c. Make neighborhood public high schools centers of their community.

In a strategy known as the “community schools” approach, schools arrange for universities, social service agencies and other organizations to offer services at the school, such as tutoring, afterschool clubs, mentoring, counseling or other opportunities for students that the school can’t provide on its own. Many community schools also offer programs for parents, such as parenting workshops or GED or job training classes. Helping parents better their lives benefits children and the local economy. Some community schools even have onsite health centers open to the whole neighborhood. Providing health care in areas where that service is scarce means students get the care they need and miss fewer days of school.

High-functioning, well-funded community schools are able to recruit, manage and leverage an assortment of partners to impact whole-school improvement. They are cost-effective and provide a strong return on investment. While the implementation of community schools strategies varies widely, according to the Institute for Educational Leadership, community schools show results. Students at community schools are more likely to:

• Arrive at school fully prepared to learn
• Develop improved work habits, efforts and attitudes toward learning
• Improve grades and test scores
• Earn more credits and stay in school
• Graduate from high school and continue learning

In 2014 New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a plan to launch 130 new community schools by 2017, using federal, state and local funds.

Chicago is a leader in the movement with 132 CPS community schools in 2016—37 of which are high schools. Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants fund most of Chicago’s community school programs, but few have sufficient funding and partners to provide all of the opportunities and services that young people and their communities need.

Placing agencies that serve youth and families inside under-enrolled high school buildings is also an alternative to school closure—one with the potential to help revitalize a neighborhood.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Private and public funding expands community school partnerships. Corporations adopt a school and provide funding for a resource coordinator to manage community school programs. Tax increment financing (TIF) funds could be used to help pay for new school health centers or renovations necessary to locate city services in under-enrolled schools.

> School and community leaders work together to recruit partners and create programs that best meet the needs of both the neighborhood and the school.

> Health care providers initiate partnerships with schools to provide physical and mental health services to students and their families onsite.

> Organizations serving teens coordinate out-of-school-time activities—such as sports, music or academic clubs—across a geographic region, so that students have opportunities to participate even if their own school does not offer them.

> The Chicago Park District ensures that neighborhood public high schools have priority access to nearby parks, fields and other facilities at little or no cost.
COMMUNITIES POWER NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS—AND NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS POWER COMMUNITIES.

In Chicago—a city of neighborhoods—neighborhood public high schools are like central charging stations that draw on various resources to brighten the civic, social and economic life around them.

For our system of neighborhood public high schools to be highly effective, it needs these resources:

- **City and community partnerships**
- **Expanded community schools approach**
- **Research-based school improvement efforts**
- **Funding based on student & neighborhood needs**
- **Public & political support**

In turn, highly effective neighborhood public high schools power vibrant community life:

- Strong schools attract families and businesses boosting the local economy and driving population growth.
- Families build more and better relationships with other families in their community, building neighborhood cohesion and trust.
- When students attend a school near their home, families can more easily connect with teachers and contribute as school volunteers and leaders.
- More and more, high schools are functioning like community centers, offering opportunities that build the health and well-being of residents nearby.
Long after the dismissal bell has rung, Hancock High School on Chicago’s Southwest Side remains abuzz. On the auditorium stage, two dozen teens practice Latin- and hip-hop-inspired dances, led by a professional choreographer. In the foyer, a musician shows the guitar club how to play chords for a Mexican folksong. On the ground floor, members of the arts club paint, draw or sculpt, while upstairs the Science Olympiad team tinkers with its latest inventions, like a catapult made from PVC pipe, string and wood that can shoot a ping-pong ball precisely 8 meters.

This buzz is coming from an approach that enables ideas and experiences to move from school to community and back again, nurturing students’ academic, physical and social well-being. With a federal grant and four nonprofit partnerships, Hancock now hosts more than two dozen after-school clubs as well as two mentoring programs, after-school tutoring, mental health counseling and classes for parents.

All are part of Hancock’s community school approach, which turns its campus into a humming environment of activities and services for parents and kids. The community schools approach is also in place at more than 30 other CPS high schools, although how it is implemented varies based on partners and funding. The mix of health, academic and social programs is in keeping with what experts know about children’s development—that it works much like a rope, which needs every strand to be strong.

Hancock is recognized as one of the best examples of a community school—in fact, it won the national Coalition for Community Schools’ 2015 Award for Excellence.

“We want to send that student into the classroom ready to learn,” says Hancock’s school resource coordinator, Kathryn Rice. “Anything that gets in the way we want to address—whether they need eyeglasses to see the blackboard or counseling to work through some emotional issues.”

Rice and her colleagues connect young people with services that support their ability to learn, like tutoring or free eye exams and glasses, but also with clubs that activate their interests or spark new ones.

Junior Marisol Praecido says that without the dance club, she would be home watching TV. Before joining the club, she wasn’t sure that she even liked dance. Now she’s club co-captain and even teaches dance to seventh- and eighth-graders at nearby Peck Elementary. “I love dance now,” she says.

Senior Lorenzo Troche explains how joining the community service club raised his confidence. And a part-time job on a landscaping crew, paid through a school partnership with After School Matters, gave him “a lot of determination,” he adds. “I would get tired, but over time I learned how to have patience and not to give up so easily.”

About 400 of Hancock’s 950 students participate in clubs or sports, and a record analysis found that all those enrolled in the after-school program have raised their GPAs since eighth grade, while the other students have not. Rice says the school could attract even more students if money for additional activities were available.

The nonprofit Youth Guidance is Hancock’s chief community school partner. One of its staff coordinates Hancock’s parent programs, including workshops on how to monitor and support their children’s academic progress. Youth Guidance counselors also lead mentoring groups for students with behavioral or emotional issues, and offers individual counseling along with other social service agencies. These services fill an important gap, since Hancock has only one part-time social worker to serve its 950 students.

Rice manages the after-school and summer programs as a Youth Guidance employee, and recruits partner organizations to provide college counseling, summer student internships and after-school clubs. Along with Hancock teachers, members of these organizations lead clubs on everything from chess to cooking to underwater robotics.

Social studies teacher Andrew Martinek, who advises Hancock’s Model UN and the student council, says that youth programs help kids break out of their shells and grow as leaders and team members. “Young people need to have those skills just as much as they need to read and write and do arithmetic.”
1d. Offer comprehensive college and career advising for students at all neighborhood public high schools.

The capacity of schools to prepare students for further education or other career preparation after high school varies across the city. Some schools not only provide college counselors, they are able to raise money each year to send students on visits to different colleges and to summer programs that acclimate them to the college experience. In some schools, students have a guidance counselor as well as a college counselor, while in others, one counselor fulfills both roles, often trying to balance a large number of students and unable to give them the attention they need. Some schools offer senior seminars or engage an outside partner to provide advising and help students apply to college or line up other post-secondary training or jobs. But these organizations charge a fee, so students who most need the additional support are often unable afford it.

All neighborhood public high school students must have access to these opportunities. Providing sufficient post-secondary advising would help more neighborhood high school students enroll in college or technical or career education, secure scholarships and financial aid, and develop the mindsets, habits and confidence they will need to complete their education and reach their potential.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

- CPS tracks all post-secondary advising programs provided by both in-house and external providers, and adds the CPS senior seminar in neighborhood public high schools that do not have it. The seminar guides students through applying to college and navigating other post-secondary pathways.

- City Colleges and CPS expand dual-enrollment courses in neighborhood public high schools for students to earn college credit and to introduce them to a city college experience.

- Chicago chapters of university alumni groups raise funds to sponsor and coordinate college visits and summer programs for neighborhood public high school students.

- Local funders and businesses offer “progressive pathways,” a program that allows young people to combine formal education, job training and employment to build toward college or career success. For example, businesses could hire students as apprentices, provide other on-the-job training or offer a work-to-college track.
**1e. Strengthen restorative practices to make schools safe and supportive for students and adults.**

Many schools have made progress in building a positive school culture, reducing school suspensions, increasing retention and improving the social and emotional skills of both students and staff.

Students learn more when they feel safe in school, both physically and emotionally. Teachers need to feel supported, too, through trusting, productive relationships with colleagues, administrators and students. They also need school practices, policies and services that address student discipline effectively. This helps teachers build good relationships with their students and encourages them to support one another.

Traditional punitive methods for handling student discipline, such as suspensions, can be counter-productive and instead alienate struggling youth and worsen their behavior. CPS is improving student discipline methods by reducing suspensions and adopting strategies to identify root causes of behavior, teaching students skills to manage their emotions and resolve conflicts and giving students a chance to make amends. These practices are called “restorative” and can reduce student infractions while strengthening students’ social and emotional skills. In addition, some young people act out due to their exposure to trauma and need trained adults to recognize the need for mental health services.

While there is growing attention and research on the importance of building a positive school climate for adults and students, more work remains to be done to make all neighborhood public high schools supportive places to learn and grow.

**WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?**

- Every neighborhood high school offers a “peace room” with a full-time trained staff member who helps students resolve conflicts with peers or teachers and figure out ways to manage conflict more successfully in the future. Students could also be trained as peer mediators.

- Each CPS network organizes training for all neighborhood public high school staff, including principals and security guards, on restorative practices and how to identify and help students whose behavior is caused by trauma.

- School-based health centers host regular evening events at which outside practitioners run workshops on methods for dealing with stress, such as meditation, yoga, breathing exercises and similar relaxation techniques, for students, school staff, parents and community members.

- Community organizations partner with youth leadership groups, faith-based institutions, schools and local elected officials to implement violence-prevention efforts in their neighborhoods.

- School administrators collaborate with student-led groups advocating for restorative practices that conform with Illinois Public Act 99-0456, an amendment to the Illinois School Code that makes the use of suspensions a measure of last resort.
SOLUTION 2: POLICY

Adopt policies that strengthen neighborhood public high schools and expand learning opportunities for their students.

Outdated district and state policies must be revised to better support Chicago’s neighborhood public high school students.

Strengthening Chicago’s neighborhood high schools will require a halt to the haphazard opening of new high schools. Our city deserves a thorough, thoughtful, long-term plan for school openings and closings that is truly in the best interest of each neighborhood.

In addition to long-term planning that considers neighborhood schools, neighborhood public high schools need district accountability policies that support—rather than undermine—efforts to revamp instruction and provide a holistic education for students.

Adequately and equitably supporting our neighborhood high schools will also require expanding public funding for education in Illinois and creating more equitable school funding policies at the state and district levels. Equitable and adequate school funding is a mechanism for helping all students reach their potential to become healthy and productive citizens.

Research shows that school districts in the United States with greater funding produce better results for students. In the January 2015 Quarterly Journal of Economics, researchers reported that increases in school funding from 1971 to 2010 had large effects on low-income children’s graduation rates, time spent in post-secondary education, chance of falling into poverty as adults, wages and even family income. The results imply that a 25 percent increase in per-pupil spending throughout one’s school-age years could eliminate the attainment gaps between children from low-income and non-poor families (average family income of $72,029 in 2000 dollars).24 This is an investment that benefits everyone, from students and families to neighborhoods, Chicago and the state as a whole.

ILLINOIS HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

—

Its school funding formula ranks 49th in equity and 50th in adequacy.25 A study released in 2015 by the Education Trust says that Illinois school districts with the greatest number of students in poverty receive substantially fewer state and local dollars than their more affluent counterparts—nearly 20 percent less.26 The study also says that school districts with the largest enrollments of minority students receive 15 percent less per student than those districts serving the fewest.27 Illinois relies too heavily on local property taxes to fund public education, causing a dramatic and unfair imbalance in funding across school districts and making it difficult for low-income communities to fund schools adequately. Illinois also lacks adequate resources to meet the needs of its students and schools. To change this, Illinois needs to explore generating revenue by increasing the state income tax, which is among the lowest in the Midwest.

To transform schools and improve student outcomes, we must change state funding for education. After all, to invest in students is to invest in Illinois’ and the country’s future. States with greater growth in educational attainment also enjoy greater growth in productivity and worker compensation.
For many years, decisions about where to open and close schools in Chicago have been made behind closed doors without a clear and publicly expressed rationale for those decisions or a long-term, citywide plan. Although public hearings are held on school closings and openings, residents often feel that their feedback is disregarded. This makes decisions appear arbitrary and undermines public trust in city institutions.

Leaders from CPS, city agencies and the mayor’s office need to engage in open dialogue with residents, community groups, school leaders, students, local school councils and neighborhood agencies about decisions on where and when to open and close schools. A more open dialogue would not only make the rationale for decisions clear and public but also influence decisions by providing better information to leaders. In some neighborhoods, an under-enrolled high school might be one of the few public institutions left, and with sufficient investment, it might spur improvements in the community. As an alternative to school closure, city agencies or community groups might use some of a school’s empty space to locate services. A public dialogue and planning process could also consider how schools and other city services, such as libraries and parks, might work together to better serve neighborhood students. Creating a community-informed, comprehensive, long-term plan for schools citywide could also facilitate schools within a geographic area sharing resources more intentionally and effectively.

A comprehensive plan for schools also needs to be part of any citywide plans for long-term investments in infrastructure such as the emerging Chicago Neighborhoods Now initiative.

Greater dialogue between district leaders, school staff and community leaders would help better inform other district policies that impact neighborhood high schools, such as the student enrollment process and determination of attendance boundaries.

**CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS NOW: A FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL PROSPERITY**

Chicago Neighborhoods Now is a structure created by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to guide investment in neighborhoods across the city. Rather than focusing on 77 different communities, neighborhoods have been clustered into 16 planning areas using commercial and physical boundaries—expressways, rivers and rail lines—to examine common needs and interests among neighborhoods. These natural boundaries create a framework for citywide planning that also accounts for a local context, contributing to greater understanding of how “the built environment contributes to local prosperity and where additional planning and investment are needed.”

In fall 2015, Chicago's planning department began using the framework to convene community planning meetings in each of the 16 areas. These meetings include city planners, elected officials, community residents and individuals involved in previous community development and planning efforts. Those attending the meetings share progress on existing plans and generate new ideas to be added to the new plan. Ideas for investing in each planning area will be documented in a Chicago Neighborhoods Now action plan, which will be published sometime in 2016. This planning process is an opportunity for neighborhood public high schools to be included strategically in community planning and capital investment to repair or update school buildings and grounds.

Chicago Neighborhoods Now began as Chicago Neighborhoods 2015: Assets, Plans and Trends, a research project convened by The Chicago Community Trust with the city planning department, LISC Chicago, the Metropolitan Planning Council and DePaul University’s Institute for Housing Studies.

**SOLUTION 2: POLICY**
WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Generation All, in partnership with the mayor’s office and CPS, convenes students, parents and educators along with community development organizations and city planners, to determine where to locate public high schools around the city in a way that aligns with community needs and benefits all students.

> The mayor’s office creates a collaborative network of department heads from city agencies and community-based organizations that supports schools through more strategic and equitable coordination of city services.

> Chicago Neighborhoods Now partners with CPS and community planning groups to include neighborhood public high schools in each of the 16 city planning areas when considering capital improvements, facilities planning, streetscapes and other investments, such as locating community services in neighborhood public high schools.

2b. Make school evaluation less punitive and more focused on problem-solving and growth.

School staff are under constant pressure to raise standardized test scores and feel threatened by poor evaluations, job loss or even school closure if they don’t produce quick results. This kind of pressure can often result in a narrow focus on test preparation. Pressure to raise standardized test scores can also dissuade principals and teachers from attempting new instructional approaches that would take some trial and error to master, but would lead to significantly higher achievement over time.

Excessive focus on test scores is misguided for another reason: Research shows that students’ standardized test scores are less predictive of their college success than their grades. Good grades in high school and college require, for example, good work habits, perseverance on difficult assignments, a willingness to ask for help when needed and the ability to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources and construct compelling arguments. These are valuable skills in the workplace, too. All can be taught in the classroom but are unlikely to be reflected in standardized test scores.

Punitive accountability, such as replacing school staff and then tightly monitoring and regulating school practices until standardized test scores and other measures improve, is frequently ineffective. In 2014, Catalyst Chicago reported that more than 60 percent of “turnaround” schools, which require staff to reapply for their jobs, remained in the lowest category on the CPS rating scale, and nearly 80 percent of them were still in the bottom 25 percent of schools on state tests.

A better accountability system would focus on continuous improvement rather than quick results. Such a system would encourage principals and teachers to work toward instruction that enables all students to be successful in the development of complex knowledge and skills. The new higher standards for learning call for deeper cognitive, analytic and communications skills in all core subject areas. The new demands on teaching require assessments that will enable educators to understand the effectiveness of their current practices as well as what they need to do to improve them.

In fact, research confirms that workplaces that motivate people to do their best operate not by threatening punishment but by providing a sense of purpose, professionalism and autonomy.

The school accountability system should also value and measure educational equity. The current policy of only measuring and reporting the average ACT scores at a school or across the district highlights the increases in the last fifteen years, but it masks the differences between high and low scores (see figure on page 15). This widening gap is an indicator of the educational inequity in Chicago’s high schools. A city and district that value equity ought to measure and track disparities, not just averages.
WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

- CPS redesigns its school rating policy to include improvement in student standardized test scores relative to other schools serving similar students and to reduce the weight test scores have on a school’s overall rating in general.
- CPS, in collaboration with staff at neighborhood public high schools, develops more measures that recognize school success, such as reductions in school suspensions or high student participation in extracurricular activities.
- CPS uses its accountability system to help schools develop long-term strategies to improve students’ chances of graduation and college and career success rather than focusing on short-term fixes designed to raise standardized test scores.
- CPS publishes not only the average standardized test scores of the district and each school, but also the variance in scores between schools and within each school. This will allow the district to track equity of outcomes over time, with the goal of making sure that all students and schools improve.

2c. Adopt a more equitable funding formula for public schools in Chicago that better accounts for differences in student and neighborhood needs and resources.

Neighborhood public high schools in Chicago simply do not have sufficient funding to provide the quality of instruction and support necessary for all students to thrive. In 2009, the federal government dramatically increased funding for School Improvement Grants, which have made an enormous difference in what struggling high schools awarded the grants could accomplish and provide for students. But when the grants ended, effective programs and services had to be cut. A patchwork of short-term grants will not lead to lasting improvements in our system of high schools. To truly prepare all students well, schools need sustained funding that accounts fairly for differences in students’ skills, abilities and needs.

Neighborhood public high schools already receive funding from the district as well as the state and federal governments for students in bilingual and special education. The state and federal governments also provide some additional per-pupil funding for students living in poverty. But Chicago lags behind other cities in more fully accounting for a wider range of student abilities and needs in its funding formulas, and does not consider neighborhood needs and resources in its funding formula.

New York City, for example, provides additional funding to schools for each student who fell below expectations on the previous year’s standardized testing. Los Angeles uses a “student need index,” which gives more money to schools that have students in various high-needs categories, including homelessness. Boston considers 31 student characteristics to determine additional funding, including whether a high school student is at risk of dropping out, and whether an immigrant student is behind other students of the same age because of disruption in formal schooling.

To further support schools serving students with the greatest needs, the district funding formula might also consider the poverty level of the surrounding neighborhood. The percentage of low-income students in a school does not fully reflect the depth of poverty that afflicts some communities. Additional funding would strengthen schools in these communities, allowing them to better serve students and function as anchor institutions able to help revitalize the neighborhood.
The district funding formula must also better account for under-enrollment, so that schools that have lost substantial numbers of students are still able to provide an adequate range of courses and support services and rebuild their enrollment over time. The alternative is to consolidate neighborhood high schools with low enrollment. But research has shown that the families of many students who attend a struggling neighborhood high school are unemployed and can't afford the cost of public transportation to send them to school elsewhere.\textsuperscript{31} Forcing students to cross gang boundaries to attend another neighborhood high school can also place them in danger and encourage absenteeism and dropping out.

An equitable school funding policy for CPS schools that enables neighborhood high schools to better serve their students, raising their academic achievement, graduation rates and college persistence, is a critical step in attracting families back to their neighborhood schools.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Chicago Public Schools works with an objective third party to conduct and distribute an annual school equity report that assesses disparities in measures of student success, including standardized test scores, graduation rates and college enrollment and persistence, and identifies gaps in school resources in order to make equitable funding decisions.

> CPS, with community participation, develops a new funding formula that considers a fuller range of student and neighborhood characteristics such as median family income, violence rates and unemployment.

> CPS creates base funding for all schools that guarantees essential teacher and staff positions regardless of student enrollment.

> The city reforms tax increment financing (TIF) funding to more easily invest in updating facilities at neighborhood public high schools in lower-income neighborhoods.
SOLUTION 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Generate public and political support for neighborhood high schools.

While the news media routinely report on CPS problems, they often overlook the successes of its neighborhood public high schools. From placing first in statewide competitions to running voter registration campaigns, students in Chicago’s neighborhood public high schools are making great strides in their academic and civic lives. Parents and neighbors need more opportunities to learn about all of the good things happening at their neighborhood high schools and how they can help to make those schools even better. And involvement shouldn’t stop at getting to know a neighborhood high school. There are many ways to connect to school improvement efforts—from community organizing to volunteering in the school office to serving on a local school council. Parents and other community members might help fundraise with a school’s PTA or “Friends of” group—even if it is not in their own neighborhood, attend school board meetings, talk with principals and teachers about the policies that make their work easier or harder to better understand how to support them.

Students and staff at elementary schools also need to become familiar with their neighborhood high schools and all they have to offer. This is a first step in creating a seamless K-12 education system in which parents don’t have to gamble on where their child is going to school next year.

Chicagoans know that strong schools help make strong communities and strong communities help make strong schools. The more we can share the good news about schools along with the problems they face and bring awareness to policies that hinder school improvement, the more people will become involved in creating a stronger community and stronger schools.
The elementary schools in the 47th Ward—Bell and Coonley—are considered two of the city’s best. But while knocking on doors in the ward before the 2011 election, Ameya Pawar kept hearing one story: “We came here for the K-8 schools and we’re leaving the city for high school.”

It seemed that only about a quarter of eighth-graders in the ward chose the neighborhood high schools, Lake View and Amundsen, according to Pawar. The rest went to charter, selective enrollment or private schools—or moved to the suburbs.

After his election in 2011, Pawar organized an initiative called Grow-Community and recruited Aldermen Pat O’Connor and Tom Tunney from the neighboring 40th and 44th wards to join him. Grow-Community aims to ensure the community’s schools are the kind of high-quality, open enrollment neighborhood schools—from kindergarten through 12th grade—that families are leaving the city to find.

Pawar says he wants to see an end to the “absurd system” of forcing elementary students to compete for slots in a handful of top high schools that they view as their only viable option. If they don’t get in, “What you’re doing is pushing families out of the city and making lots of kids who are wonderful students feel like they failed,” he says.

The alderman believes Chicago’s decreasing population and financial woes make reinvesting in neighborhood high schools an urgent matter—citywide. “If we don’t do it in the next three to five years, we are going to continue losing population,” he predicts. “If you want to grow the tax base, invest in neighborhood high schools.”

Grow-Community has shown both how to attract these investments and the difference they can make. It has spawned “Friends of” groups for individual schools and obtained millions in public development funds called tax increment financing (TIF) funds to improve school facilities and programs. For example, Friends of Amundsen appealed to city officials for TIF money to pay for fresh paint and new flooring for classrooms, a science lab and two new gymnasiums. The improvements raised the morale of staff and students, Amundsen Principal Anna Pavichevich says. “School attendance increased 10 percent because we created an environment that students wanted to be in.” It’s her impression that the new wave of political commitment and community involvement sparked by Grow is already making a difference in her school.

Pavichevich says that when she was appointed principal in 2012, Friends of Amundsen “gave me really good intelligence about the community attitude toward the school” and worked with her leadership team on tackling school culture and climate.

Thanks to Grow-Community, in April 2015, Amundsen and Lake View high schools formed a collaboration with University of Chicago’s UChicago Impact to work on improving core aspects of schooling such as leadership, teacher collaboration, instruction, safety and family involvement.

“I would never have had the time to coordinate an effort like this and make a connection with the University of Chicago and get the funding,” says Pavichevich. “Without Grow, it never would have happened.”

Neighbor Stephen Reynolds, director at a money management firm, says he intends to spare his eighth-grade daughter the “anxiety and stress” of applying to selective enrollment schools and enroll her in Amundsen’s well-regarded International Baccalaureate program next year.

And he’s not the only one. Outreach efforts by the principal, the three aldermen and Friends of Amundsen are beginning to draw more families from the neighborhood’s top feeder elementary schools to Amundsen, he says. Where once Amundsen was closed to the surrounding community, Reynolds says, now the school hosts quarterly open houses for community members, parents and the families of prospective students. “They can hear directly from the principal and the local aldermen who are supporting the school.”

Friends of Amundsen has even collaborated with school leadership on special events, like a haunted house at Amundsen run by high school students to draw younger children and parents in the neighborhood. “It sounds silly,” says Reynolds, “but it matters. Parents get to see high school students. It breaks down those attitudes of ‘Oh, those kids are bad.’”

In a student focus group three years ago, Pavichevich says, Amundsen kids complained that “the community feared them, looked down on them. ‘Everybody thinks we’re in a gang.’” Now that the school is getting attention and building relationships, those attitudes are changing. She says when students wear Amundsen t-shirts, “The community responds to them positively: ‘Hey, I hear that’s a great school.’”
3a. Create opportunities to learn about neighborhood public high schools directly from staff, students and families.

Who better to tell the story of what life is like at a school than the people who go there every day? Creating opportunities for people in the school community to share what they are working on, where they need help and how they envision the future of their school is a meaningful way to get community members engaged.

Many residents are unaware of the programs and opportunities available at their neighborhood schools, so students might travel across the city to participate in an arts program or on a sports team when similar activities are available locally. Increasing awareness of opportunities nearby can promote neighborhood cohesion and community pride and spark interest in school-community partnerships.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Aldermen and other elected officials build local support for neighborhood public high schools by organizing school visits for residents, sponsoring school fundraisers and hosting town hall meetings that include presentations and performances by school administrators, teachers and students.

> Schools host regular open houses. Community groups help them publicize and recruit participants so that residents can learn about the school firsthand. The CPS central office coordinates a citywide calendar of school open houses so that they don’t conflict with one another.

> Students at each neighborhood public high school form clubs to tutor, mentor or engage seventh- and eighth-graders at their local feeder schools in projects, such as community service, to build relationships and get them interested in attending their neighborhood public high school.

> Middle school counselors, principals and parents of seventh- and eighth-graders arrange to visit their neighborhood high schools to fully understand the opportunities offered there.

> High schools host events for students from nearby elementary schools to attend, such as plays or haunted houses. Proceeds could be shared by all schools to fund the next year’s events.
3b. Raise the profile of neighborhood public high schools.

For parents and families to gain a greater understanding of what is happening in and around their neighborhood public high schools, there must be a citywide effort to draw positive attention to them. Some communities, with the support of their elected officials, are already doing this extremely well. For example, some aldermen include news and updates about their schools in weekly newsletters distributed to all their constituents. Community nonprofit organizations are rallying around their neighborhood public high schools through their own organizing campaigns. A citywide effort would demonstrate Chicago’s support of neighborhood public high schools, and encourage more businesses and universities to get involved.

Journalists, university researchers and data experts from the emerging “civic tech” community have analyzed and publicized data to generate greater public understanding and debate about education policies in Chicago. When new policies such as school funding formulas are implemented, the civic tech community is often the first to analyze the data and disseminate information. Greater sharing of data analysis and other research helps inform the public and decision-makers and begins to change how people understand neighborhood public high schools. This is a critical step to rebuilding engagement and commitment to neighborhood public high schools.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

> Generation All and its partners fund a citywide multimedia communications campaign in support of neighborhood public high schools.

> Each neighborhood public high school organizes an outreach team comprising administrators, teachers, students and parents to share the school’s accomplishments through social media.

> Aldermen and other elected officials highlight school events and success stories in their newsletters and through social media.

> Communications firms provide pro bono marketing support and resources for individual neighborhood public high schools.

> Generation All and its partners disseminate research and other data about neighborhood public high schools.
For some nonprofit organizations and businesses, it may be unclear how to build a partnership with a school. For others, concerns about working with a system as large as CPS may present a barrier to developing a sustained relationship with any particular school. Yet everyone recognizes the value of bringing in outside partners that provide unique opportunities for students to learn in and out of the classroom. Tapping into these resources for students, school staff, and community residents will help strengthen the social fabric of neighborhoods by building relationships among neighbors and between youth and adults.

There are numerous individual school efforts to coordinate resources and attract partnerships and volunteers, as well as efforts at the district and network levels. The challenge is to plug in resources where they are most needed or can make the biggest impact, and to do this in a way that is equitable and fair.

Chicagoans—individuals and organizations—can start by being proactive about volunteering in, collaborating with and investing in neighborhood public high schools.

**WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?**

- Corporate and other private funders invest in neighborhood public high schools by funding school-based partnership coordinators who recruit and manage nonprofit and business partners and volunteers. Businesses and nonprofit organizations provide student internships, technical training or part-time jobs using a coordinated approach that links work opportunities with in-school learning.

- A central volunteer-match website links Chicagoans with opportunities to provide specific skills like graphic design, website development, branding and marketing, coaching sports or tutoring to schools that seek them.

- Neighborhood residents organize “Friends of” groups to raise funds and build support for their neighborhood public high schools.

- Neighborhood public high schools create sister-school relationships with neighborhood public high schools in other parts of the city. Sister-school activities could include student exchanges where students have the opportunity to “live a day in the life of...” other students, participate in joint fundraising efforts and share unique facilities or equipment.

- A corporation or group of small businesses adopts all the neighborhood schools within each of the district’s 13 networks and contributes funding, in-kind resources and volunteers. This would make sharing resources or programs among schools easier and more equitable.
A renewed commitment to Chicago’s neighborhood public high schools is critical if we are to prepare all of our young people to lead healthy, productive lives and contribute to their families, their communities and our city.

Neighborhood high schools are essential for the vitality and stability of Chicago’s communities. In some, the high school is already at the center of community life and in others it has the potential to be and needs to be. Families, educators, students and residents working together to make both their school and their neighborhood safe, supportive, exciting places of learning can transform a community.

There are no easy solutions for making Chicago’s high school system work for everyone. This action plan for revitalizing our neighborhood high schools—through changes in practice, policy and public engagement—is a start.

There are issues outside the scope of this plan that must also be addressed. Chicago and all of Illinois need adequate and equitable school funding from the state. Our neighborhoods need to be free of the severe racial and economic segregation that divides us from one another and undermines so much human potential. Every community needs not only good schools but also safe streets and green spaces, affordable homes, thriving businesses. Developing schools and improving neighborhoods must go hand in hand because the success of each endeavor depends upon the other. As the Generation All network expands, we hope to connect our work with that of other agencies around the city and state working to overcome inequities and improve the quality of life for all.

We envision this plan not as a short-term initiative but as the beginning of a movement that must be sustained and developed in the years to come.

In the months ahead, the Generation All steering committee will work to develop infrastructures, generate resources and bring people together to implement the ideas put forth in this action plan. We will convene work groups, at least one in each of the three major areas—practice, policy, public engagement—to select priorities and collectively implement, evaluate and replicate the most promising ideas. We will continue to work with both grassroots and civic leaders to learn more about the issues addressed in this document, to generate a citywide dialogue and to find innovative and practical ways to achieve our goals.

Whether you are a high school student, a parent of a school-aged child, a young adult interested in bettering your community, an elected official, a city employee, an educator, a foundation program officer, a community organizer, a CEO, a retiree or a nonprofit director, you have a role to play. We invite you to join us. Visit the Generation All website to find out how you can get involved.
Appendix A: Examples of Disparities in Two Very Different High Schools

Neighborhood Public High Schools Serve Students of All Backgrounds and Abilities

For Chicago’s diversity to translate into shared economic and cultural vibrancy, it’s important to have institutions that can, and do, educate children regardless of their ZIP code. It’s just as important to ensure that those open doors offer access to a high-quality learning experience. Here’s how one Chicago neighborhood public high school compares to an elite Chicago public high school in terms of who is included, and the opportunities to learn that they experience. Both enroll about 800 students but are remarkably different in terms of the variety of academic and extracurricular opportunities. Working toward greater fairness across neighborhoods will require devoting more attention and resources to those schools that currently have fewer ways to activate adolescents’ interests and skills.

A Chicago Neighborhood High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95%</td>
<td>Low-income students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Homeless students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>White students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>AP courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Foreign language courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>High-school level math available (no precalculus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Clubs for academic enrichment and fine arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>Graduation rate in four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Students “ready for college”**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Chicago Selective Enrollment High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>Low-income students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Homeless students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>White students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>AP courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Foreign language courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>High-school level math available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>College-level math courses*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Clubs for academic enrichment and fine arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Graduation rate in four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Students “ready for college”**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: school staff or school website
** The Illinois Board of Education considers students “ready for college” if they score a 21 or better on the ACT.
Appendix B: The Generation All Planning Process

Creating a community and city-owned plan based on proven practices, public input and innovative strategies

Generation All was founded in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union, The Chicago Community Trust and the Ford Foundation to unite Chicagoans in revitalizing the neighborhood public high schools. In fall 2014, Generation All convened a 41-person steering committee, comprising education, community, civic and student leaders from across Chicago, to create a new vision and action plan for expanding equity in education by ensuring high-quality learning opportunities for Chicago neighborhood public high school students. Generation All also worked with an advisory council of national experts in education reform, teaching and learning, and policy.

The steering committee’s planning was grounded in research, the expertise of its members and the perspectives and creativity of Chicagoans across the city.

Starting in September 2014, the steering committee met monthly to learn and to shape the plan for how all Chicagoans can put neighborhood public high schools front and center and support them so they can offer a high-quality education for all students. Sessions included discussions with:

• John Jackson, president of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, on equity and closing opportunity gaps.

• Aarti Dhupelia, formerly with Chicago Public Schools, on CPS high school data.

• Warren Simmons, former executive director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, on lessons learned from prior efforts to improve U.S. high schools.

• Rebecca Wolfe, director of Students at the Center, a Jobs for the Future initiative; and local high school students Jessica Diaz, Xiao Lin Mei, Donald Rapier and Jesus Velasquez, on student-centered learning experiences in and out of school.

• Jenny Nagaoka, deputy director of the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, on holistic adolescent development and well-being.

• Pedro Noguera, distinguished professor of education at UCLA, and director, Center for the Study of School Transformation, on equity in education.

Public Engagement

In addition to our steering committee’s ideas, we wanted to hear from community residents and educators. Public engagement efforts by Generation All included a community speaker series, social media platforms and 21 focus groups. Speaker series events featured Warren Simmons speaking on education reform, Rebecca Wolfe on deeper learning and Pedro Noguera on equity and excellence. Over 400 people attended these events.

“What can our city and communities do to revitalize neighborhood public high schools so that ALL of our students experience a top quality education?”

We collected a total of 342 responses to this question at the speaker series events and on our website and social media, and these ideas were used to inform the plan.
Responses were coded and categorized into four major strategies:

1. Build partnerships between schools, parents and community organizations
2. Fund equitably to meet students’ needs
3. Make instruction student-centered
4. Focus on strengthening neighborhoods rather than on school choice

In August 2015, Generation All, in cooperation with several steering committee organizations and additional partners, hosted 21 focus groups across the city of Chicago, with more than 180 people in attendance.

Despite the diversity in age and race of the participants, the idea that rose to the top at every group was that everybody has a role to play in rebuilding engagement and commitment to neighborhood public high schools. This and other focus group findings helped shape the action plan.

Thank you to the following organizations for hosting focus groups:

- Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
- Center for Science and Math Education, Loyola University
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Park District
- Chicago Public Library
- Chicago Students Union
- Communities United
- Enlace Chicago
- Gads Hill Center
- LISC Chicago
- Logan Square Neighborhood Association
- Metropolitan Family Services—Calumet
- Mikva Challenge
- Network for College Success, University of Chicago
- Network 4, Chicago Public Schools
- Raise Your Hand
- School of Education, Loyola University
- Schools That Can
- Southwest Organizing Project
- Teach Plus
- Umoja Student Development Corporation

Generation All used website and social media platforms to establish name recognition, to disseminate ideas and research on school improvement and systemwide reform and to amplify the work of our partners and the positive activities in neighborhood public high schools.
Appendix C: Chicago Public Neighborhood High Schools, 2015-16

Benito Juarez Community Academy High School
2150 S Laflin St Chicago, IL 60608

Bowen High School
2710 E 89th St Chicago, IL 60617

Carl Schurz High School
3601 N Milwaukee Ave Chicago, IL 60641

Charles P Steinmetz College Preparatory High School
3030 N Mobile Ave Chicago, IL 60634

Chicago Vocational Career Academy High School
2100 E 87th St Chicago, IL 60617

Christian Fenger Academy High School
11220 S Wallace St Chicago, IL 60628

David G Farragut Career Academy High School
2345 S Christiana Ave Chicago, IL 60623

Edward Tilden Career Community Academy High School
4747 S Union Ave Chicago, IL 60609

Edwin G Foreman High School
3235 N LeClaire Ave Chicago, IL 60641

Ellen H Richards Career Academy High School
5009 S Laflin St Chicago, IL 60609

Emil G Hirsch Metropolitan High School
7740 S Ingleside Ave Chicago, IL 60619

Eric Solorio Academy High School
5400 S St Louis Ave Chicago, IL 60632

Frederick A Douglass Academy High School
543 N Wacker Ave Chicago, IL 60644

Gage Park High School
5630 S Rockwell St Chicago, IL 60629

George H Corliss High School
821 E 103rd St Chicago, IL 60628

George Washington High School
3525 E 114th St Chicago, IL 60617

Greater Lawndale High School For Social Justice
3120 S Kostner Ave Chicago, IL 60623

Gurdon S Hubbard High School
6200 S Hamlin Ave Chicago, IL 60629

Hope College Preparatory High School
5515 S Lowe Ave Chicago, IL 60621

Hyde Park Academy High School
6220 S Stony Island Ave Chicago, IL 60637

Infinity Math, Science and Technology High School
3120 S Kostner Ave Chicago, IL 60623

John F Kennedy High School
6325 W 56th St Chicago, IL 60638

John Hancock College Preparatory High School
4034 W 56th St Chicago, IL 60629

John M Harlan Community Academy High School
9652 S Michigan Ave Chicago, IL 60628

John Marshall Metropolitan High School
3250 W Adams St Chicago, IL 60624

Kelvyn Park High School
4343 W Wrightwood Ave Chicago, IL 60639

Kenwood Academy High School
5015 S Blackstone Ave Chicago, IL 60615

Lake View High School
4015 N Ashland Ave Chicago, IL 60613

Lincoln Park High School
2001 N Orchard St Chicago, IL 60614

Manley Career Academy High School
2935 W Polk St Chicago, IL 60612

Marie Sklodowska Curie Metropolitan High School
4959 S Archer Ave Chicago, IL 60632

Morgan Park High School
1744 W Pryor Ave Chicago, IL 60643

Multicultural Academy of Scholarship
3120 S Kostner Ave Chicago, IL 60623

Nicholas Senn High School
5900 N Glenwood Ave Chicago, IL 60660

North-Grand High School
4338 W Wabansia Ave Chicago, IL 60639

Orr Academy High School
730 N Pulaski Rd Chicago, IL 60624

Paul Robeson High School
6835 S Normal Blvd Chicago, IL 60621

Percy L Julian High School
10330 S Elizabeth St Chicago, IL 60643

Roald Amundsen High School
5110 N Damen Ave Chicago, IL 60625

Roberto Clemente Community Academy High School
1147 N Western Ave Chicago, IL 60622

Roger C Sullivan High School
6631 N Bosworth Ave Chicago, IL 60626

Stephen T Mather High School
5830 N Lincoln Ave Chicago, IL 60659

Theodore Roosevelt High School
3436 W Wilson Ave Chicago, IL 60625

Thomas Kelly High School
4136 S California Ave Chicago, IL 60632

Wells Community Academy High School
936 N Ashland Ave Chicago, IL 60622

Wendell Phillips Academy High School
244 E Pershing Rd Chicago, IL 60653

William Howard Taft High School
6530 W Bryn Mawr Ave Chicago, IL 60631

William J Bogan High School
3939 W 79th St Chicago, IL 60652

William Rainey Harper High School
6520 S Wood St Chicago, IL 60636

World Language Academy High School
3120 S Kostner Ave Chicago, IL 60623


5 Perez, “Chicago Public Schools downgrades four years of inflated graduation rates,” Chicago Tribune.


7 Healey, Nagaoka and Michelman, The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students, 1.

8 Healey, Nagaoka and Michelman, The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students, 2.


17 Generation All analysis of Illinois State Board of Education data.


27 Ibid., 8.


STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nancy Aardema
Executive Director, Logan Square Neighborhood Association

Sandra Abrevaya
President and Chief Impact Officer, Thrive Chicago

Jennifer Arwade
Co-Executive Director, Communities United

Jeff Bartow
Executive Director, Southwest Organizing Project

Karen Boran
Principal, John Hancock College Prep High School

Patrick Brosnan
Executive Director, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council

Chris Brown
Director, Education and Engagement, LISC Chicago

Vaughn Bryant
Former Chief Program Officer, Chicago Park District

Lynn Cherkasky-Davis
Director of Professional Learning-CTU Quest Center, Chicago Teachers Union

Ted Christians
Chief Executive Officer, UMOJA Student Development Corporation

Jessica Diaz
Student, Prosser Career Academy

Sam Dyson
Director, Mozilla Hive Chicago Learning Network

Mindy Faber
Director, Convergence Academies, Center for Community Arts Partnerships at Columbia College Chicago

Amy Heinke
Associate Professor of Bilingual and Bicultural Education, Loyola University

Joe Irizarry, NBCT
Math Department Chair, John F. Kennedy High School

Jennifer Johnson
Quest Center Facilitator, Chicago Teachers Union

Gregory Jones
Principal, Kenwood Academy High School

Wendy Katten
Executive Director, Raise Your Hand

Imran Khan
CEO and Co-Founder, Embarc

Michael Lach
Director of STEM Policy and Strategic Initiatives, University of Chicago Urban Education Institute

Rebecca Levin
Chief of Network 4, Chicago Public Schools

Xiao Lin Mei
Student, Jones College Prep High School

Mary Ellen Messner
Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services, City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services

Melissa Mitchell
Executive Director, Federation for Community Schools

Michelle Morales
Executive Director, Mika Challenge

Katya Nuques
Executive Director, Enlace (Little Village)

Cristina Pacione-Zayas
Co-Chair, the Puerto Rican Agenda

Danielle Parker
Director, Center for Student Development, Chicago Urban League

Mary Ann Pitcher
Co-Director, University of Chicago Network for College Success

Rita Raichoudhuri
Principal, Wells Community Academy High School

Andrea Saenz
First Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Public Library

Nouha Shwehdi
Chief of Staff, After School Matters

Eric Skalinder, NBCT
Music Teacher, Thomas Kelly High School

Audrena Spence
Executive Director, Metropolitan Family Services Calumet Center

Paul Sznewajs
Executive Director, Ingenuity, Inc.

Jesus Velazquez
Community Organizer, Logan Square Neighborhood Association

Bonita Walker-Jones, NBCT
Career and Tech Ed Teacher, VOISE Academy

FORMER STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Aarti Dhupelia
Former Chief Officer, College and Career Success, Chicago Public Schools

Christian Diaz
Former Executive Director, Enlace (Little Village)

Peggy Mueller
Former Senior Program Officer, The Chicago Community Trust

Jeannie Oakes
President Emerita in Educational Equity, University of California, Los Angeles

Charles Payne
Frank P. Hixon Distinguished Service Professor, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration

Warren Simmons
Former Executive Director; Assistant Clinical Professor, Master’s Program in Urban Education Policy, Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform

Rebecca Wolfe
Senior Director, Students at the Center, Jobs for the Future

GENESIS ALL TEAM

Abbey D. McLaren
Associate Program Officer

Misuzu Schexnider
Associate Program Officer

Beatriz Ponce de León
Executive Director

GENESIS ALL LEADERS

Patricia Gándara
Research Professor and Co-Director, The Civil Rights Project at UCLA Graduate School of Education

Terry Mazany
President and CEO, The Chicago Community Trust

Pedro Noguera
Distinguished Professor of Education, University of California, Los Angeles

Janice Jackson
Chief Education Officer, Chicago Public Schools

Fred Frelow
Senior Program Officer, Ford Foundation

Karen G.J. Lewis, NBCT
President, Chicago Teachers Union

ADVISORY COUNCIL