

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR CPS STUDENTS IN UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOODS



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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AUSL, in partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), provides CPS students with extra resources to ensure an equitable, high-quality education by cultivating a classroom environment and academic instruction built on rigor, relevance, and relationships.

As a nonprofit school management organization, AUSL is one of CPS' school networks in Chicago, with 31 neighborhood Schools of Excellence. We manage for continuous improvement by:

- Supporting the whole child.
- Creating highly-effective teachers.
- Transforming school culture and climate.

"All children, regardless of their zip code, deserve a high-quality education. Their learning experience needs to be student-centered in a supportive learning environment, academically rigorous and provides the supports needed to address the whole child. We must continually fight the achievement and opportunity gap that many of our students are facing."

– Don Feinstein, Ph.D., AUSL Executive Director

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR EQUITABLE LEARNING

Mayor Lori Lightfoot came into office with a core mission of creating and supporting an educational system that provides a safe and nurturing environment where children can thrive. Our academic best practices and commitment are aligned with those of the Mayor. Since our founding in 2001 as one of the country's first teacher residency programs, we have worked to:

- Transform educational outcomes of students (the majority being low-income Black and Latinx) in underserved, inner-city communities – from Auburn/Gresham, Austin, and Englewood to Lawndale, West Humbolt Park, and Roseland.
- Fulfill the promise that each student has access to an excellent education, right in their own neighborhoods.
- Ensure a safe, nurturing learning environment staffed by a diverse team of highly-qualified teachers.

Our learning platform is designed to ensure neighborhood schools have strong, effective leaders, highly-engaged teachers, and quality resources that are essential for students to achieve academic excellence. And achieve they have. Performance highlights from SY19 show that:

- AUSL elementary schools led district-managed Chicago Public Schools in attendance.
- Nearly 84% of AUSL schools were identified as “Well Organized” or “Organized” on the University of Chicago’s 5Essentials Survey – with no schools assessed as “Not Yet Organized” for the first time in four years.
- Since 2015, AUSL has increased the percentage of students at or above the national average performance for both 8th grade reading and 8th grade math.
- Graduating AUSL seniors have strong post-secondary school options, and in 2019 enrolled in college at a high rate:
 - The AUSL enrollment rate (67%) exceeded the national rate (47%) for urban teens.¹
 - Our senior class of 2019 earned a total of \$57.5 million in scholarships.

All this would not be possible without strong buy-in and support from our involved families, effective leaders, highly-engaged teachers, and students.

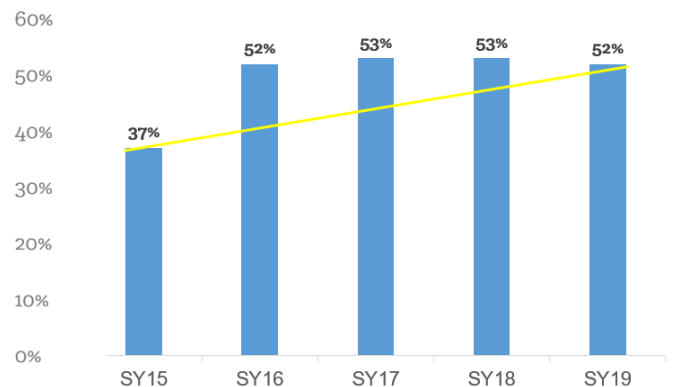
¹New York Times, Jan. 31, 2017.



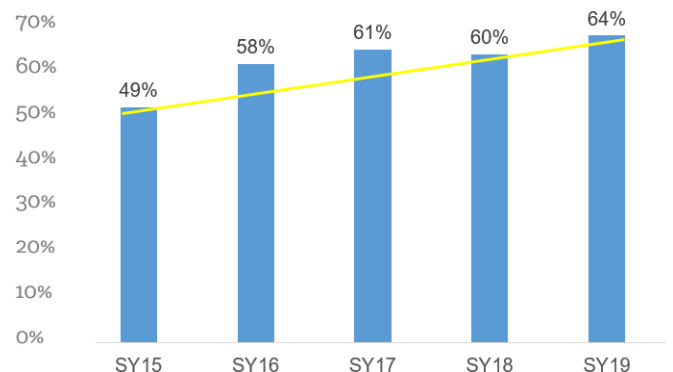
“We believe a high-quality educational experience focused on the whole child is a game-changer, and it sets our students on a pathway and trajectory for success. We are relentless in making a difference in the life of every student who walks through our door.”

– Dr. Keisha Campbell, AUSL Director of School Leadership

Percent At/Above National Average Performance, 8th Grade Math



Percent At/Above National Average Performance, 8th Grade Reading



Source for both charts: NWEA MAP Assessment 2015-2019

FILLING THE DEMAND FOR HIGH-NEEDS TEACHERS

The Chicago Teacher Residency (CTR) Program is one of the first and the most successful programs of its kind in the country. Created as a specialized training program for teachers in urban schools, it serves as a pipeline to recruit, train, cultivate, and retain high-quality, best-in-class teachers and leaders for CPS students.

“One of the things I liked was the model. It was simple and straightforward, it was repeatable, scalable, and measurable ... And at the core, it’s the teacher in front of the classroom that makes everything else that we do work.”

– Rosa Jimenez, Assistant Principal, Solorio Academy High School

Similar to a medical residency program, CTR offers hands-on experience and university coursework to train and prepare for the classroom. Our residents commit to teaching in an AUSL school for four years after graduation in order to:

- Raise the academic standards and performance for all students.
- Provide all students with equitable instruction and a quality education.

Currently working exclusively with DePaul University, the CTR program has developed, graduated, and supported over 1,100 highly-qualified educators with master’s degrees in the last 18 years for CPS.¹ And over the last three grade years (2017-2019), the teacher retention rate has increased, with over 80% of CTR graduates still teaching in CPS.²

The CTR has prepared me to be a teacher by giving me all the tools, training, and knowledge needed to become a successful practitioner, and having a mentor transformed my learning experience. I have a passion for empowering all children and helping each child realize their fullest potential.

– Courtney Bowdry, Resident, McNair School of Excellence.

Recruiting for Diversity

Attracting quality educators to teach and lead students requires a methodology that not only meets the educational standards required by CPS, but that also addresses the needs of the neighborhoods where the schools are located. Recruiting teachers who demographically reflect the student population they serve aligns with this approach.

Re-calibrating our teacher population to make it more diverse will help address those needs. CTR continues to recruit and develop more teachers of color (ToC) to fill positions within the District. The impact of diversity on students attending under served, inner-city schools is undeniable, as studies show that:

- Low-income students of color benefit most when taught by teachers of color, who improve learning for students of all races and help close achievement gaps between poor and affluent students.³
- The benefit of having a minority teacher for just one year in elementary school can carry over for several years; this is especially true for low-income boys.⁴

We need to prepare a more diverse teacher workforce that is representative of the student population and their academic and socio-emotional needs, so we:

- **Recruit for ToC:** We have surpassed the national average (20% teachers of color). In our CTR program, for the last four out of five years, we have recruited 50% ToC to reflect the diverse makeup of our student population. 80% of the CTR class of 2021 are teachers of color. From a leadership perspective, 84% of the principals in the AUSL network are people of color. This exceeds the findings in the Department of Education’s 2016, “The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce” report that only 23% of Principals in inner-city schools were Black and 15% were Hispanic.

2020 AUSL Network Principal Ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	Count
Black / African American	25
Hispanic / Latino	1
White	5
Total	31

Source: AUSL compiled data 2020

¹Ibid

²Madeline Will, Study: [Having Just One Black Teacher Can Up Black Students’ Chances of Going to College](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/11/black_teachers_key_black_students_college_enrollment), November 12, 2018, available at: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/11/black_teachers_key_black_students_college_enrollment. Source: A Plan to Transform Chicago Schools, Lori Lightfoot for Mayor.

⁴Madeline Will, Study: [Black Students More Likely to Graduate if They Have One Black Teacher](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2017/04/black_students_are_more_likely_to_graduate_if_they_have_one_black_teacher_study_finds.html), April 6, 2017, available at: http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2017/04/black_students_are_more_likely_to_graduate_if_they_have_one_black_teacher_study_finds.html. Source: A Plan to Transform Chicago Schools, Lori Light-foot for Mayor.

- **Recruit for Diversity:** We are committed to increasing the number of male teachers in K-12 classrooms to surpass the national average of 23%, and have successfully done so for the last two years, 32% and 34% respectively.
- **Recruit to Train and Retain:** Over the last five years, AUSL's CTR program's retention rate increased across all races, with substantial gains for ToC. The chart below shows the retention of Black teachers and teachers of color was 79 and 80% in 2018-2019, which is on par with white teachers.

By working together, we can build the capacity of the District to dismantle racial and socio-economic inequities that stand in the way of students in Chicago and across the country reaching their full potential.

Community Voices: Giving Back as a Parent Volunteer and Mentor.

"Being a parent volunteer through AUSL's parent mentor program at the Marquette School of Excellence is important to me for several reasons.

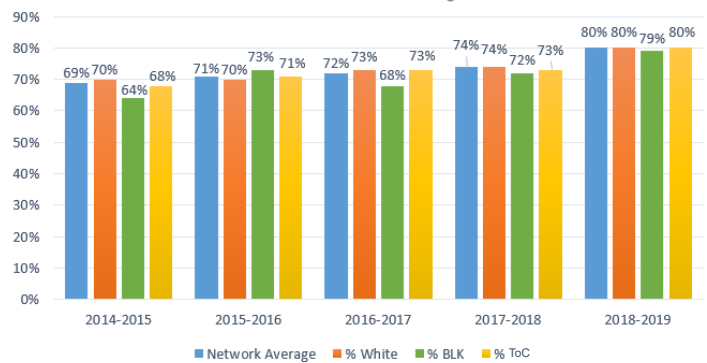
First, I gained leadership skills as a volunteer in the program. I started as a parent volunteer, but it was not my decision to become one. It was my son who wanted me to come to his school. He saw other parents volunteer and thought that it would be great for his mom to do something like that, so he recognized the leader in me way before I did.

Now, I am the coordinator for 12 parents, sharing the skills that made me a leader with them. Being a leader in my children's school is important because I can give back to the school, the teachers, administrators, and, most of all, the students. Being a mentor also inspired me to get my GED, then become a CNA, and to now pursue a degree in nursing.

Second, I became a leader in my community for the same reasons I became a volunteer and a parent mentor. I wanted my community to know that we have resources the same as others. It is important that we understand what support we have. Now I am a part of a system of care that gives back to my community."

– *Ebony Henderson, Parent at Marquette School of Excellence*

Teacher Retention by Race



Source: AUSL compiled data 2014-2019

PUTTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTO PRACTICE

In urban areas, it is estimated between 50% and 96% of all students experience some form of trauma.⁵ Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to suffer trauma as a result of their circumstances, and are more likely to experience homelessness, hunger, violence, abuse, and an unstable home life.

More than half – 58% – of U.S. children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) live in households with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.⁶ The impact of ACEs “Are compounded for children of low-income backgrounds who may lack support in the home and in under-resourced schools to overcome them.”⁷

Those ACEs follow children to school every day. “Elementary and secondary students that experience multiple traumatic events exhibit a decline in school-work and reduced concentration in and out of school. They act more disruptive in structured settings, display irritable and aggressive behavior.”⁸

To address the emotional price paid by these students – and teachers who feel their pain – AUSL has integrated trauma-influenced instruction into its curriculum using a mix of social and emotional learning (SEL) practices. These promote a safe school culture and classroom space designed to help teachers identify triggers and practice deescalation. The Lewis School offers a good example of applying SEL.

“What we’ve realized is that you can have the best system in place, but if kids are not able to work effectively on their own ... to self-regulate ... we’re not going to get very far. This SEL programming explicitly teaches our kids how to participate in these new, personalized learning classroom practices.”

– *Aquabah Gonney, Principal, Lewis School of Excellence*

Case Study: The Lewis School of Excellence

Challenge: The Lewis School of Excellence, located in the Austin neighborhood, serves grades K-8. The level of violence, poverty, abuse, and lack of social and emotional support in the community had traumatized many students. School leadership needed an effective, affordable solution to provide a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for students in order to improve behavior, control emotions, and re-focus them on learning and study.

Solution: Implement a set of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) best practices to help students:

- Manage their emotions and behaviors.
- Recognize external supports, feelings, and perspectives of others.
- Use communication for effective interaction with others to resolve conflict.
- Contribute to one's own school and community.

To meet these objectives, school leadership deployed the following techniques:

- **Zen Zones**, which provide students with space in the classroom to “Cool Down,” and teach breathing technique and calm down activities.
- **Talking Circles**, which offer daily space for students to discuss issues or concerns (school related, family, etc.)
- **Peace Ambassadors**, where students and staff request a peace circle to mediate student-to-student conflict in 1st-8th grade. Initiates restorative conversations, facilitates peer conferences, and creates agreements between students.

Results: Implementing SEL techniques had a positive impact on students:

- Attendance increased to 92%-96.4%.
- Behavioral referrals decreased by 82%.
- More students began requesting SEL services.
- The school gained in academic standing, reaching Level 1 (as per District Quality Rating Policy).

“I applaud AUSL for giving children that safe haven. It seems like the world is so cold and cruel, but to find out that there are still decent people out there with a genuine concern for your well-being makes you feel good.”

– Local School Council President, Parent at Carter School of Excellence

PRIVATE REVENUE FOR INCREMENTAL SUPPORTS

Private-funding initiatives, supported by a group of caring donors, have helped strengthen our network, and brought us all closer to transforming educational opportunities for Chicago's lowest-performing schools.

As an example, Robert and Emily King are two of our most generous benefactors. They believe that all children, given a chance, can achieve at high levels and should be given the opportunity. They share a view similar to all our donors and partners that “*This is an esteemed organization that does great things for kids. We are going to continue supporting AUSL, after all these many years, because we believe in it.*”

Private donations have averaged almost \$5 million per year, and total approximately \$100 million since we have opened our doors. This private revenue is what we use to provide incremental supports for students, including social and emotional support, mentors and tutors, educator professional development, middle school college visits (through Success Bound), and creative writing and sports after-school programs.

Our donors fully support the “Whole Child” model, and are committed to investing in order to witness the progress each school makes towards becoming true centers of academic excellence. The results are clear:

- 97% college acceptance rate.
- 94% of freshmen on track.
- 96% average attendance rate.

⁵See <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/mental-health/adolescent-mental-health-basics/index.html>.

⁶Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools, The National Council of State Education Associations and the National Education Association, July 2019.

⁷Ibid. 6.

⁸Favro, Tony, *Urban America Challenged by On-going Trauma Among the Poor*, City Mayors Society, September, 2019.

We also recognize that development and learning do not begin and end when a child walks through the school door. AUSL has established partnerships with many private sector businesses, community-based organizations, and local agencies that provide vital in-school and out-of-school services.

The Boeing Company, for instance, is one of AUSL's longterm partners, and a big believer in STEM education. Boeing has provided thousands of students with STEM programming, preparing them for educational and career opportunities in the digital economy. They have also committed to installing FUSE Lab in each of AUSL's K-8 schools.

Success Bound puts purpose behind why students come to school, and helps break the cycle of poverty by helping them find meaningful career pathways through early preparation that begins in middle school. The program takes a holistic, research-based approach to college/career readiness across all AUSL network schools. It offers students:

- *Success Bound Curriculum*, which connects students' current choices to their future self, helping them goal-set and build autonomy.
- *High School Preparation*, to help students select their 'best fit' high school and put them more in charge of their high school destiny.
- *College Trips*, which increase student ambition through visits to colleges to meet with students and faculty, and help them envision their future possibilities.

AUSL establishes partnerships with many community-based organizations and local agencies that provide vital in-school and out-of-school services to our students.

City Year ensures our students stay on track to graduate, with a focus on core grades and attendance. City Year corps members provide school-based tutoring and mentoring at 14 AUSL schools. Their efforts have made a positive impact on hundreds of students in grades 4th through 9th. Members also engage in classroom and school functions, providing support to the school culture and climate.

“Personalized learning is about productive members of society. Students are learning how to work by themselves and engage with other students. They are given the autonomy to advocate for themselves.”

– Ms. Ashley Jarrell, Teacher at Stagg School of Excellence

AIMING HIGHER FOR CPS STUDENTS... AND BEYOND

Since becoming the nation's first urban teacher residency program, and its first district innovation zone in 2006, we have worked closely with the Chicago Public School System to transform the city's lowest-performing schools. We have trained over 1,100 high-quality teachers, transformed 31 schools, and impacted over 16,000 children throughout Chicago's South and West sides.

Following recent recognition as a key element of Chicago's learning gains over the last 10 years, AUSL's Advisory Services – which provides strategic consulting to K-12 school districts – was approached by districts across the country looking to replicate our Chicago learning model.

As a result of their diligence and expertise, we now work with many school districts across the country. Two district programs are operating in both Waco, TX, and Louisville, KY. Just as with Chicago, both initiatives are based on our innovation framework that creates highly-effective teachers and leaders.

We develop, place, and advance high-quality teachers and future leaders by providing targeted and scaffolded pathways.

- **Transforms school climate and culture.** We ensure previously under-performing schools are safe, supportive, and diverse learning environments that enable each child to thrive academically and socially.



- **Supports the “whole child”** We build and sustain Pre-K through 12 academic, social-emotional, and extracurricular supports to enrich all aspects of student learning.
- **Leads with data.** We implement, nurture, and refine the data systems and culture to enhance how we serve our students.
- **Manages for continuous improvement.** We evolve the leadership structure and relationships necessary to help underserved populations succeed within large urban school systems.

For Toamca Wricks, a parent at the Casals School of Excellence in Humbolt Park, it has all worked out well. She’s developed a positive outlook on her child’s experience in the classroom, and believes that *“These kids have a great opportunity now, and I think that AUSL was the best thing that could have happened. I just hope that this journey continues to keep moving.”*

ACCELERATING THE SHIFT TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

There has been a growing interest among educators to migrate from the stigma of punitive, zero-tolerance disciplinary practices to the collaborative, problem-solving methods of Restorative Justice Practices.

Since suspensions neither improve school culture, nor change student behavior, Restorative Practices are gaining traction. They are viewed as a viable alternative to the punish/suspend method of discipline that has been found to affect students of color at a disproportionate rate.

Research indicates that *“Traditional forms of discipline actually exacerbate bullying, violence, poor academic performance, and a decrease in social-emotional health. Conversely, research shows that restorative approaches can transform student behavior and build healthy school communities.”*⁹

As partners with CPS, AUSL schools have been implementing the Restorative Justice Practices to create positive school cultures where all students learn to resolve disagreements, take ownership of their behavior, and engage in acts of empathy and forgiveness. Restorative Justice Practices *“Provide a way for schools to strengthen community, build relationships among students and between students and staff, and increase the safety and productivity of the learning environment.”*¹⁰

The importance, impact, and outcomes of Restorative Practices cannot be denied, and we will explore them in greater depth – supported by case studies and results – in our next white paper.

EDUCATING SAFELY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for our schools. To keep our students safe while they learn, CPS and AUSL network schools will begin the Fall 2020 school year using remote instruction.

AUSL is evaluating historical lessons learned, and curating the tools, strategies, tips, and best practices needed to ready schools and educators for online learning environments. The academic work will be equivalent in effort and rigor to typical classroom work, and will be structured to engage participation by all students. AUSL’s goal for the upcoming school year is to provide the most effective education possible during these uncertain times.

ABOUT AUSL

AUSL is a school management organization that works tirelessly to deliver on the promise that all students have access to an excellent education, right in their own neighborhoods. We inspire student achievement with our highly trained and passionate teachers who care for each child’s educational, social, and emotional needs. Our holistic model ensures our students experience more, with programs that aren’t always offered in public schools.

Today, we manage 31 Chicago Public Schools serving nearly 16,000 students.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Visit us at auslchicago.org

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⁹ Ferlazzo, Larry, *What It Takes to Apply Restorative Practices in Schools*, Education Week Teacher, January 14, 2020.

¹⁰ *Restorative Practices Guide and Tool Kit*, Chicago Public Schools.