

# Chicago Public Schools Student Advisory Council

August 13, 2018

## Policy Recommendations

Youth created policies based on issues students of Chicago Public Schools have identified as barriers in their district.



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Haley Williams  
Brooks College Prep

Jade Webb  
Epic Academy

Aislinn Diaz  
Kelly High School



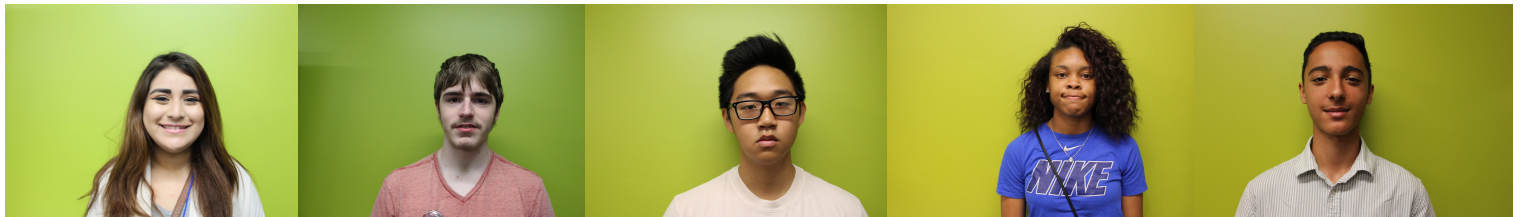
Ibraheem Khan  
Northside College Prep

Aysha Ahmad  
Senn High School

Travares Wilson  
Fenger Academy High School

Liliana Villa  
Hancock College Prep

Rohit Khanal  
Mather High School



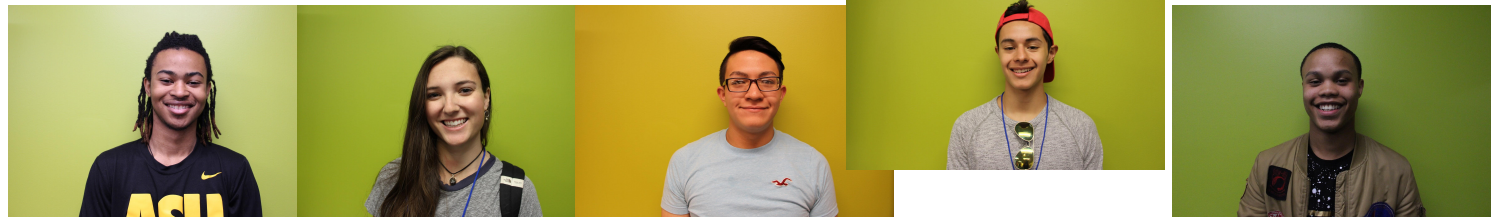
Denise Garcia  
Curie High School

Zachary Robbins  
Lindblom Math & Science Academy

Jonathan Lee  
Northside College Prep

Asia Harris  
Morgan Park High School

Kian Khatibi  
Lincoln Park High School



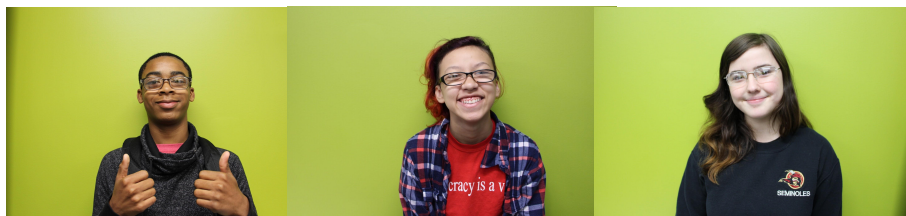
Justin Burns  
Bronzeville Scholastic Institute

Kate Ellbogen  
Jones College Prep

Hugo Diaz  
Solorio High School

Uriel Bandera  
Lane Tech College Prep

Reginald Palmer  
Urban Prep Englewood



Jerimiah Pope  
Kenwood Academy High School

Dominique Del Valle  
Alcott College Prep

Tatum Thompson  
Taft High School

# CPS Student Advisory Council Youth Policy Makers



# CPS Student Advisory Council

A collective of twenty-one young leaders from across the city of Chicago, who are passionate about education and addressing issues affecting students throughout Chicago Public Schools. With the support of Mikva Challenge, the council has learned about different factors that impact inner-city public education and inform policy to the CPS Chief Education Officer, Dr. Janice K. Jackson.



This summer, the Chicago Public Schools Student Advisory Council focused on addressing the framing question of “How do we offer students a voice in allocating resources to equitably impact all CPS youth?” The Council researched through a wide variety of methods: online research; interviews with Dr. Dave Stovall and Cynthia K. Barron of UIC, as well as Alejandra Frausto of Sara E. Goode; site visits to Juarez High School and the Chicago Cultural Center; survey distribution at Millennium Park; and simulations to understand different stakeholders’ roles in budgeting, as well as creating one’s ideal school.

## Our Research

## Issue:

Currently CPS uses a formula across the entire district that determines the funds allocated to each school on a per pupil basis. This is problematic because no school has the same challenges. Certain variables that are very important to various schools are not weighed equally in a formula that stretches across 600 schools, which leads to schools not being properly funded to tackle specific issues within their schools. Variables we know of are student enrollment in which around \$5400 are given to each school per student enrolled, state funds according to the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch, and federal money according to the neighborhoods the students come from. Schools may receive additional money according to the number of diverse learners they have. While we have no control over federal and state funding, our recommendation aims to impact the allocation of citywide funds in CPS schools.

## Recommendation:

Create distinct fund allocation formulas for each network, resulting in 13 different formulas in hopes of having different variables present depending on the needs of students in those areas.

## Action Steps:

1. Determine the monetary value of each of the variables in the current formula
2. Speak with each network chief and multiple schools within each network to see what variables are not represented in the current formula and why those factors are not factored in
3. Reach out to a university/research partners in school public policy such as UIC to help us create these formulas
4. Present the draft formulas to the network chiefs and school representatives to see if they approve.

## Why is it important?

Changing the formula is key because it will be a turning point from the singular formula system currently in place that creates a lot of disadvantages for schools in certain scenarios. One formula cannot realistically encompass all the variables that need to be addressed and funded for every school.

For example:

Schools in high trauma areas may have students with higher social emotional learning (SEL) needs. These institutions require proper funding in order to help these students. Networks with more students in need of SEL services would have a distinct formula that allocates funds to help these students. If the school is able to account for SEL students than parents would be more likely to enroll their students at these schools.

## How does this relate to the CPS vision?

The CPS vision commits to having financial stability of protecting and improving student achievement. Network specific formulas allow for specific needs being funded, allowing schools to achieve financial stability. A more financially stable school has the resources necessary to provide the best education possible for its students.

## Issue:

Students don't understand how the budget operates or how other resources are allocated, which leaves them confused and frustrated as their favorite teachers get laid off, schools have little to no textbooks, and they're having fewer events or sports. Along with this, students cannot impact the budgets without first understanding it.

## Recommendation:

Creating a toolkit that showcases how other schools and student led organizations can reallocate resources within their schools, so they will later be able to make informed recommendations to their schools on creative ways to bring resources into their schools.

## Action Steps:

1. Talk with CPS officials to find people well-versed in how the CPS budget works to help us create the toolkit
2. Put the toolkit online and advertise it to stakeholders, which are principals, Local School Council members (especially students), Chicago Student Union members, Student Voice Committee members, and CPS budgeting experts.

## Why is it important?

Schools don't have a lot of resources. This guide will help them understand how resources are allocated so they can later apply it to their school's budget. We also don't know what it takes to bring the activities we want into our schools, so this will help us to realize those factors, and create a plan of action to implement our ideas in our schools. This will also hold LSC and SVC members more accountable, and introduces students to responsible financial options.

## How does this relate to the CPS Vision?

Our recommendation relates to the CPS vision through two different aspects: financial stability and integrity. For financial stability we plan to give students a deeper understanding of what goes into the CPS budget. It relates to integrity because we are being honest and transparent about the budget and how it affects students

## Issue:

Currently on the Local School Council there is 1 principal, 6 parents, 2 community leaders, 2 teachers, 1 non-staff member, and only one student. Having only one student representative doesn't allow every voice within the school to be heard. There are approximately 109,000 students in CPS High Schools and there are only 95 student representatives on the LSCs. That is a representation of .08% of student voice. Students are what make up a school therefore having more than one student involved in decisions that affect the school allows them to more accurately represent the voice of all the students in the school. Adding on, currently the student representative is not allowed to vote on the budget. Students are the ones who are directly affected by budget changes and when they aren't given opportunities to have a voice it leads to students feeling excluded from the school. Part of this also stems from the fact that the LSC is not as well-known within their schools so students don't know they can get involved.

## Recommendation:

Expanding the amount of students within the LSC to allow more voices within the school to be heard and to reflect the population of young people so that there are 3 students from 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Expand voting capabilities of the students within the LSC to give more students a hand in how their resources are being allocated. Raise awareness of the LSC within the school to increase student interest and participation.

## Action Steps:

1. Having a CPS mandate allow two additional members as student representatives on the LSC.
2. Of those student representatives one will be a sophomore, junior, and senior from each year. The sophomore would be involved with the Student Voice Committee and the junior/senior participation is optional.
3. Once that is established the student representative voting capabilities will be expanded by being given the ability to vote on the budget. With that being said we would also like the student representatives to receive additional training with the student budgeting toolkit.
4. Lastly it is important that the entire student body is aware of the Local School Council and its impact therefore awareness of the LSC would be expanded upon by creating posters around the school or updates on social media about the LSC.

## How does this relate to the CPS Vision?

In the Local School Council (LSC), we only have one student representing a whole student body. We cannot expect them to be able to know the sentiments of everyone. Having more students on the LSC helps achieve a more diverse student opinion. Also, giving students the right to vote on the budget gets them involved more with how their resources are being allocated and more involved in bettering their education. This connects to the CPS vision because within their vision is integrity and a key component within integrity is empowering students to be involved in the decision making process. Opening the number of spots of student representatives in the local school council allows students to be directly involved in the decision making process and to have a more rounded and collective say.

## Issue:

One of the most key aspects of proper school management is the incorporation of student voice. Without student voice integration in the decision making process, school administrations are more prone to enacting policies that will not benefit the student body. The current method of student voice has no direct path for sufficient change alongside their adult counterparts, Local School Council (LSC) or otherwise. Although Student Voice Committees are already part of the school atmosphere, by being able to work alongside LSC, they will be able to create more impactful change for the students and their school.

## Recommendation:

Our recommendation is to have Student Voice Committees (SVCs) act as a counterpart to their Local School Councils (LSCs). LSCs will enable SVCs to be present in their meeting providing ample speaking opportunities. SVC members will primarily focus on the issues pertaining to their school and neighborhood while providing valuable input on issues that affect the entire student body.

## Action Steps:

1. Make it a requirement for the LSC to host the SVC at their meetings every other month
2. Have a short period of time during the LSC meeting devoted to listening to what the SVC has been working on
3. No matter what month it is, SVC has to be present and get fair say in the summer LSC meeting about the budget and how to prioritize
4. Have every SVC member informed with the Student Budgeting Toolkit (SBT) so at the meeting with LSC they have proper input to give on how to prioritize the budget.
5. The LSC student member should also be a SVC member

## Why is it important?

Student Voice Committees possess a lot of value simply because of all the progressive work that can be done. A council, simply a group, led and run by a group of youth can possibly be exactly what we need in order to improve the lives of many youth within Chicago as well as the rest of the country. Schools function better with proper communication between student and adults in the school which is where the SVC comes in. Students could provide the adults with advice and recommendations on how to help the school run better. Students develop leadership competencies including team coordination and teamwork. SVC also becomes advocates for students' voice.

## How does this relate to the CPS Vision?

The CPS Vision states under the core beliefs that "Young people must learn to work with others, resolve conflicts and pursue goals." Within the Student Voice Committees, these values would not only be upheld by the members, but by all students passionate about the issues they face. The committees would teach youth to take action and build the skills to problem solve for themselves and each other. Future leaders would develop within the program. Another aspect of the vision is creating a high intensive learning environment. The SVC would be working alongside LSC to implement student voice within matters that affect the education system. Having the SVC able to work with the LSC would enable students to personalize their education based on what they see works best.



## Issue:

When it comes to the allocation of resources, we have concluded that it has been distributed unfairly. One of the primary factors that revolve around the distribution of resources is student enrollment. We know that neighborhood schools are not a top pick for many students because of their “negative reputation.” Students’ attention is sought towards the commonly talked about selective enrollment and charter schools; therefore, there is a decrease in enrollment in neighborhood schools and as a result, less funds.

## Recommendation:

Implement life skill classes to a section of the common core CPS curriculum because the common core states that these skills are to be learned in the common core, yet they are not being taught.

## Action Steps:

1. Contact Umoja, a student development organization, and try to get a partnership with them since they already have experience implementing life skill courses.
  - a. Explain to them how this connects to the CPS Vision and why their line of work would establish a connection our focus question.
2. Talk to principals about the benefits of life skills classes and how teachers curriculums will not be too deeply affected - only a week will be devoted to the courses and only to certain teachers.
  - a. Ex: An English teacher will be in charge of having workshops for creating a proper resume, how to properly send an email, or how to prep for an interview.
  - b. Math teachers, specifically statistics (if possible), will be in charge of workshops for filing taxes.
3. Umoja will help supply tips and resources for this since they do similar workshops as well as apply to SEL course.
4. Promote the life skill courses and the uniqueness in neighborhood schools through media

## Why is this important?

A unique program such as life skills classes may help check off the anxiety families may face when it comes to choosing a school for their students to be successful. This could help with students wanting to go to neighborhood schools, helping persuade them because of a program that more and more people feel are necessary for a successful future. On average, only 25% of Chicago kids go to their neighborhood high school. Only 10 years ago the average was 45%. That is a drastic fall between a short time period and is predicted to continue to fall. It is stated that LESS than 1 out of every 4 students go to their neighborhood high school. If there is a grand decrease in enrollment, the money and distribution of resources lessen.

## How does this connect to the CPS Vision?

This directly correlates to Academic Progress, as we are preparing students for post-secondary success in the ever-evolving workplace. This is especially crucial with the Learn Plan Succeed initiative that is planning to be passed in 2019. This initiative mandates a job acceptance, military enrollment, or college acceptance letter in order to graduate. Without certain skills, how are students supposed to fulfill these requirements. A solution to this is life skill courses because it helps create an opportunity to obtain a prosperous future.

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Dr. Cynthia K. Barron  
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UIC, Center for Urban Education Leadership

Alejandra Frausto  
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Jasmine Juarez  
Juarez High School

Karen Lewis  
Chicago Teachers Union President

Jackson Potter  
Chicago Teachers Union

Jessica Marshall  
CPS, Office of Civic Engagement and Social  
Science

Cristina Salgado  
CPS, Office of Civic Engagement and Social  
Science

### Facilitators:

Monica Gutierrez, Director, CPS Student Advisory Council

Barbara Cruz, Summer Support, Cornell University

Faviola Ramirez, Intern, Beloit College

For more information on Chicago Public School's Student Advisory Council,

please contact:

Monica Gutierrez, [monica@mikvachallenge.org](mailto:monica@mikvachallenge.org)

Mikva Challenge, [mikvachallenge.org](http://mikvachallenge.org), (312) 332-5810

Or visit:

<http://cps.edu/Pages/StudentAdvisoryCouncil.aspx>