



Timeline of Chicago School Reform

1979

- Through mismanagement, CPS plunges into a fiscal crisis, including payless pay days.
- The Legislature creates the School Finance Authority to oversee spending and mandates the replacement of all Chicago School Board members

1981

- Chicago United, the city's racially integrated business organization, issues a harsh report and recommendations for streamlining the operation of the CPS

1983

- Harold Washington is elected Chicago's first black mayor.

1985

- The nonprofits Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel on School Policy and Finance grab headlines with highly critical reports on school dropouts and truancy.

1986

- Mayor Washington creates an Education Summit, tapping 35 school, civic, business and university leaders to draft "contracts" outlining actions to improve the education and employment of young Chicagoans.

1987

- U.S. Secretary of Education Secretary William Bennett calls Chicago Schools "the worst school system in the country."
- Teachers strike for a record 19 days, the 9th strike since 1969
- Many groups organize protests, including a march on City Hall.
- Mayor Washington calls a "mass brainstorming session" attended by some 1,000 people
- Mayor Washington appoints a 50 member Parent/Community Council and launches Education Summits II.
- Mayor Washington dies unexpectedly.
- Stretching into 1988, the summit crafts a reform plan but then dissolves amid the politicking over selection of a successor to Mayor Washington.

- Designs for Change, with others, drafts a school reform bill with most elements of the final law. Dozens of organization then leaders work on the draft bill.

1988

- Corporate leaders join grass-roots leaders in lobbying for the law in Springfield.
- Legislative leaders call school reform leaders to Springfield to finalize the reform legislation, which features the creation of local school councils with key powers, including selection of principals.
- Lead by the reform groups, the city steps up to the challenge. Foundation giving to education increases four-fold. Higher education becomes involved.

1989

- Again the board is replaced.
- The first Local School Council elections are held (17,256 candidates for 5,420 seats; 227,622 voters)
- With non-citizens having the right to vote and serve on LSCs, Hispanics rally around the new law. But African-American leadership is divided, with some calling it “school deform.”

1990

- The Interim Board taps Ted Kimbrough from Compton, Calif., for superintendent
- The Consortium on Chicago School Research and *Catalyst* are created to analyze and report on school reform efforts.
- The Interim Board plants the seeds for continuing labor unrest by approving pay raises of 21 percent over three years without having the money to pay for them.

1991

- Richard M. Daley becomes Chicago’s mayor
- Following a drop in philanthropic support, the second LSC election sees a big drop-off in the number of candidates (8,173) and voters (161,000).

1993

- Argie Johnson, a New York City school administrator, is named superintendent

1994

- Mayor Daley rejects all the School Board nominees proffered by the grassroots-based School Board Nominating Commission.
- The Annenberg Foundation makes a five-year, \$49.2 million matching grant to Chicago for school-based reform initiatives.
- Republicans take control of the Illinois House, Senate and Governor’s office.

1995

- The GOP in Springfield gives Mayor Daley control of the system, trims union bargaining rights and takes the strings off substantial sums of money. It also

strengthens school accountability measures and, for the first time, mandates training of local school councils.

- Mayor Daley names his chief of staff, Gery Chico, as president of another reconstituted board, and his budget director, Paul Vallas, as CEO.
- Able to use previously restricted money, the board balances the budget, signs a four-year teacher contract and launches new programs. It also begins a massive school rehab and construction program.

1996

- The board approves a new student promotion policy based on test scores
- Vallas places 109 schools on academic probation, curtailing the authority of their LSCs.
- The Legislature approves the creation of charter schools: 15 in Chicago, 15 in the suburbs and 15 downstate.

1997

- 22,000 3rd-, 6th- and 8th-graders who do not meet test cut scores are enrolled in mandatory summer school programs known as Summer Bridge.
- Staff at seven high schools are dismissed as part of a reconstitution initiative, which is quickly abandoned.

1998

- President Clinton praises Chicago's accountability program in the State of the Union address.

2000

- CPS raises the bar for academic probation and tries another get-tough strategy with low-scoring high schools, Intervention. It too is abandoned.

2001

- With Mayor Daley showing displeasure over a dip in test scores, School Board President Gery Chico resigns, followed by CEO Paul Vallas
- Mayor Daley taps a mid-level administrator, Arne Duncan, as CEO.
- CPS launches the Chicago Reading Initiative, dispatching reading specialists to 114 schools where at least two-thirds of students read below grade level.
- Parents in Little Village conduct a successful hunger strike to get a long-promised high school built in their community.
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation makes its first grant to Chicago schools and nonprofits, principally to create charters and reform high schools. The investment would top \$86 million by 2008.

2002

- President George W. Bush signs the No Child Left Behind Act, which had bipartisan Congressional support.

- In a first, CPS announces the closing of three chronically failing elementary schools—Terrell, Williams and Dodge—along with plans to re-open Williams and Dodge as revamped "Renaissance Schools" in fall 2003.

2003

- CPS agrees to postpone closing schools for poor academic performance, striking a deal with the Chicago Teachers Union to provide extra money and support at 10 struggling schools.

2004

- Mayor Daley announces Renaissance 2010, his plan to close dozens of poorly performing schools and create 100 new ones, most of them charter and contract schools, by 2010. Activists gear up for battle, citing lack of community and parent input into the sweeping proposal, which was largely based on a 2003 proposal by the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago.

2005

- The Illinois Facilities Fund reports that the West and South sides have the greatest need for schools that meet strong academic standards. The five communities with the greatest need are South Shore, Greater Grand Crossing, Austin, Washington Park and Brighton Park.

2006

- Gov. Blagojevich signs a new Universal Preschool law that ultimately will offer free, state-funded preschool to all Illinois children, regardless of their parents' income.
- The Consortium on Chicago School Research reports that only 45 percent of CPS graduates earn a post-secondary degree. Among all CPS high school students, 8 percent receive bachelor's degrees by the time they are 25.
- CPS wins a \$27.5 million federal grant to launch a "merit-pay" pilot program in 40 low-performing schools. Designed with the help of CPS teachers, the plan features additional professional development and a career ladder for teachers who want to stay in the classroom.
- Sherman Elementary School is the first to undergo CPS's new "turn-around strategy," where students stay at a school, and new leadership and staff are brought in.

2007

- School employee unions get five-year contracts, the longest ever.

2008

- President-elect Barak Obama nominates Arne Duncan for U.S. secretary of education.

For more information, go to www.catalyst-chicago.org