

## New Studies Examine Diversity Among CPS Principals, Explore Their Previous Experiences

*CPS Principals Are More Racially and Ethnically Diverse than Principals in Other Urban Areas, but Latinx Principals Are Underrepresented*

**CHICAGO, January 31, 2023** – Recognizing the importance of principals in fostering student success in their schools and the challenges they face, NORC at the University of Chicago has released two new reports that delve into the landscape of the principalship in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the crucial leadership development experiences that affect principals’ ability to lead effectively.

Researchers from NORC, the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill conducted an innovative analysis of demographic, career history, and job tenure data of hundreds of CPS principals over eight years and interviewed 20 early career school principals in CPS from 2020 to 2021, with funding from the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education.

In one report, researchers examined the landscape of the CPS principalship over time and found that CPS principals are more diverse in terms of race/ethnicity than principals in other urban areas and nationally, and that newer principals are more likely to be Black than the overall CPS principal population. Yet Latinx principals are underrepresented relative to the CPS student population, suggesting that it is important to identify and support high-quality Latinx leaders moving into the principal pipeline.

Key findings include:

- Three of every four Black and white CPS students have a principal of the same race/ethnicity.
- 69% of CPS principals are female, compared to 54% nationwide.
- A newly hired principal’s likelihood of remaining in their position five years later differed by elementary (52%) versus high school (32%); by student body racial composition categories of predominantly Black (49%), Latinx (58%), racially mixed (57%), and Black and Latinx (23%); and by free/reduced-price lunch category.
- In CPS, former assistant principals (58%) tend to stay in their schools longer than other newly hired principals (44%).

According to previous studies, strong principal leadership requires a range of skills, behaviors, and management experiences and is crucial for student success. The level of expertise and the types of experiences principals have before they start their careers play a significant role in their own success. Yet principals who serve in under-resourced communities often have less access to pre-service professional learning opportunities and fewer supports.

“We wanted to identify existing gaps in the critical experiences and essential skills of CPS principals so that policymakers and programs can better support their leadership development.

We believe this will ensure that principals begin their careers as prepared as they can to lead successfully,” said Molly Gordon, NORC senior research scientist. “The results of our study suggest patterns that may be relevant for other large urban districts.”

In the companion report, researchers asked principals what it takes to be a successful school leader, what critical experiences they had before they became principals and where they learned essential skills, and what skills and supports they wished they had before taking the position.

The majority of principals cited people skills and emotional intelligence skills, along with organizational and managerial skills, as most important for successful leadership. Principals who had first been assistant principals said that role best prepared them to lead their own school. Formal principal preparatory programs and peer networks also provided essential skills. Skills that principals wished they had before they took the position included school budgeting and navigating central office systems. Overall, these studies suggest that aspiring school leaders need to have a wide range of experiences; the assistant principalship could serve as a more explicit training ground for new principals.

For more information, read [\*\*New Principals in Chicago Public Schools: Diversity and Their Prior Experiences\*\*](#) and [\*\*On the Path to Becoming a Chicago Public School Principal\*\*](#).

### **Methodology**

For the New Principals in CPS Brief, the research team used eight years of CPS personnel- and student-level demographic (aggregated to the school-by-year level) data from 2012-13 to 2019-20. The research team also used publicly available school performance data from 2015-16 through 2019-20. Data were only available for educators and school leaders working in district-run, non-charter schools.

For the On the Path to Becoming a CPS Principal Report, the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 early career principals (those who had been in the position between two and five years) between 2020 and 2021. The final sample included 12 elementary school and eight high school principals with varying backgrounds and experiences.

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### **About NORC at the University of Chicago**

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, we have studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, we partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society.

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### **About UChicago Consortium**

The UChicago Consortium on School Research conducts research of high technical quality that informs and assesses policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools, with the goal of supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes for students. We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, families, and communities as we support the search for solutions to the challenge of transforming schools. We encourage the use of research in policy action and practice but do not advocate for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for systemic school improvement by identifying what matters most for student success, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.  
<https://consortium.uchicago.edu/>

### **About University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education**

The School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the nation's first public university, is among the best in the nation, consistently ranking as a top school of education in U.S. News & World Report. The School offers a full range of degree programs, ranging from undergraduate to doctorate; forward-thinking certificate and licensure programs; and in-person, online, and HyFlex offerings. Faculty members generate basic and applied knowledge across a number of fields, including human development, educational technology and entrepreneurship, teaching and learning, school counseling, school psychology, administration, educational policy and leadership, and more; they also prepare students to become the most highly effective educators to lead in classrooms, schools, districts and beyond, as well as future scholars and researchers. Every day, the School's faculty, staff, and students shape their teaching, research, and public service to meet North Carolina and the nation's most pressing needs in education. The School's more than 22,000 alumni live in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 40 countries with the majority living and working in North Carolina.

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