

# A TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR RECRUITING AND RETAINING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

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Since 2003, AUSL's Chicago Teacher Residency (CTR) has been transforming educator preparation. In partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and DePaul University, AUSL is committed to serving schools with the greatest need by increasing the supply of teachers in hard-to-staff areas, diversifying Chicago's teacher workforce, and improving retention of early-career teachers. The one-year, full-time program recruits and trains talented career changers who are committed to equity and culturally responsive education. Individuals who join the program obtain a master's degree and obtain in-classroom experience with guidance from expert coaches and mentors.

AUSL's mission to provide CPS students with an

equitable, high-quality education has never been more crucial. In 2020, the nationwide teacher shortage was acutely felt in the face of the pandemic and increasing social unrest. As students returned to in-person classrooms, many were coping with lost academic and social emotional development as well as new and compounding challenges at home. Effective educators require resilience and support to adapt to students' diverse needs and navigate unexpected challenges with compassion. Through innovative teacher-preparation and ongoing educator career-coaching, CTR residents and alumni are equipped to provide students access to the academic rigor and social emotional supports they need to succeed.

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“The most important thing we can give our children in the wake of this pandemic are classrooms full of highly effective educators. Teacher residencies build upon the science of teaching—recognizing that great educators are needed to help students learn and thrive, especially in these challenging times.”

— DONALD FEINSTEIN, PH.D.,  
AUSL Executive Director

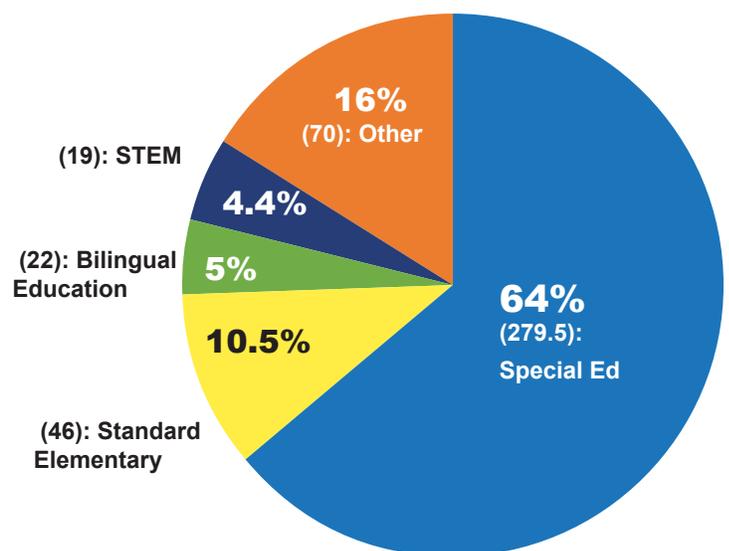


# CHALLENGES TO EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

For years, K-12 schools across the country have been facing growing rates of teacher turnover and unfilled positions. The issue is especially severe in Illinois where the state has lost half of its educator preparation programs since 2012 (Advance Illinois). As of October 2020, CPS had more than 430 unfilled teaching positions, and 64% of those were for positions supporting diverse learners. In fact, for the 2021 school year, half of all Chicago Public Schools had at least one vacant special education teacher position each quarter with 100 positions staying open all year (ISBE).

Teacher shortages contribute to significant inequities in our students' educational experiences. Low retention disproportionately impacts students of color and students from low-income homes. There is also growing concern for the diversity of the teaching force in neighborhoods of color. Black teachers are retained at lower rates from their first year in the classroom, and while Latinx teachers' early-career retention rates are similar to white teachers' in their first two years, they begin to decrease by year three (Advance Illinois).

## Unfilled teaching positions at beginning of 2021 school year (ISBE)



As CPS students readjust to in-person classrooms, many are grappling with significant learning and social emotional loss. After schools transitioned to remote learning in March 2020 and only partially reopened in spring 2021, an alarming number of students were absent from their classes and/or earned failing grades. Additionally, the isolation and stresses of stay-at-home protocols created gaps in their social-emotional skills.

This is especially true in low-income communities on the South and West Sides. One analysis showed that the same public high schools with the highest rise in Fs and declines

in attendance serve almost entirely low-income students and students of color (WBEZ). These students and their families experience the traumas of illness and loss, as well as food, housing, and economic insecurity at higher rates. The cumulative impact of these obstacles raises concern that students, especially low-income children of color and those with special needs, will face challenges reacclimating to in-person learning. Now, more than ever, our students need highly effective, compassionate educators to help overcome student learning loss, build social-emotional skills, and close equity gaps.

## By the end of the 2020–21 school year, students were on average five months behind in math and four months behind in reading.

Cumulative months of unfinished learning due to the pandemic by type of school, grades 1 through 6

Learning gap	By race			By income			By location		
	Schools that are majority ...			Household average, per school			School site		
<b>Math</b> 5 months behind 	Black		6	<\$25K		7	City		5
	Hispanic		6	\$25K–\$75K		5	Suburb <sup>1</sup>		5
	White		4	>\$75K		4	Rural		4
<b>Reading</b> 4 months behind 	Black		6	<\$25K		6	City		4
	Hispanic		5	\$25K–\$75K		4	Suburb <sup>1</sup>		4
	White		3	>\$75K		3	Rural		3

<sup>1</sup>Town or suburb.  
Source: Curriculum Associates i-Ready assessment data

McKinsey  
& Company





**“AT CURTIS, WE ARE ALL A FAMILY,**  
so as soon as students step in the door,  
they are taken care of. We are able to  
develop that strong caring teacher style  
because of the residency program. CTR  
residents want this job. They are change  
makers, teachers who truly believe  
their students are capable of anything,  
regardless of their environment, their  
history, regardless of what the world tells  
them, there is no limit to what they can do.  
They see the possibility of a better world.”

**— LAQUITA LOUIE,**  
Principal, Curtis School of Excellence



# TRANSFORMING TEACHER PREPARATION

Longstanding research has shown that teacher quality has a significant impact on student achievement. In fact, studies have revealed that a single year in the classroom of an ineffective teacher can have irreparable negative effects on a student's education, while students who spend just one year with a highly effective teacher tend to experience residual benefits for the next two years (NAP).

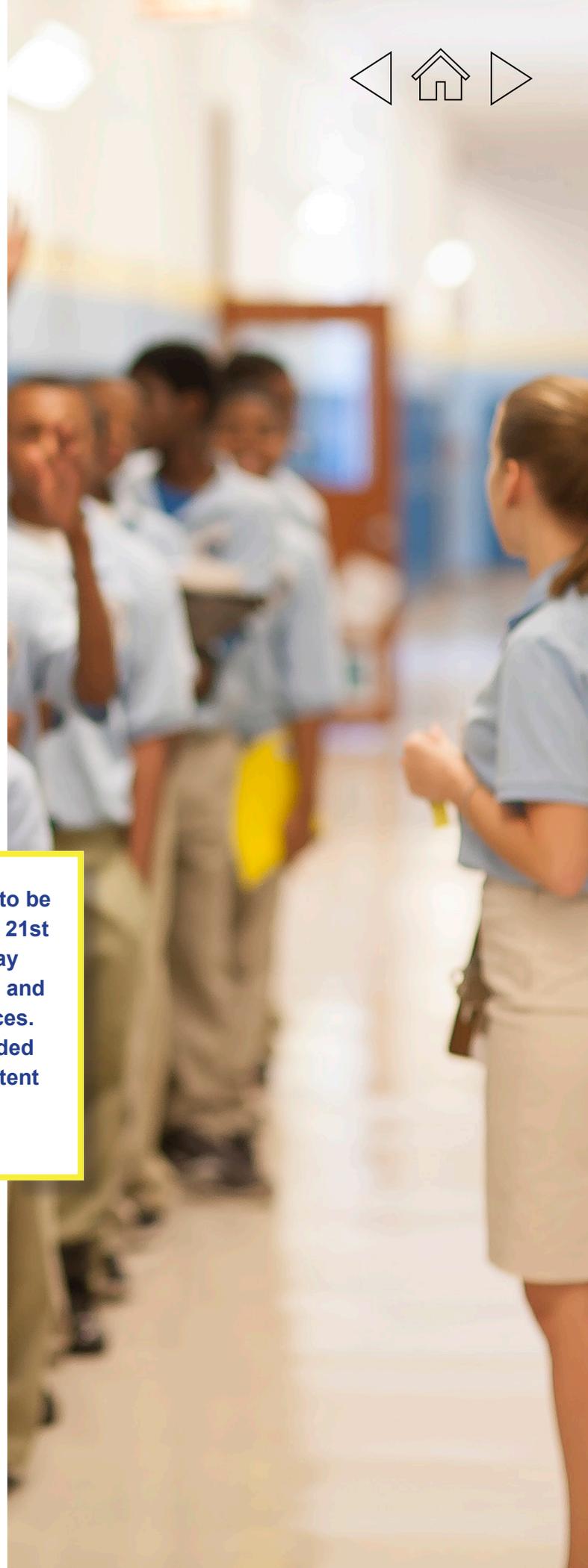
There is also growing consensus that a transformation of teacher preparation is needed to recruit, train, and retain highly effective teachers, including teachers who match the ethnicity of their students and are able to meet the needs of diverse learners.

**The education of teachers in the United States needs to be turned upside down. To prepare effective teachers for 21st century classrooms, teacher education must shift away from a norm which emphasizes academic preparation and course work loosely linked to school-based experiences. Rather, it must move to programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses.**

**— NCATE**

The impact of diversity on students attending underserved, 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 (Madeline Will).
- 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 (Madeline Will).



# LOCAL PARTNERSHIP CREATES LASTING IMPACT

A key approach to meeting these needs is through investment in public-private partnerships that recruit and train excellent educators committed to serving our most at-risk students. For example, the Chicago Teacher Residency (CTR) program, a partnership between the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and DePaul University, has worked to transform educator preparation and diversify the teacher workforce, particularly for hard-to-staff CPS classrooms. The CTR is a one-year program for individuals with limited to no teaching experience. Individuals who join the program obtain a master's degree and obtain in-classroom experience with guidance from expert coaches and mentors. After one year, residents begin a rewarding career as a licensed teacher in a Chicago Public School.

Since 2003, the CTR has graduated over 1,200 teachers — making it one of the largest producers of resident teachers in the country. Of our 2021 graduates, over 80% are teachers of color and 54% are special needs teachers. The program is a pioneer in teacher preparation and has served repeatedly as a model for other programs across the country.

Understanding that all students benefit from teacher diversity, the CTR is committed to attracting, developing, and retaining teachers who are from the very communities it serves. Recruiting diverse residents happens in partnership with local communities, drawing on parents and volunteers, who already know the needs of their schools. Organizations such as AmeriCorps and Chicago Works as well as our growing network of CTR

## Diversity of CTR Residents

OVER **80%** *identify as teachers of color (compared to 29% of teachers enrolled in Illinois teacher preparation programs)*

NEARLY **70%** *train in hard-to-staff areas: Special Education, Middle School, Math and Middle School Science*

**68%** *are Chicago residents*

**59%** *identify as first-generation college*

alumni partner with us to recruit career changers and recent college graduates.

CTR implements a proven process to support and build the foundation so that novice, first-year teachers are successful and capable to best serve students' academic progress. Residents experience a wide range of supports within the AUSL network of schools: they visit multiple schools and classrooms, learn to teach from a common curricular resource, find collegial support through alumni network programs, and make an early connection to an induction coach who will support them in their first year of teaching.

The CTR's success is directly linked to the mentor teachers who partner alongside residents for their training year. With mentors at the heart of the resident training process, the CTR believes that teaching is a leadership profession where residents and mentors are equipped with tools to make an impact within their classrooms and beyond. Last year, 50% of mentors were former residents, reflecting their desire to give back and continue developing as teacher leaders. The CTR recruits and develops mentor teachers who not only model great teaching but also create a supportive and collaborative space where adult learning thrives.

Everything about the training and support that goes into the residency program is designed to set up new teachers for success so they can develop and thrive as excellent educators for years to come. According to CTR Director Katie Peterson, these are the key ingredients of that recipe:

- **Teaching resilience skills**—we read the book *Onward* during the residency and practice resilience skills as openers every time we meet!
- **Fostering a growth mindset and a culture of coaching**—CTR grads are used to reflecting and getting LOTS of feedback. This practice helps them tackle each hurdle as a learning opportunity and a chance to reach out to a colleague, coach, or administrator to collaborate.
- **Experience**—Residents go through every part of the school year with a mentor teacher, and thus events like Curriculum Night, Report Card Pick Up, Field Trips, Emergency Drills, Testing, and End of Year celebrations are all experiences they have had at least once as opposed to a student teacher in a traditional setting who may only see some of those things in action and will have very little to fall back on in terms of experience.
- **Helping them find the right school to work at during the hiring process**—We support residents by getting to know them all year long and helping them build awareness of the types of settings they thrive in. Then we help school leaders interview residents with realistic knowledge of their strengths and growth areas so they can consider good placements within their grade level teams.
- **A great professional network**—There are so many CTR grads who have had similar experiences and training to reach out to. They have developed strong professional and personal bonds through the cohort model and the CTR individualized support.

## CTR SUCCESS

### VACANCY DOWN 7.5% TO 3.8%

In AUSL schools, The Chicago Teacher Residency has decreased the teacher vacancy rate by 49% and increased the retention rate of early-career teachers by 46% (from 56% in FY17 to 82% in FY21).

### IMPROVED TEACHER RETENTION RATES

among Black and Latinx teachers are especially encouraging (first year Latinx teacher retention rate improved from 44% in FY17 to 87% in FY20, and the first-year Black teacher retention rate improved from 52% in FY17 to 80% in FY20).

### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

CTR graduates report that the support they received helped them grow in their profession and acclimate to the culture within their schools.

### 81% RETENTION RATE

CTR's retention rate over the last 5 years is much higher than the national average.

### ABOVE AVERAGE PERFORMANCE

Over the last five years, students of CTR alumni have performed at or above the national average in math and reading.



# CASE STUDY: CURTIS SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

**Challenge:** Curtis School of Excellence, located in Chicago's historic Roseland neighborhood, has a history of high mobility rates for students, staff, and administrators, and is also high on the poverty index for CPS. Principal Laquita M. Louie knows that to stabilize this learning environment she needs teachers with exceptional commitment, particular skill sets, and a true understanding of the community they serve.

**Solution:** The CTR screens graduates who will be the right fit for Curtis School of Excellence, then provides new teachers with ongoing professional development and support to ensure their success and growth within the classroom.

*"We are a high needs school and things can go left really fast, which keeps me running different places. In partnering with the CTR, I know they are here to support not only the residents, but also the graduates. I have an awesome team of coaches who are supported in the same manner*

*"I'm asking them to support teachers, through professional development and also through setting a vision which is carried throughout the school." — Dr. Louie*

**Results:** Of the 25 teaching positions at Curtis, 11 are filled by CTR alumni, in addition to current residents and staff positions.

*"With traditional graduates we have to start with how to set up the classroom and teaching classroom management. CTR graduates come prepared with behavior management skills so we can focus on instruction rather than management." — Dr. Louie*

**Trial by Pandemic:** When CPS moved to remote learning during the pandemic, 93% of Curtis families did not have access to the internet in their homes. 94% of parents had never used the Google Meet technology that classes would be delivered through. Through the AUSL network there was a cohesive effort to figure out challenges like these and share solutions as they were being tested in different neighborhoods.

*"AUSL created opportunities for us as leaders to work together to develop systems and protocols, to organize teachers and support personnel as we went into the pandemic. This forward thinking meant we went in with systems in place to support learning. There was an atmosphere that we are better together."*

Curtis opened a command center so parents could learn in person to use the technology they would need to take home. The entire staff also came together to share their knowledge of the community and find creative solutions to each family's barriers to either internet access or supervision for students during classes. For some students this meant logging in to class from a parent's phone while in the car; for others it meant going with a parent to work and logging in from a work computer. Throughout remote learning, Curtis was able to maintain 87% attendance—a triumph in pandemic times.

**"I AM SURROUNDED WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE COMMITTED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT THE NEXT THING THAT WILL PUSH US AND PUSH OUR STUDENTS TO THE NEXT LEVEL."**

*"The advantage of the CTR is the community it creates, both within your school with your mentor teacher and coaches, and among the residents you are taking classes with. In one year of training, I had the advantage of seeing how a school operates at a macro level, how different systems are related. It also created pathways for people I could go to whenever I had questions. Those opportunities for collaboration and the professional development we receive has kept the fire kindling for me."*

**— ALLISON RINGHAND,**  
Curtis Math Coach, CTR C'12





## ABOUT THE ACADEMY FOR URBAN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) is an education equity-focused non-profit that works tirelessly with the belief that all students should have access to an excellent education right in their own neighborhoods. AUSL does this by recruiting and training promising individuals to be effective teachers. In addition, we leverage our nearly two decades of learnings through our partnerships with school communities across the country with the goal of unlocking student potential. To achieve the goal of providing access to an excellent education, we have three service lines:

- **Chicago Teacher Residency:** Founded in 2001 as the nation's first teacher residency program, the CTR develops highly effective new teachers in neighborhood schools to meet the diverse needs of students. CTR teachers are trained to provide students access to the academic rigor and social emotional supports students need to succeed.
- **School Management:** We inspire student achievement with our highly trained and passionate teachers who care for each child's educational, social, and emotional needs. Last year, 97% of the high school students at AUSL network schools were accepted into college, and our students continue to show improvements in math and reading each year.
- **Advisory Services:** We partner with schools and districts across the country to attain whole-school transformation where all students can thrive.

### SOURCES:

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