

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools High School Transformation Instructional Strategy

Like many large urban school districts, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) struggles to prepare *all* of its students for life after high school graduation. Far too many high school students drop out. And of those who do graduate, far too many are not adequately prepared for success in postsecondary education or the workforce. In 2005, CPS partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Boston Consulting Group to embark on a diagnostic, visioning, and planning process to inform the design and building of systemic, sustainable strategies to support high schools in their effort to dramatically improve outcomes for Chicago students.

The result is CPS's High School Transformation (HST), a comprehensive, district-wide strategy for driving significant performance improvement in CPS's system of high schools over a 10-year period. CPS will transform high schools using six basic levers of change:

- Increase what is expected of students by everyone: principals, teachers, parents and students themselves.
- Hire, develop, and support great principals.
- Hire, develop, and support great teachers.
- Empower schools as the center of change--not Central Office, but motivated principals and teachers.
- Ensure that every student finds a great fit in a great school.
- Prepare students to succeed in 9th grade, the crucial transition year during which almost half of the system's dropouts are lost.

Instructional strategy is the pillar of High School Transformation. It focuses on increasing the rigor and relevance of high school courses by strengthening the curricula, improving professional development to help teachers transform their work with students, and providing better school-based supports for students, principals and teachers. Instructional Development Systems (IDS) are a core component of instructional strategy. CPS and the HST team worked with experts in education to develop two to three comprehensive English, math and science IDSes from which schools implementing instructional strategy choose as their core curricula for 9th-11th grades. Each IDS is a unified system of curricular strategies, classroom materials, formative and summative assessments, targeted professional development, and personalized coaching. Twenty five high schools will implement instructional strategy and IDS during the 2007-2008 school year. Up to 75 high schools will implement the strategy by 2010. CPS continues to think purposefully about the strategies and initiatives that will compliment instructional strategy, encompass all the HST change levers, and ultimately transform its system of high schools.

Contact: Chaka Farrow, Chicago Public Schools, cfarrow@cps.k12.il.us.