

## Preamble

We are a dedicated community of educators from diverse backgrounds, committed to shaping a fairer, more just society in Chicago. We believe every student deserves high-quality education and opportunities, regardless of their background. Our goal is to break down barriers and create a supportive environment where all students, especially those from marginalized communities, can succeed. Beyond academics, we focus on nurturing students to lead purposeful, dignified lives.

After discussing the challenges educators face, we created an Educators' Agenda with key issues for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Board of Education to address. Solving these problems will help students and educators thrive, free from discrimination and inequity.



### Issue #1: Educator Mental Health

Only [19% of teachers report the teaching profession is sustainable](#). We can't pour into our students from an empty cup. Yet, we hear from our peers across CPS that there are so many teachers with empty cups, which is leading to burnout and workforce instability. We need more reasonable workloads, support from our administrators, and full access to mental health resources so we can take care of ourselves and our students.



### Issue #2: Student Mental Health

Our students are struggling socially and emotionally, impacting their ability to thrive in school. In fact, [40% of high schoolers nationally report symptoms of depression](#), with even higher rates among LGBTQ+ students. Students deserve emotional care and safety, and can't access academic content when they are experiencing overwhelming emotions or a mental health crisis without the tools to regulate themselves. We feel underequipped to support them, and need leadership to dedicate funding and training to help us do so.



### Issue #3: Academic Needs of Diverse Learners

Only [23% of teachers believe their school very effectively meets the academic needs of all of its students](#), including the unique needs of student subgroups. We became educators because we believe in the potential of all students, but we lack the resources to support our students with disabilities and English learners to access the same learning as their peers. City leaders must engage educators—who are closest to the issue, and the solutions—to identify the best strategies to support them and their diverse learners.



### Issue #4: School Experience of Diverse Learners

In too many schools, students with disabilities, English learners and their teachers are left out of extra-curricular experiences and decision-making or considered an afterthought. Whether it's not including students in field trips or not considering educators for leadership roles or as part of school-wide planning, CPS can and must do better to live into our shared belief that every child is an integral part of the school community.



### Issue #5: Black Student Achievement Committee

Black students in CPS face alarming inequities: In 2023, [13% of Black CPS students dropped out](#), a rate higher than that of any other student group. SB15 created the Black Student Achievement Committee to ensure the Board engages directly with key stakeholders to address the persistent inequities Black students face. We urge the Board to act swiftly in establishing a Committee that drives meaningful change for Black students.

# The Educators' Agenda



## Our Process

E4E hosted a teacher leader policy institute in July 2024 for educators to review top issues facing CPS and identify specific policies to focus on. Those educators hosted focus groups with over 100 colleagues who developed this list of high-priority issues. A group of ten educators gathered to review these priorities, and draft this agenda.

## About E4E

Founded by classroom teachers, Educators for Excellence (E4E-Chicago) is a movement of 25,000 educators, including 7,500 members in Chicago, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

**Resources:** To access the survey data used in these recommendations, see E4E's annual Voices from the Classroom National Teacher Survey at <https://e4e.org/what-we-do/a-survey-of-americas-educators/>

**Thank you to these educators for their leadership with the E4E-Chicago Policy Institute and Working Group**

Charese Munoz  
Janelle Munoz  
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Corrine Lydon  
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