



ACCELERATING EXCELLENCE

# Investing in Chicago's School Leaders

Fund 4 Impact: 2013 to 2018

THE CHICAGO  
PUBLIC  
EDUCATION  
FUND

## Who We Are

Since 1999, The Chicago Public Education Fund (The Fund) has transformed public schools in Chicago by investing in the talented educators who lead them.

We regularly convene partners, including Chicago Public Schools (CPS), to reflect on the past, explore opportunities in the present, and set goals for the future. Education, nonprofit, philanthropic, corporate and community leaders help shape our strategy to achieve these goals. With their support and input, we raise funds to execute on distinct, but cumulative, five-year missions.

In 2013, we began our fourth funding cycle and raised more than \$20 million toward a new strategic focus—to improve schools by advancing principal quality. It worked: Chicago increased the number of strong principals in public schools citywide, improving educational outcomes for more than 1 in 3 public school students and laying a firm foundation for the work ahead.

“There is no better place to see the difference that principals can make than Chicago.”

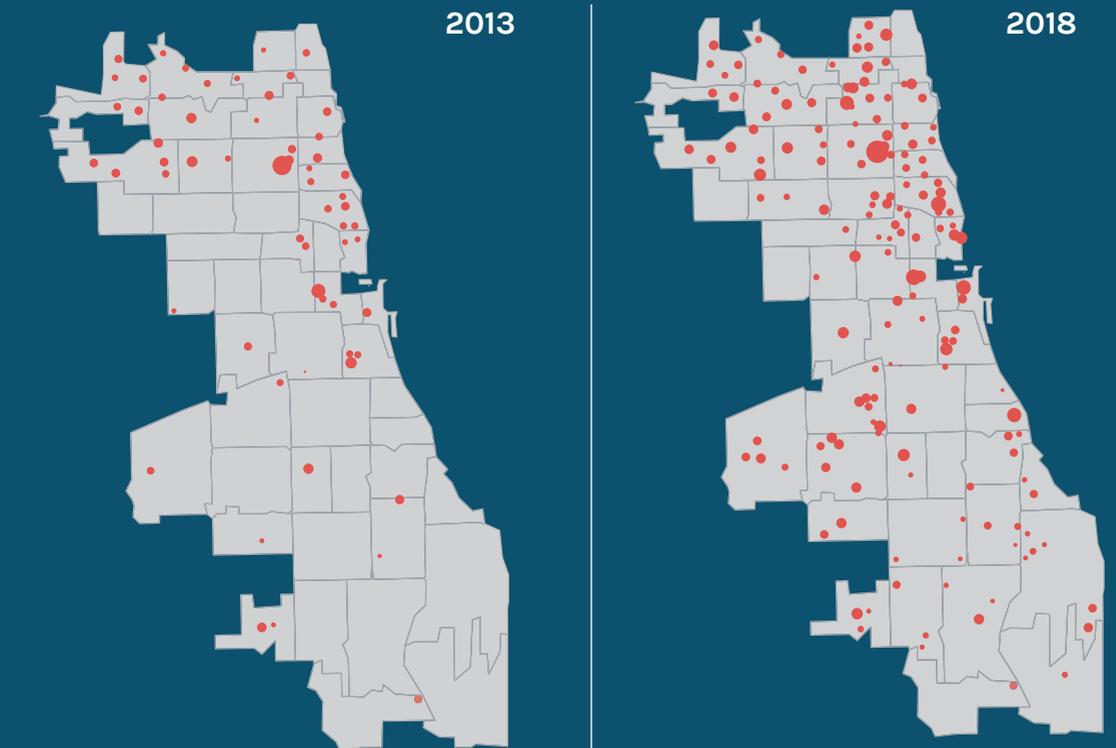
DAVID LEONHARDT, THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Our Impact

Between 2013 and 2018, the number of schools with strong student achievement and stable culture and climate in Chicago grew by 167 percent. We believe that principals were the driving force.

In Chicago, principals lead school communities—they set curriculum, hire and develop their teams, and control a large share of the district’s budget. Behind every one of Chicago’s excellent schools is a dedicated Chicago principal.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT OVER FUND 4: 2013 TO 2018



60

EXCELLENT  
SCHOOLS

+ Serving  
33,000  
students

160

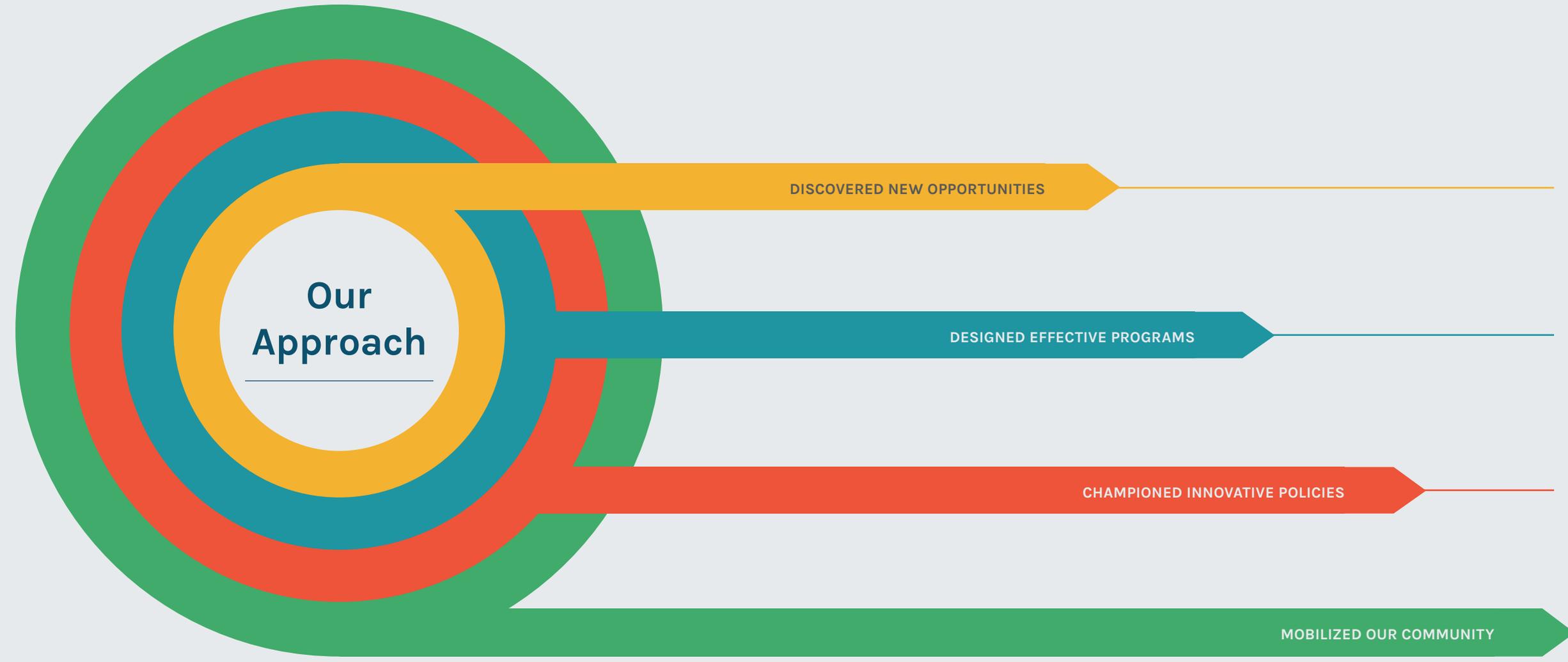
EXCELLENT  
SCHOOLS

+ Serving  
88,000  
students



HOW WE DEVELOPED CHICAGO'S SCHOOL LEADERS

We believe the solutions to the challenges of public education exist. Our role during Fund 4 was to unlock Chicago's potential to innovate in pursuit of better schools.



+ DATA DROVE OUR FOCUS AND WORK.



+ SCHOOL LEADERS IMPROVED WITH TAILORED SUPPORT.



+ PRINCIPAL VOICE SHAPED DISTRICT DECISIONS.



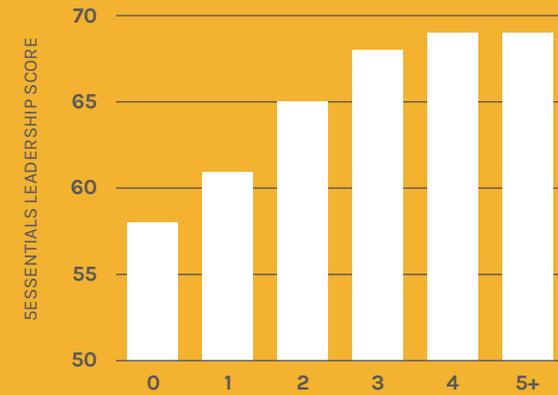
+ PARTNERS INVESTED IN SCHOOL LEADERS.

WE COLLECTED AND SHARED DATA IN FOUR WAYS

## Discovered New Opportunities

We started with data. We leveraged surveys, focus groups and interviews to regularly ask principals about the challenges they faced and looked for trends in school performance that pointed to new opportunities for growth.

Since 2013, principals have provided us continuous insight on the types of policies, programs and networks that help them succeed. That information formed the foundation of our work and continues to shape it. By 2018, we received feedback from over 80 percent of principals through our annual survey.

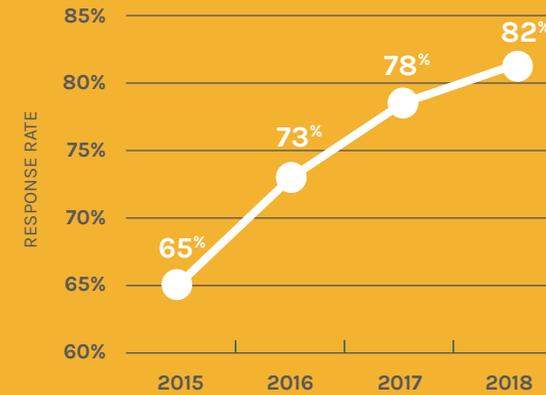


### School Performance Data

We analyzed and shared data on principal and school performance. We collaborated with more than a dozen partners to discover new insights and take collective action that led to improvement.

### Feedback from Educators

We recruited and facilitated four Educator Advisory Committees that included more than 100 experienced principals, assistant principals and teachers. They gave us feedback and shaped our work.



### Principal Engagement Survey

We designed and deployed an annual survey to gather principals' input on satisfaction and professional development. We used the findings to evolve our program and policy agendas to meet their needs.

### Reports and Events

We compiled and published our learnings in a series of six reports and case studies. We invited partners and practitioners to dozens of events to advance the public dialogue on school leadership in Chicago.



### BARTON DASSINGER

- + PRINCIPAL OF CHÁVEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- + 9 YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

“The principal role can be very challenging, and I was so glad The Fund asked me about what would keep me in-role longer. Thanks to The Fund and CPS, I’ve had opportunities such as the Chicago Principals Fellowship and now the Executive Principal Program, which were built specifically for principals like me. They have kept me learning and growing in my leadership.”

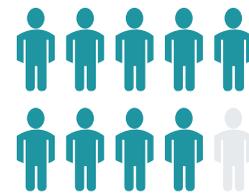
# Designed Effective Programs

We responded to the needs of district and charter principals citywide. We cultivated innovative professional development programs, bringing new partners to Chicago who helped principals grow their leadership skills.

Our first cohort was small: We had just two programs for 20 principals in 2013. Over the years, we used participant feedback to refine and scale what worked. By 2018, we were serving more than 240 principals in nine different programs.



**435** We Broadened Our Reach  
Our programs helped meet the needs and improve the practice of 435 principals.



### Principals Valued Our Programs

In our most recent survey, 9 out of 10 program participants said our programs increased their satisfaction with their role.



### Our Programs Worked

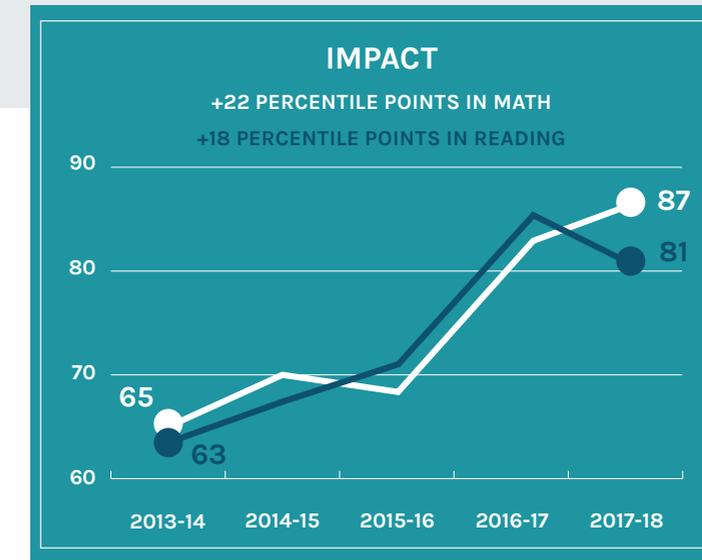
The Boston Consulting Group found that principals in our programs were 60 percent more likely to improve than their non-participating peers.



### MELISSA SWEAZY

- + PRINCIPAL OF ACERO SANTIAGO CHARTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- + 8 YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

“The work I’ve been able to do through The Fund is the primary reason I continue to serve as a principal. The Summer Design Program gave me the chance to work with Dr. Janice Jackson and other principals on critical policy issues. The Fund challenges and supports principals in our work—a delicate balance that is necessary for personal growth.”



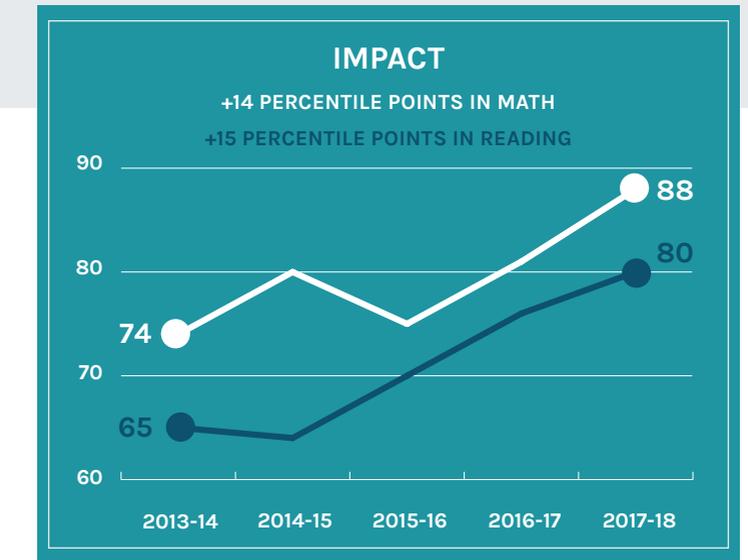
Source: NWEA Attainment Percentile



### OTIS DUNSON

- + PRINCIPAL OF ARMSTRONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- + 10 YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

“Working with the Fund over the past several years has provided me with dynamic ways to collaborate, lead and learn. The Fund’s programs, such as the Summer Design Program and the Executive Principal Program, have enhanced my executive leadership skills and expanded my sphere of influence both at Armstrong and district-wide.”



# Championed Innovative Policy

We helped bring principal perspective to the table to facilitate policy change. We worked closely with CPS leadership to solicit ideas from principals to shape district initiatives that affected all schools.

In 2016, 8 out of 10 principals who took our annual survey said they wanted to engage in policy discussions. By 2018, principal voice was a critical part of district-wide decision-making.

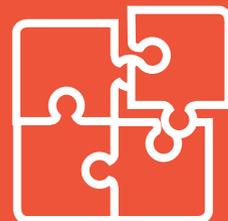


## Accountability System

**WHAT WE HEARD:** Principals said their schools needed an aligned evaluation system that focused on student growth.

**WHAT WE DID:** We helped the CPS Office of Accountability run a working group on its school evaluation rating policy. We participated in the group and advocated based on principal voice.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** CPS launched a new School Quality Rating Policy and updated teacher and principal evaluations with a focus on academic growth.



## School Budgets

**WHAT WE HEARD:** Principals said they wanted more flexibility around how they spent their money to meet school needs.

**WHAT WE DID:** We helped secure national funding to make the transition to Student-Based Budgeting. We also advocated to give principals as much authority as possible in the budget process.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** CPS gave principals more control over school funds so they could make the best resource decisions for their students and communities.

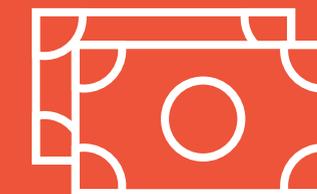


## Autonomous Schools

**WHAT WE HEARD:** Principals, through focus groups and conversations, said they needed more flexibility to lead.

**WHAT WE DID:** We worked with the CPS Chief Education Officer to shape the development and management of the district's Independent School Principals (ISP) program.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** CPS launched the ISP program in 2015 with 28 principals; nearly 90 principals across the city have achieved ISP designation in 2018.



## Principal Compensation

**WHAT WE HEARD:** Principal surveys suggested that increased compensation was a top way to keep principals in role.

**WHAT WE DID:** We worked with the CPS Talent Office to facilitate a working group of principals and assistant principals, who made recommendations to improve the compensation system.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** CPS changed the compensation system based on the working group's recommendations.



**VICTOR ITURRALDE**

+ PRINCIPAL OF SOLORIO HIGH SCHOOL

+ 8 YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

“Being a part of the CPS Compensation Working Group was a great experience. I was able to see how policy is made in real-time and to feel like my opinion and experiences were valued. This work really made a great impact in how I see my role in the district and in my school.”

## Mobilized Our Community

We established deep and broad relationships with district, nonprofit, philanthropic, corporate and community leaders. In 2013, we rallied partners to invest in principals and celebrate them as anchors of their communities.

By 2018, national partners and media organizations recognized that what we were doing in Chicago was unique. Education leaders across the country began investing in principals as a way to drive change in schools.



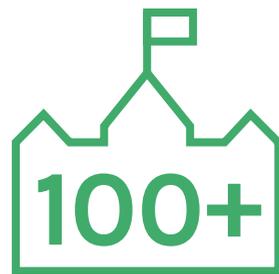
DR. JANICE K. JACKSON, CEO, CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Behind every strong school is a strong principal with a pulse in the community. The Fund’s critical efforts have helped define Chicago Public Schools as a national leader in urban education by providing unparalleled opportunities and resources for principal leadership development and collaboration. By working together to empower our principals, we are laying the groundwork for Chicago students to build upon their record-breaking academic progress for generations to come.”



**\$20M** Raised to Support Principals

We invested \$20 million to improve school leadership in Chicago’s public schools.



**Communities Engaged**

Over 100 Local School Councils and communities celebrated their principals during the 2018 Principal Pride Campaign.



**Schools with Strong Leaders**

The number of students with access to a strong principal nearly doubled between 2013 and 2018.



**ERIC S. SMITH**

+ REGIONAL PRESIDENT, FIFTH THIRD BANK, LEAD SPONSOR

“Our educators deserve consistent recognition for their dedication, professionalism and excellence. Fifth Third was honored to host The Fund’s Principal Pride event to recognize the hard work of Chicago principals at Navy Pier in 2018. We look forward to partnering with The Fund on principal appreciation in the years ahead.”



**ANDREW BROY**

+ PRESIDENT, ILLINOIS NETWORK OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

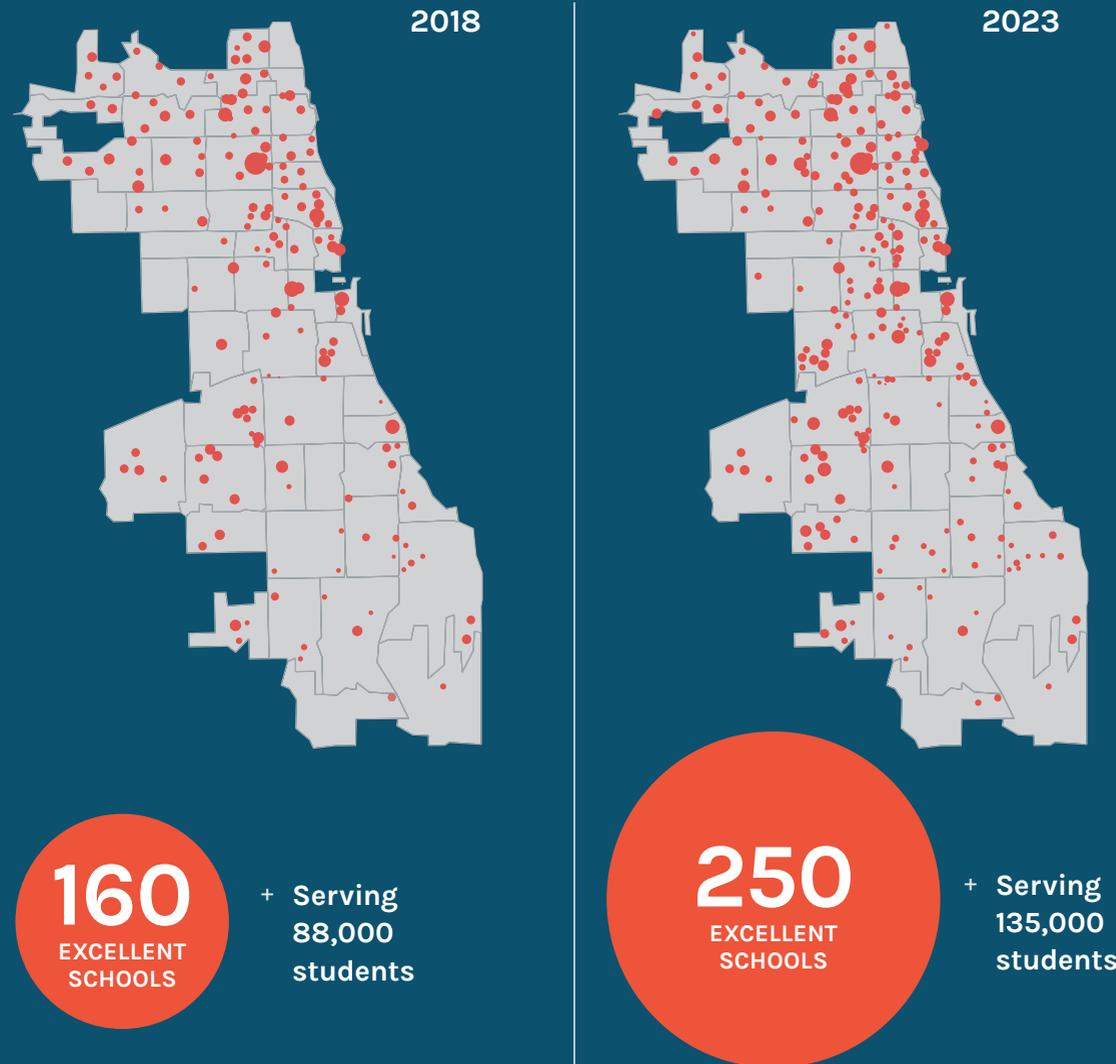
“As an advocate for school improvement and a former teacher, I know how much principal quality matters. The Fund led the effort to build The Chicago Principal Partnership—and now partners across the city are using data to better support principals. We look forward to continuing to work with The Fund to ensure all district and charter schools have strong principals.”

PROJECTED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT OVER FUND 5: 2018 TO 2023

## There Is More Work To Do

In 2013, The Fund took a bet on principals. We believed that, with the right supports, principals could transform their schools. We were right. None of this would have been possible without the investment of the education, nonprofit, philanthropic, corporate and community leaders who joined us on this journey.

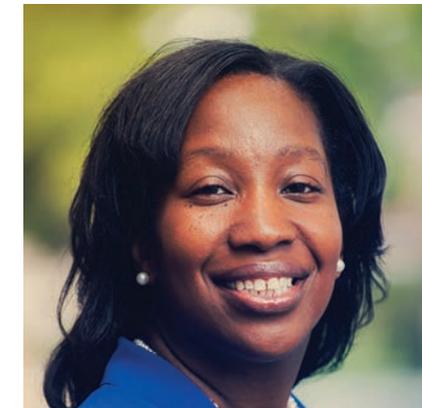
But there's still more work to do. For our part, we will invest an additional \$25 million by 2023 to ensure Chicago continues to lead the nation in its commitment to principals. The future of our students—and our city—depends on it.



“Five years ago, The Fund put the issue of school leadership at the center of the conversation in Chicago. We know that students with stronger principals learn more. We need The Fund to continue to focus on making sure every student in every school has the principal they deserve.”

**PENNY BENDER SEBRING**

+ CO-FOUNDER, UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM ON SCHOOL RESEARCH, BOARD MEMBER SINCE 2002



“Thanks to The Fund, my school is one where students have a voice. Students, parents, teachers and administrators are working together to build the future of this community. We can’t do it alone. The Fund is committed to helping us learn and grow.”

**STACY STEWART**

+ PRINCIPAL, BELMONT-CRAGIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 2018 GOLDEN APPLE WINNER

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## Acknowledgements

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Additionally, we would like to thank our partners at Chicago Public Schools (CPS), including Chief Executive Officer Dr. Janice K. Jackson, Chief Education Officer LaTanya McDade and leaders in the offices of Network Support, Principal Quality, Talent, and Teaching & Learning. We are grateful to leaders at CPS and in the charter community who have partnered closely with The Fund since 2013. Most of all, we are grateful to all the educators in our network, especially the more than 100 principals who served on our Educator Advisory Committees in the last five years. You are changing the world every day, and we appreciate the opportunity to learn from your leadership.

### RODOLFO ROJAS

- + PRINCIPAL OF EVERETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- + 7 YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

“The Fund’s investment in me has been essential to my students’ progress. The Fund makes me feel supported so I can focus on a principal’s real job: helping students and teachers grow.”





THE CHICAGO  
PUBLIC  
EDUCATION  
FUND

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