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FOR MAYOR

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EDUCATION

A great city needs a great school system, and a great school system needs the support of a great city. The two go hand-in-hand, and Gery understands that strengthening our economy and improving the lives of all Chicagoans begins with ensuring that all children have access to the high-quality education they deserve.

Gery believes that schools are the “great equalizers” in our society and that every Chicago child should have the same opportunity to attend a “world class” school. Moreover, Gery believes that the neighborhood school is the anchor of the community. If your local school is thriving, your neighborhood is thriving. Gery believes that when the Chicago School Board closed 50 schools in the dark of night – without real community involvement – it tore the guts out of our communities.

Gery knows that 90% of CPS students are children of color, and 80% come from economically disadvantaged homes. Gery believes that the time is long past due for the city to live up to its moral obligations and give children in every neighborhood the kind of education that gives them the best chances for success.

Right now, however, thousands of parents are not sending their kids to CPS because they have lost faith in our schools’ ability to prepare students for colleges and careers. We’ve lost 150,000 students according to a recent CPS report. These families are paying taxes to support schools that their kids don’t attend, while many are also paying for private school tuition.

Gery knows that CPS is wasting millions of dollars to maintain aging and empty infrastructure because families are opting out of CPS. Gery believes we need to restore families’ faith in CPS and start filling those seats. Every single empty chair in Chicago schools represents a loss of potential for our city.

Gery understands why families have lost faith in CPS. Over the last eight years, there have been six different superintendents – including one who is serving time in prison. Just as outrageous are the contracting scandals and run-down school facilities that have real impacts on our kids.

But Gery knows how to get our schools back on track – *because he’s done it before*. While President of CPS, Gery built more than sixty neighborhood schools and led what President

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Clinton described as a turnaround model for the nation. Under Gery's leadership, CPS saw improved student performance six years in a row, the district funded 100% of teacher pensions – and he turned a \$1.3 billion deficit into a \$345 million surplus.

During Gery's service as Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education, each and every year he fought for more money for public schools and secured hundreds of millions for Pre-K and K-12 schools.

He also began the rewrite of Illinois's education funding formula that is weighted more heavily to low-income students and students with special needs. Consequently, the state sent hundreds of millions more dollars to CPS.

More than ever, our school system and our students need Gery again. As mayor, he will put the following education plan into action starting on day one:

Rebuilding Our Schools

Gery believes that our neighborhood schools are the building blocks of our communities. Too many of our schools are empty and crumbling. Gery believes every student deserves to be in a new or renovated school with state-of-the-art infrastructure. To rebuild our schools, Gery will focus on:

- Fighting for capital money in Springfield to modernize and renovate schools in every neighborhood. Utilizing TIF surpluses to fund the construction of new schools.
- Upgrading every high school to include state-of-the-art science equipment and a lab layout that is designed to facilitate learning – especially with STEM curriculum. Gery worked with Mayor Emanuel to bring companies to CPS as STEM sponsors and will work to increase those sponsorships and access to job opportunities.
- Repurposing the 50 schools that were closed by CPS and now sit dormant, blighting our neighborhoods. Gery is committed to turning these buildings into community centers, affordable housing, retail, mental health centers, and job training sites. It is time to both repair and augment Chicago's broken social infrastructure.

- Keeping the current cap on new charters in place and ensuring charter schools are held to the same standards as neighborhood schools, recognizing that more than 60,000 students attend charters.
- Getting parents to opt into CPS schools as CPS says it has over 150,000 empty seats and more than 60,000 seats in the highest performing schools.
- Giving parents choices to send their children to the 60,000 student vacancies in the highest performing schools.
- Empowering parents to elect 7 school board members out of a total of 15. Doing so will allow parents' voices to be clearly heard while also ensuring special interests do not buy elections for their candidates. The mayor will still be accountable for fixing our schools and providing every child a top quality education.

Creating College and Career Ready Students

Gery believes that what makes Chicago so attractive to business is our central location and our amazing infrastructure, but more than anything, our highly educated workforce. In spite of the crisis in Springfield that has underfunded our schools, and the contracting scandals that have plagued CPS, Gery knows we can turn our schools around and create yet another generation of highly educated kids who will get good jobs and provide for their families. To prepare our kids for their future, Gery will focus on:

- Creating the largest ever expansion of technical educational opportunities for CPS students. Gery will work with CPS, Chicago Federation of Labor and the Chicago Teachers Union to make this happen. He will open new programs and new schools dedicated to technical and vocational training tracks that lead to apprenticeships, well-paying jobs and new opportunities for kids for whom traditional college is not the best option. Four-year universities are not for everyone, and it's time to get serious about providing education alternatives that will still lead to substantial careers.
- Expanding the International Baccalaureate programming from just 50 to 150 schools so that more students can take advantage of an accelerated curriculum focused on a world language, English, mathematics, humanities, sciences, arts, physical education, and technology.

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- Expanding the college prep programs in high schools so that more students applying have an opportunity to participate.
- Funding the recent expansion of free, universal, All-day Everyday Pre-kindergarten. Research indicates that students who are enrolled in Pre-kindergarten programs achieve better academic results – especially in reading. High-quality Pre-K programs provide our youngest students with a set of social and communications skills that are key to building relationships and solving problems. By the end of Gery's first term as mayor, he will have worked with the state to ensure that every four-year-old in Chicago has access to full-day preschool. Every child, in every community.
- Partnering with local businesses to expand the number of job shadowing and internship/apprenticeship opportunities to all 17,000 students who take Career and Technical Education courses. This can be done by working with the more than 5,000 CPS vendors to offer job-shadow and internship opportunities to CPS students. Gery has already done this with Mayor Emanuel and he will work to grow this program even more.
- Working with Civic Organizations like the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago to encourage their member companies to offer job-shadowing and internship opportunities to CPS students.
- Building out the Chicago Public Libraries Summer Learning Challenge and its Early Readers program to engage children in STEM learning throughout the summer months.
- Requiring middle school students to attend career and technical education programs of study that are offered in high school, realizing that students should be exposed to career opportunities sooner.
- Increasing the funding and reach of Youth Guidance's Becoming a Man and Working on Womanhood programs that focus on mentoring kids in high-crime neighbors.
- Adding after-school programs in high crime neighborhoods to keep kids in the classroom and learning, rather than out on the streets.
- Expanding the city's One Summer Chicago program to provide more kids with vital work experience and help keep them off the streets.
- Partnering with organizations to provide vision screenings to our kids since researchers agree there is a strong correlation between uncorrected vision problems and behavioral, academic and even criminal troubles. Up to 70 to 80% of juvenile delinquents and 90% of inmates fail eye exams. Gery will provide glasses to schoolchildren who need them, just as he did when he was President of CPS.
- At the Chicago City College level, Gery will recruit local companies to participate regularly in job summits on all seven CCC campuses to connect students and graduates with both part-time and full-time employment. These summits will have the added

benefit of matching employers with applicants to fill existing skills gaps. As mayor, Gery will work directly with the Chancellor and City College presidents to create this continuous employment pipeline.

- Gery will expand comprehensive student support programs for our City College students. Gery is a founding Advisory Board member of One Million Degrees (OMD), a scholarship model that provides tutoring, individual coaching and financial assistance to CCC students. OMD scholars carry a 78% retention rate and a graduation rate that is twice the state average.

Investing In Staff and Teachers

Gery believes we need to have high-quality teachers, first and foremost, but to be a great school you need more than just great teachers. Schools need reading support specialists to help kids catch up to their peers.

Students need social workers, especially in high crime areas, to help them through difficult issues so that they can focus on school. And they need librarians to spread the love of books.

To give our kids the support they need, Gery will focus on:

- Working with the Chicago Teachers Union to encourage greater utilization of their professional development programs.
- Investing in principal and school leadership development programs, including principal training and residency programs, to ensure that every Chicago Public School has a high-quality principal that every student, teacher, and family deserve. While teachers have the most direct impact in the classroom, research makes clear that high-quality leadership creates the conditions for improving instruction.
- Hiring more librarians – since 2013 the number of school librarians has dropped from 454 to 128 which leaves hundreds of schools with no librarian.

- Adding more psychologists – The National Association of School Psychologists recommends one school psychologist for, at most, 700 students, but CPS has 1,760 students per psychologist.
- Tripling, at a minimum, the number of social workers as CPS. Currently, the district has one social worker per 1,238 students – which is five times the recommended level. Gery will also ensure that new social workers are trauma informed experts who are focused on students in Chicago’s highest crime neighborhoods.
- Partnering with the State’s Independent Monitor that oversees CPS Special Education so that the kids most in need receive the support and services they deserve. Eventually, CPS must be “best in class” for special education services and require no monitor.
- Expanding partnerships to work with at-risk truant kids to reduce truancy. Kids learn more *when they’re in school*. Right now, 20% of students miss more than 17 days of school.
- Limiting suspensions and expulsions through mentoring and support programs.
- Increasing due diligence in staff and teacher hires to ensure that no one who victimizes or hurts children is in the classroom.
- Aligning curriculum throughout CPS.

Gery intends to work with the state of Illinois to fund schools at the recommended per-pupil funding level. He will also push for the state to assume all CPS pension obligations, as it does for all other school districts.

As he has shown time and time again as President of CPS, Chair of the City Colleges and Chair of the Illinois State Board of Education, Gery knows how to deliver results. He is ready on day one to apply his depth of experience and expertise to implement these reforms to move CPS in the right direction.

As mayor, Gery’s top priorities will be ensuring that all children have the same access to quality school facilities and excellent teachers. At the same time, he will take immediate action to start creating more comprehensive career and technical opportunities for our students. Without high-quality education, opportunities get foreclosed. This is an unacceptable outcome in a city as great as Chicago.

Gery Chico will do what he’s done before: lift up our system and our students.



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