



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2024

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**MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON ANNOUNCES FULL COMPOSITION OF CHICAGO'S FIRST
HYBRID SCHOOL BOARD**

*New leadership reflects the administration's commitment to equity, democracy and
community-centered governance in public education*

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson announced the final appointment to the Chicago Board of Education today, completing the city's first-ever hybrid school board. This transition marks a significant milestone in Chicago's shift toward a fully elected board by 2027, ensuring greater transparency, equity and public representation in the governance of Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

"For decades, families, educators and students have called for greater transparency, equity and representation in our public school system," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "This hybrid school board is a monumental step toward a truly democratic and community-led CPS. With these dedicated leaders, our schools will be led by people who deeply understand the needs of students, families and educators."

The newly formed Board consists of 10 elected representatives, chosen by Chicago voters in the November 2024 elections, and 11 mayoral appointees, selected for their expertise and leadership in education, community advocacy, and public service.

At the helm is Sean Harden, appointed as President of the Chicago Board of Education. A South Side native, Harden has extensive experience in city government and education policy. He previously served as Deputy CEO of Community Affairs for Chicago Public Schools and held positions under former Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Mayor Johnson's Appointees:

The Mayor's appointees bring a wealth of experience and commitment to ensuring Chicago's public school system serves all students equitably:

- Sean Harden (Board President) - A veteran public servant with deep expertise in education leadership and community engagement.
- Ed Bannon (District 1a) – A CPS parent and longtime community organizer in the Dunning neighborhood, Bannon has played an active role in local governance through the Dever Elementary Local School Council and previously ran for 38th Ward alderman.
- Debby Pope (District 2b) – A respected educator and labor leader, Pope has spent her career fighting for teachers' rights and advocating for stronger public schools.
- Norma Rios-Sierra (District 3a) – A CPS parent and an organizer, Rios-Sierra has championed inclusive education policies and community-driven initiatives to expand opportunities for students.
- Karen Zaccor (District 4a) – A veteran CPS teacher and policy strategist, Zaccor has been a leader in advancing equitable education policies and strengthening classroom curriculum.
- Michilla "Kyla" Blaise (District 5b) – A CPS parent and experienced policy professional, Blaise serves as chief of staff to a Cook County commissioner and brings government expertise to the board.
- Anusha Thotakura (District 6a) – A policy analyst and civic engagement advocate, Thotakura has worked extensively to amplify student voices in decision-making processes.
- Emma Lozano (District 7a) – A trailblazing activist for immigrant rights, Lozano has been a dedicated voice in the fight for equal access to education and social justice.
- Cydney Wallace (District 8b) – A CPS parent, South Side native, dedicated wife and mother of four committed to uplifting her community. Her deep roots in Chicago fuel her passion for advocacy and equitable opportunities for families and students.
- Frank Niles Thomas (District 9a) – A business leader and entrepreneur, Thomas has prioritized economic development and expanding educational opportunities in historically underserved communities.
- Olga Bautista (District 10b) – A Southeast Side environmental justice leader and CPS parent, Bautista has been instrumental in advocating for cleaner, healthier school environments and stronger community investment.

Elected Members:

Chicago voters elected 10 members in the city's first school board elections in November 2024, reflecting the city's commitment to local control and public accountability:

- Jennifer Custer (District 1b) – An educator and mother of two, Custer has worked as a teacher and dean of students in suburban school districts. She resides in the Montclare neighborhood.
- Ebony L. DeBerry (District 2a) – A community organizer, former Chicago Public Schools teacher and parent, DeBerry has been an active Local School Council member, focusing on policy reform and community engagement.
- Carlos A. Rivas Jr. (District 3b) – Serving as a spokesperson for the Civilian Office of Police Accountability and a former charter school counselor, Rivas brings a unique perspective to the board.
- Ellen Rosenfeld (District 4b) – A longtime CPS educator, parent and community leader, Rosenfeld has served as a Local School Council chair and district-wide Family and Community Engagement Specialist.
- Aaron "Jitu" Brown (District 5a) – A nationally recognized education and community organizer, Brown has been a leading voice in advocating for educational equity and has spearheaded numerous campaigns to improve public schools.
- Jessica Biggs (District 6b) – A CPS parent, former teacher and school principal, Biggs has extensive experience in educational leadership and community engagement.
- Yesenia Lopez (District 7b) – A community advocate and Latino outreach director for Governor J.B. Pritzker's campaign, Lopez has extensive experience in community engagement and has worked to bridge gaps between diverse communities and educational institutions.
- Angel Gutierrez (District 8a) – An executive at a private high school and former leader at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Gutierrez brings a wealth of experience in educational administration and social services.
- Therese Boyle (District 9b) – A school psychologist with deep insights into student needs and educational support services, Boyle has been a strong advocate for mental health resources in schools.
- Che "Rhymefest" Smith (District 10a) – A Grammy and Oscar-winning artist, Smith is also a dedicated community activist. He has been involved in various initiatives aimed at integrating arts into education and advocating for social change.

Mayor Johnson's administration is committed to fully funding public schools, amplifying student and educator voices and ensuring equitable resources. The new Board will prioritize funding equity, mental health supports, and collaboration with educators to address systemic inequities.

With this hybrid Board, Chicago moves toward a fully elected school board by 2027, ensuring greater accountability and community representation. "This transition marks a

new era for public education – one rooted in democracy, transparency, and equity,”
continued Mayor Johnson.

The administration remains focused on building a fully resourced, student-centered and community-driven school system where every child can succeed.

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