



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN CHICAGO: A BASELINE REPORT

THE CHICAGO
PUBLIC
EDUCATION
FUND

A young boy with short hair, wearing a blue shirt and a dark jacket, is sitting at a wooden desk. He is looking intently at a tablet computer in front of him, with his finger touching the screen. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom or school setting.

GREAT LEADERSHIP

is required for world-class public schools.

We are investing dollars, time and expertise to support school leaders in transforming and accelerating student learning.

Over the next four years, The Fund will invest more than \$20 million to aggressively grow the number of high-quality principals citywide. Our investments aim to:

Enhance the placement and support of **high-potential** principals at scale

Develop **best-in-class** principal supports that grow high-performing and high-potential public school leaders at each stage of their careers.



Enable **principal-led** school transformation

Support principals and their educator teams as they use innovative, personalized learning models to accelerate student learning, improve teacher practice, and move their public schools **into the 21st Century**.



Create the conditions in which principals can **succeed** and **stay**

Make Chicago the best city in the nation to be a public school principal by championing structures that **recognize, empower** and **reward** great leaders.



ABOUT THE FUND

The Chicago Public Education Fund (The Fund) is a nonprofit organization working to grow the number of great public schools in Chicago by seeking out and investing in innovative leaders working to reinvent classroom learning.

As one of the first nonprofits in the nation to leverage the time and talent of business leaders to create social impact, The Fund's inception 15 years ago redefined local philanthropy. Disciplined and flexible seed investments launched a now-thriving ecosystem of nonprofits dedicated to improving public education in Chicago by recruiting, supporting and retaining great teachers and principals.

Solutions to the challenges of public education exist.

The Fund is a catalyst for promising initiatives that benefit all of Chicago's nearly 400,000 public school students. Our data-driven approach allows us to navigate the risks of such ambitious undertakings, respond to the changing and diverse needs of educators across the city, and act boldly.

In keeping with this legacy, Fund 4 seeks to more than double the number of high-performing principals¹ in Chicago's public schools by 2018 and to enable the city's best educators to redefine what's possible for our schools and students.

WHY INVEST IN PRINCIPALS?

No great school exists without great leadership, and principals are the leaders of Chicago's public schools. Among school-related impacts on student learning, principal leadership is second only to teaching and accounts for 25 percent of the total school influence on a child's academic performance.² This is because – like the leaders in all industries – principals are a major contributor to the retention or turnover of their teachers. Our best principals keep great teachers, even through times of transition or resource reduction.³

24 out of 25 teachers say the principal is the number one reason they stay in or leave a school.⁴

Great principals can achieve dramatic results – but it takes time. Our data show that Chicago principals reach their peak effectiveness around year five, which is about the length of a single Chicago principal contract. Unfortunately, more than 60 percent of our city's principals leave prior to this milestone – a fact that requires effort to change. With workforce expectations evolving toward more frequent job changes, we need to redouble our efforts to retain our highest-performing leaders for longer. When principals are working to create a positive school culture and sustainably improve student outcomes, every year counts.

WHY INVEST IN CHICAGO PRINCIPALS?

Unique among big city school systems, Chicago has a long-standing focus on building effective school leaders. The City of Chicago, CPS and nonprofit and higher education partners were first to invest in full-year principal residencies to prepare aspiring leaders – a model now used across the nation. They have also built a first-of-its-kind collaborative to train and support Chicago's future principals.

We can do more to recruit, develop, support and retain Chicago's best principals.

Context matters, too. State of Illinois and CPS policies grant principals significant influence over what happens within their school buildings. Unlike many other cities, Chicago principals have the authority to hire the best teachers for their schools, the flexibility to differentiate the support they provide to teachers, and the ability to develop both a budget and schedule that best meet the needs of their students and communities.

OUR PRINCIPAL WORK

We believe that educator-led innovation helps schools solve their most pressing challenges and keeps great educators invested in the schools that need them the most. Fund investments empower the hundreds of members of our Innovative Educator Network to utilize time, technology and talent to transform student learning.

Discover Series

Discover Series events are open-enrollment workshops on a wide range of topics chosen by educator demand. More than 750 educators participate annually.

Summer Design Program

With nearly 20 percent of public schools participating through 2015, Summer Design Program enables principal and teacher teams to use design-thinking principles and innovate around their use of talent, time and technology. Early evidence suggests these innovations measurably improve student learning.

Breakthrough Schools: Chicago

In partnership with LEAP Innovations, an innovation hub that bridges the gap between education and innovation, Breakthrough Schools: Chicago enables the city's best educators to lead whole-school transformation in public schools. This multi-year, competitive program will serve more than 20 schools across Chicago in 2015.

Chicago Principals Fellowship

With support from the Crown Family, the Chicago Principals Fellowship is a partnership between the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Northwestern University to provide a new strand of executive leadership development designed for and with Chicago's most talented principals. Twenty-one principals were selected in the first cohort; the top 10 percent of Chicago's principals will participate by 2017.

ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL SURVEYS

In the first year of Fund 4, we reviewed available data on principal performance and retention in Chicago’s public schools. That analysis suggests that principals are most effective in their fourth year and beyond. However, retaining principals past this milestone is a challenge.

Just 40 percent of principals remain in-role after five years.⁵

To better understand what principals need, we conducted:

- An engagement survey to collect feedback from principals returning to their roles for school year 2014-15, and
- An exit survey to collect feedback from principals transitioning out of their roles.

Over a three-month period, both groups of principals had the opportunity to complete the survey online or with a third-party interviewer over the phone. To help build on survey findings, we conducted additional focus groups with approximately 30 principals to further guide our programmatic approach. This report summarizes that survey and focus group feedback and identifies in-role supports that could improve principal satisfaction, performance and retention rates.

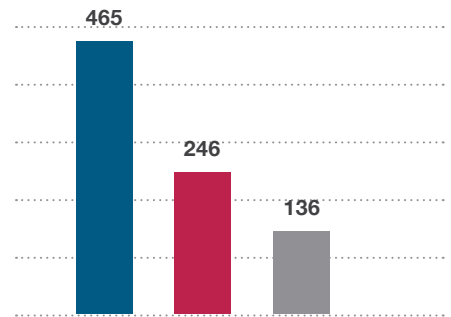
Nearly 50 percent of the 650 principals contacted responded to our survey.

The Fund will continue to conduct these surveys each spring to gather important information from our school leaders. We will also publish a new report each fall, comparing year-over-year results and making recommendations for programming in the new school year.

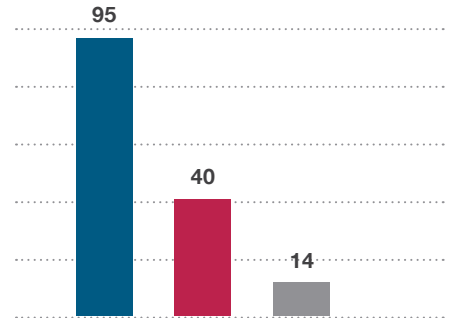
FAST FACTS

- # of Principals Contacted
- # of Respondents
- # of Respondents With 5+ Yrs Of Principal Experience

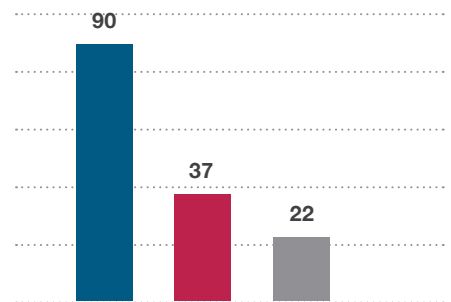
DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS



CHARTER ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS



DISTRICT EXIT SURVEYS



KEY TRENDS

Clear trends emerged from the principals' anonymous responses – aspects of the position principals value most, the areas in which principals would like more support, and suggestions for increasing overall principal job satisfaction.

To begin, it is worth noting that many principals are satisfied with key aspects of their work.

- 93 percent of principals who responded are satisfied with current compensation.
- 86 percent of principals who responded say they have a good relationship with their community, including Local School Councils in district-managed schools.
- 60 percent of principals who responded say they have a positive working relationship with their direct manager.

TAKEAWAYS

It was also clear that all principals appreciate and would like more differentiated professional development and support – regardless of satisfaction level or school type. This finding is consistent with general employee satisfaction surveys in other sectors.⁶

Specifically, Chicago's principals are asking for:

- 01** Tailored, streamlined professional development opportunities and tools that respond to their schools' individual needs.
- 02** Practical tools that help increase the quality of teaching and learning in schools, especially as it relates to instruction, implementation of the Common Core State Standards and strategic budgeting.
- 03** Greater flexibility in their roles to implement the instructional leadership practices that will most benefit their unique schools, teams and communities.

A PRINCIPAL'S WORDS

"No one has told me recently that I am doing a good job or that they want me to stay in my role."

– High performing principal in Garfield Park

TAKEAWAY 01

Principals want more tailored professional development opportunities and tools that respond to their schools' individual needs.

Principals suggested an **integrated annual calendar** that covers fewer topics in a more in-depth manner and fosters coordination among professional development providers; **differentiated sessions** that meet their individual needs and allow for self-selection among multiple choices; and professional development that illuminates **examples of good practice** within Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and speaks to current needs.

TAKEAWAY 02

Principals want practical tools that help increase the quality of teaching and learning in schools, especially as it relates to instruction, implementation of the Common Core State Standards and strategic budgeting.

Principals cited instructional leadership – developing teacher practice and increasing student achievement – as both a top priority and the most enjoyable aspect of the job. They recognized the Common Core State Standards, the REACH Students (REACH) teacher evaluation system and strategic budgeting as potential **supports for teacher development** and **student learning**. However, principals cited a desire for more opportunities to work with their peers to overcome **common challenges** with **timely, innovative solutions**.

TAKEAWAY 03

Principals want greater flexibility in their roles to implement the instructional leadership practices that will most benefit their unique schools, teams and communities.

The majority of principals reported a lack of time available to devote to instructional leadership practices as their greatest challenge. Specifically, principals noted a **large number of compliance mandates** that they are expected to complete without sufficient support from their direct managers. Top-performing principals repeatedly expressed **strong, productive relationships with their managers**, but felt that managers are spread too thinly to provide consistent support. In subsequent focus groups, principals felt neither recognized nor appreciated for their work. Furthermore, they repeatedly expressed a desire for more flexibility in choosing curriculum and leading teacher professional development.

SURVEY STATISTICS

65% of principals

would like more tailored professional development

57% of principals

would like more support transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

40% of principals

would like more support in strategic budgeting

88% of principals

cited instructional leadership as their top priority

72% of principals

identified compliance as the most challenging aspect of the job



OUR RESPONSE

Over the past 15 years, The Fund has seeded more than 30 programs and organizations dedicated to recruiting, supporting and retaining great educators in every type of public school in Chicago. This vibrant nonprofit community has trained and developed 25 percent of principals citywide today. During school year 2014-15, The Fund supported initiatives that respond directly to the feedback of our principals.

To best support principals, we:

- Used our **Discover Series** to provide workshops around immediately relevant topics – such as distributive leadership, 5Essentials, scheduling and budgeting;
- Launched programs that retain our top principals, including the landmark **Chicago Principals Fellowship**;
- Enabled visionary educators to discover new ways to innovate in their schools through our flagship **Summer Design Program** and the **Breakthrough Schools: Chicago** initiative;
- Published comprehensive **case studies and reports** that illuminated how public school principals in Chicago are developing strategies to address challenges in their individual schools; and
- Collaborated with CPS, the charter community and other stakeholders to ensure **principals' needs and voices remained a top priority** in our city.

LOOKING AHEAD

We believe that highly effective principals are best poised to successfully lead change in public education. It is the shared responsibility of CPS, charter, city and community leaders to do all that we can to retain them. This belief was the impetus for the engagement and exit surveys, which will provide a space for principals to voice their feedback and offer ideas for improvement. The results of this annual survey offer significant insight into how The Fund and others can partner with CPS and charter networks to increase principal satisfaction and, ultimately, better retain high-performing principals in Chicago.

We deeply appreciate the hard work of our city's best principals and will continue to ask them how we can better meet their needs. We hope you will join us in listening and responding in ways that help foster a citywide culture of outstanding leadership in our schools. If you are interested in learning more about our commitment to principal quality in all of Chicago's public schools, please contact us at info@thefundchicago.org.



ENDNOTES

1. To identify high-quality principals, The Fund uses the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) principal evaluation system and the student-growth focuses Schools Quality Rating Policy.
2. CHURN: The High Cost of Principal Turnover (2014). Report. School Leaders Network. Retrieved from http://connectleadsucceed.org/sites/default/files/principal_turnover_cost.pdf.
3. Allensworth, Elaine, Stephen Ponisciak, and Christopher Mazzeo (June 2009). The Schools Teachers Leave. Teacher Mobility in Chicago Public Schools. Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. Retrieved from: http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/CCSR_Teacher_Mobility.pdf.
4. <http://www.newleaders.org/impact/leadership-matters/>
5. Analysis of publicly available CPS personnel data from 2007-08 through 2012-13; completed April 2014.
6. For example, a recent Gallup study suggests that employees whose managers help them establish individualized performance goals are 17 times more likely to be engaged in their work. Furthermore, companies with a large percentage of highly engaged employees are 21 percent more productive and have 22 percent higher profitability. Those same companies have 65 percent less turnover.

The Fund would especially like to thank team members Brianne Dotson, Anna Piepmeyer, Mark Koski and Lauren B. Rapp for their contributions to this report.



First
Day
Jitters

What Teachers
Can't Do

THERE WAS AN
OLD LADY WHO
SWALLOWED SOME BOOKS!

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