Despite Some Progress Made, Chicago Public Schools is Not Meeting the Needs of Students for College Readiness, Graduation Rates and Closing Achievement Gaps

While student achievement has seen some gains in CPS over the last several years, too many students are either not graduating from high school or not graduating college and career ready, while achievement gaps continue to widen. Only 7.9% of all 11th graders in 2011 tested college ready, while the graduation rate stands at 57%. There are 123,000 underperforming seats in schools throughout our system – representing nearly a third of all seats in CPS. When you take a deeper dive into the numbers, it’s clear that CPS is not serving the needs of most of the students it serves. This has also had an impact on communities where many of our children and their families live.

Since 2001, the African American population within CPS has decreased by 55,138 students, which represents a drop of nearly one-quarter of African American students – from roughly 52% of the school population to 42% today. Chicago lost nearly 200,000 residents during this time – and most African American population drops correlate with communities that have low performing schools.

Today, CPS is charged with a simple mission – provide students with a world-class education in every community and ensure they graduate college and career ready. That starts by having an honest dialogue about the quality of education in our schools and talking about how we can work together to make sure the needs of our children come first as we move forward with reinventing CPS to boost the academic success of our students...

According to the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research...

- Over the last two decades, African American students: reading scores have not improved; only incremental math score improvement; and across all groups, their test scores improved the least
- Racial gaps in achievement have steadily increased between African Americans and all other groups
- The widening of the gap in reading and math scores between Caucasian and African American elementary grade students in Chicago was larger than national trends

2011 ISAT (Illinois Standards Achievement Test – Elementary School)
- Only one in nine African American students in grades 3-8 are currently exceeding state standards
- The achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students was 31.3 percentage points – an increase of 13 in the last five years alone
- A Caucasian student is nearly four times more likely to exceed on the ISAT than an African American student
- Just over one in seven Hispanic students exceeded state standards
- The achievement gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students was 27.1 percentage points – an increase of 7 in the last five years alone
- A Caucasian student is nearly three times more likely to exceed on the ISAT than a Hispanic

2011 PSAE (Prairie State Achievement Exam – High School; ACT, ISBE science and WorkKeys math/reading assessment)
- Not even two out of five African American students meet/exceed state standards
- Achievement gap between African Americans and Caucasian students was 44.5 percentage points - an increase of 12.9 percentage points over the last decade
- Caucasian students are 16 times more likely to exceed standards on the PSAE than African American students at CPS
- Fewer than one out of three Latino students meet/exceeded state standards
- The achievement gap between Latino and Caucasian students was 33.4 percentage points – an increase of 8.3 percentage points over the last decade
ACT (American College Testing) – college admissions benchmark is a score of 21
- Barely one in seven African American students scored at or above a 20, which represents a 43.2 percentage point gap between Caucasian students
- Over the last decade Caucasian scores have improved at three times the rate of African Americans, while Hispanic students have improved at twice the rate of their African American peers

Graduation Rates
- While graduation rates have increased over the last decade, the graduation gap between African American and Caucasian students has increased by 5.5 percentage points
- Just over one in two African Americans graduate from high school in CPS (52.7% in 2011)
- African Americans have the lowest graduation rates and saw the slowest growth rate across all groups