



Jean-Claude Brizard
Chief Executive Officer

Dear CPS Parent,

As I begin my fifth month as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, I wanted to reach out and thank you for all the feedback and input I have received from so many of you at my listening sessions, during school visits, by email and in person at multiple events I have attended throughout the summer. One issue that has been very top of mind for many of you has been the longer school day. In fact, recent polls taken by Raise Your Hand and FOX 32 Chicago show support among CPS parents ranging from 64% to 68% for a longer day. So I thought I'd take the time to revisit where we are with our efforts to lengthen the school day and why we and so many others support efforts to provide our students with more time in the classroom with their teachers.

As you know, Chicago currently has the shortest school day and year compared with all major U.S. cities and school districts. I think this is an injustice to our students. That's why in school year 2012-2013 CPS will adopt a longer day and year in every school throughout the system to bring our students on par with the rest of their peers across the country. To put it in perspective, every student attending a Chicago Public School today from kindergarten through high school will receive nearly three years less instructional time than students in Houston. Some of you may ask, has this actually put our children at a disadvantage? My answer to this is unequivocally, yes.

Despite the hard work and efforts of our school leaders and teachers, our children are falling behind. I would argue that having the shortest school day and year in the country has resulted in our students – as well as our teachers – getting shortchanged every day of the school year. Here are a few facts to consider:

- Only 7.9% of our 11th graders tested college ready in 2011.
- The achievement gap for African American students is 31 percentage points.
- The achievement gap for Latino students is 27 percentage points.
- Only 57% of our students are graduating from high school.
- The CPS ACT average for high school juniors is 17, well below the college admissions benchmark of 21.
- Over 150,000 students are enrolled in under-performing schools.

This is why our children cannot afford to wait for a longer school day. While there is no magic bullet to turning student achievement around, I do know this – providing our children with more time in the classroom to learn core subjects such as math, science, and literacy, as well as time for enrichment programs like art, music, and physical education, is proven to boost student achievement. Lengthening our school day is one tool at our immediate disposal that we can provide our principals and teachers to help better prepare our students for both college and career. We plan to give them those tools next school year.

However, many schools do not want to wait until next year. That's why we launched the Longer School Day Pioneer Program, which began this fall. These schools are adding 90 minutes of instructional time to their day for core subjects and enrichment programs – they are also adding recess back to their day. CPS is providing both financial support and other resources to these schools as they will help identify best practices for all others to follow when a longer school day is implemented system-wide next year. They will also provide CPS with critical feedback on the financial impact schools may face as well as identify any pitfalls that schools should avoid. Six of the thirteen pioneer schools started their longer day on September 26 and all did so without incident or disruption. Other school districts across the country have also lengthened their school day, such as Boston, and have done so seamlessly – and have already realized increases in student achievement.

In preparing for the longer day in 2012/2013, we not only are relying on these pioneer schools for guidance, but we're also launching a series of other initiatives to prepare schools for system-wide implementation next year. We created the Longer School Day Advisory Committee, which is a diverse group of education stakeholders representing parents, teachers, students, principals, faith and community leaders who will help draft guidelines for schools to follow in implementing the longer day. We're receiving feedback from principals through webinars and from teachers through focus groups to ensure their input is incorporated in the front end of our planning. We're also working closely with the National Center on Time and Learning to incorporate their expertise and guidance. Over the course of the next year, this planning process will ensure that every school is ready to launch a successful longer day plan next September.

But we also need your continued input to ensure that we're not just implementing a longer school day, but a richer school day. You know your children better than anyone – and we're eager to hear how you think a longer school day can best be put to use. I hope you'll be part of our continuing dialogue about the longer school day. Please feel free to email me at longerschoolday@cps.edu. And please visit our longer school day pioneer program website at www.cps.edu/longerday to learn more about what the pioneer schools are doing with their 90 minutes of additional instructional time and to get updates on this program as well.

Thank you for all that you do for your kids and our schools. I look forward to hearing from you.



JC Brizard
CEO

Chicago Public Schools