



CONSORTIUM ON  
CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
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## **CCSR's executive director confirmed by Senate for top spot at U.S. Institute of Education Sciences**

John Q. Easton, the leader and a founding researcher of the nationally recognized Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, will become the country's new Director of the Institute of Education Sciences, two months after his nomination by President Obama. The Senate confirmed Easton's appointment late Thursday.

The Institute of Education Sciences is the nation's engine for educational research, evaluation, assessment and statistics -- instrumental to scholars, education policy makers and practitioners. As director of IES, Easton will oversee four major national centers, a staff of about 200 and partnerships with institutions nationwide. The Institute funds hundreds of research studies on ways to improve academic achievement, conducts large-scale evaluations of federal education programs and reports a wide array of statistics on the condition of education, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Easton will resign as executive director of CCSR and start at IES next month. Two long-time Consortium directors, Penny Bender Sebring and Elaine Allensworth, will serve as interim leaders while the organization conducts a nationwide search for a new executive director.

"This is a remarkable moment - for John and for the Consortium. John builds powerful bridges between research and practice - and has created a robust institution where strong leaders and pathfinders are the norm," said Tim Knowles, director of the university's Urban Education Institute, which has operational responsibility for CCSR. "I know Penny and Elaine will ensure the Consortium grows only stronger - and continues to improve the lives of children in Chicago and beyond."

Throughout his career, Easton has directed rigorous projects aimed at providing the best evidence about what it takes to spark meaningful policy debate and sustained change in urban schools. Just this week, Easton and other CCSR leaders hosted a national convening of 19 major school districts working to build research partnerships similar to the one created between the Consortium and Chicago Public Schools some two decades ago.

Michael McPherson, president of the Spencer Foundation, the nation's only charitable organization solely dedicated to educational research, said CCSR is widely known as the nation's most successful example of a partnership between academic researchers and a major urban school system.

“John Easton has led a research team that responds to the needs of the educational community while maintaining high standards of academic integrity and independence,” McPherson said. “John knows research and researchers. He also knows schools -- their issues, their opportunities and the people in them. I am confident that the nation will benefit as he brings his values and talents to the national level.”

The Consortium is part of a larger initiative at the University of Chicago – the Urban Education Institute -- to improve urban education through research, the creation of charter schools, teacher training and curriculum innovations. Founded in 1990, CCSR conducts research to inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools and expand communication among researchers, policy makers and practitioners as they search for solutions to the problems of school reform.

Easton has been affiliated with CCSR since its inception and led its first research study. He became executive director of the Consortium in 2002. Much of Easton's research at CCSR examines trends in achievement test scores and the use of test scores in school improvement and school accountability efforts. He is lead author of *From High School to the Future: The Pathway to 20*, a recent study that revealed a “major misalignment” between the standards set by the state ISAT tests in elementary school and the college-readiness standards expected of all juniors in Illinois high schools as measured by the ACT.

The Consortium, under Easton’s leadership, has enjoyed a productive relationship with Arne Duncan, who spent seven years as chief executive officer of the Chicago Public Schools before his appointment this year as Secretary of Education.

“They are not ivory tower researchers,” Duncan said of the Consortium in a 2003 *Education Week* article. “These are people who roll up their sleeves and get out to the schools and conduct research that is applicable to real situations.”

Easton first met the secretary of education in the early 1990s, when Duncan was involved in creating a Southside Chicago community school and sought Easton’s expertise on school data.

“The success Arne had in Chicago working closely with researchers might lead him to believe that the Consortium is a valuable model,” Easton said. “Our model involves developing a deep knowledge about a school district, where you build coherence in your studies and in your findings. It could be very productive, especially in the larger urban districts across the country that continue to struggle with public education.”

Recently, the Consortium has garnered considerable national attention for its studies following students from high school to college, and on the importance of the freshman year in high school graduation rates.

Easton also has had a long association with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). He has twice served as Director of the Department of Research, Analysis, and Assessment, first from 1994 to 1997 and most recently from 2001 to 2002. Easton served on the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), the independent board that sets policies for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the “Nation's Report Card,” from 2003 to 2007.

Easton, 59, won a Presidential Citation from the American Educational Research Association for “important contributions that helped to establish and advance a public-private research partnership.” He is co-author of an upcoming book, *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Easton earned a Ph.D. in Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistical Analysis from the University of Chicago. He has lived in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood since 1973.

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