



TRANSFORMING CHICAGO'S FUTURE NOW

THE CHICO EDUCATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, the U.S. Secretary of Education called Chicago's Schools "the worst in the nation." The morale of our city was low - but worse - we as a city were guilty of condemning our children - Chicago's Children - to hopelessness.

In 1995 The Illinois Legislature finally acted, giving the Mayor full control over Chicago Schools - and Mayor Daley turned to Gery Chico to lead a stunning turnaround that was hailed by President Bill Clinton as a reform model for the nation.

Against the odds, Gery's leadership from 1995 to 2001 paid dividends for students and taxpayers. Test scores rose for six straight years. An unprecedented number of kids - nearly 200,000 - attended summer school and after-school programs. Blighted and outdated schools were replaced by over new state of the art school buildings and hundreds more were renovated.

And while undertaking a multi-billion dollar schools construction plan, Chico cut, slashed and saved until a projected \$1.3 billion dollar deficit became a \$344 million dollar surplus.

Today, just nine years later we find our schools in crisis again. Critical learning programs have been slashed, bureaucracy has grown, schools have fallen into disrepair, and deficits have again surged.

Without bold action now, we will continue drifting downward until all that was gained will be lost. Smart and sustainable reforms are needed and everyone must be held accountable for results: parents, teachers, students, administrators and schools.

Without an effective school system we cannot prepare kids to compete in the global economy, or provide the labor force that will attract good companies to locate in our great city.

As a candidate for Mayor, Gery Chico has proposed innovative but affordable and achievable plans that will Transform Chicago's Future Now!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

READY BY FIVE

Using a full range of initiatives from expanding park district programs like “moms and tots,” to dramatically increasing Chicago’s network of pre-K programs, Gery Chico will make prenatal, infant, and early childhood education available and accessible to families throughout Chicago.

DISMANTLE AND RESTRUCTURE

Chico will do away with the current Central Office and replace it with a much leaner, more nimble and responsible school improvement organization, which will focus on serving and supporting schools.

GIVING PARENTS POWER

Parents can’t play a critical role in their children’s education unless they have the information necessary to make good choices. Chico will put a Parent Academy in every school and create a Parent Advocate General to ensure parents have the necessary information and power to make smart and informed choices for their children.

EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Only the best teachers will serve in our classrooms. The best teachers will be rewarded and recognized through a research-based teacher evaluation system. Chico will personally lead national teacher recruitment missions and seek to raise the score required to be certified as teachers in Chicago Public Schools. If a teacher is not performing up to standards in the classroom, Chico will not hesitate to remove that teacher regardless of rank.

MORE LEARNING AND BETTER CHOICES

Every student in every neighborhood should attend a high-performing school. Chico will work to lengthen the school day and the school year. He will increase the number of high performing charter schools, magnet schools and college prep schools. A full menu of school choice options, including vouchers for private schools, will be available to parents.

CONQUERING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Every high school student will be issued a laptop and every student in Chicago schools will have a laptop by the end of Chico’s first term. Chico will accelerate citywide WiFi. Students will be offered access to classes online that are not available at their particular schools.

SAFER SCHOOLS

Kids can't learn and teachers can't teach if they fear being in school. Chico will crack down on bullying, violence and a lack of discipline with a range of tough initiatives that include privately run schools for disruptive or violent students. Chico will relentlessly fight gang violence in schools by placing more Chicago Police in and around schools in need.

BRINGING BACK CULTURE

Research shows that arts are an essential part of a comprehensive education, and students in these classes perform better on standardized tests. Chico will restore the arts to every school.

SPORTS

For many kids, sports are the key to keeping them out of trouble, teaching them about competition and growing their self-confidence. Chico will promote sports and ensure that kids have the proper equipment to protect them.

LANGUAGES

As a world-class city, we must teach our children to think and learn beyond our national borders. Chico will ensure that foreign languages are incorporated into our school's curriculum, and English language learners develop the English language skills necessary to succeed.

MODERNIZING SCHOOLS

Chico will continue building new schools and maintaining our existing facilities. He will ensure that all schools are environmentally sound, green schools that reduce costs and raise awareness.

Transforming Chicago's Future Now

The Chico Education Plan

READY BY FIVE

An unprecedented focus on early childhood development starting before birth

Extensive research indicates that high-quality child development programs for children and their families, beginning prenatally, ensure that children will enter kindergarten ready to learn and to achieve to their fullest potential. These programs engage parents, keep children healthy, support mental health, teach skills and close the achievement gap. Children who attend early education programs are less likely to exhibit significant behavioral problems in school and are more likely to perform at or above grade level. Children in these programs are ultimately better prepared to move on to high school, and eventually, higher education.

Investments in high-quality early education have been shown to result in a decrease in crime, teen pregnancy, delinquency, substance abuse, welfare dependency, and the need for special education services. The stakes are higher than ever because our children must compete in a global economy.

As President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery dramatically expanded early childhood development programs such as all day kindergarten, home schooling support, and cradle-to-classroom initiatives. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will implement the "Ready by Five" initiative, with the goal of ensuring that every child is prepared to learn and succeed by the time he or she reaches kindergarten.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Make prenatal, infant, and early childhood programs available and accessible to all families throughout Chicago

High-quality prenatal, infant and early childhood programs result in higher student achievement in school and in life after school. Affordable programs for infants and toddlers are essential for working families. It is critical that these programs are available to all families, regardless of income level or background. Gery will:

- Work with public health providers to expand access to prenatal care for all pregnant women;
- Expand programs like the Chicago Park District's "Moms and Tots" to reach our youngest citizens and their families;
- Use federal dollars to provide high quality home visiting programs to our neediest children and their families;
- Encourage the state to make a commitment to permanent placement of infants and toddlers in foster care;
- Ensure that all children younger than age five, whose parents qualify for Medicaid, receive early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment, paid for by Federal sources;
- Focus on improving child nutrition programs in early childhood;

- Open our schools and government buildings to serve as early learning centers through public and private partnerships;
- Propose a local supplement to the Federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to ease the burden on families with young children;
- Encourage Federal and State governments to offer corporate tax incentives for private entities who partner with and support early learning initiatives;
- Encourage the Federal Government to pursue additional Head Start funding, and ensure that all funds directed toward early learning are properly allocated and effectively utilized to maximize the benefit to our kids.

Enhance and Prioritize the Preschool-for-All Program

As President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery recognized and promoted the value of providing voluntary preschool for all children. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will make this program a priority by:

- Dramatically expanding the network of pre-K programs, including the highly successful CPS tuition-based pre-k program and developing innovative partnerships with non-profit organizations and private companies;
- Ensuring that all preschool programs meet the highest standards in programming and certification;
- Instituting all day kindergartens in all elementary schools.

DISMANTLE AND RESTRUCTURE

Transform the Central Office into a leaner, more nimble and responsible school support organization, reducing staff by one-third and focusing on serving and supporting schools

Guided by the principle, “Kids and Families First”, Gery will dismantle and restructure the central administration to more effectively support local schools. Things work better when they are simpler. In a system designed to educate our children, inefficiency, mismanagement, and bloated bureaucracy are simply unacceptable. While there has been some reduction in manpower, the result has been confusion about the role of the Central Office. That has, in turn, confused schools about what they can expect from the Central Office. Our vision is a limited central administration that focuses on school support services and accountability. We will reduce overhead costs and drive efficiencies that will help balance the budget and achieve the best outcomes with the available resources. Savings from the pared-down administrative costs will be shifted to local classrooms to benefit children.

As Chief of Staff to the Mayor, and President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery established a reputation for reinventing government. While consolidating the CPS Central and District Offices, he eliminated hundreds of unnecessary positions, refocused the administration to support schools, and dramatically reduced operating costs. He’s done it before, and he will do it again!

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Restructure the smaller more efficient Central Office to maintain the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Education Officer model, and have the following functions:

- Provide education support services to local schools by identifying exemplary educators, both current and retired, who can serve on school improvement teams to provide expert assistance to struggling schools;
- Be an authority on research and development (R&D). The best practices for curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, interventions and teacher assistance will be identified and provided to all schools. Gery will create a Working Group that includes local and national experts from the civic, educational, labor and professional communities tasked with the ongoing goal of providing ideas and insight into improvements and developments in the educational field;
- Identify, expand, replicate and/or “franchise” existing schools (e.g.: high-performing neighborhood schools, Charters). In communities where schools are struggling, we need not re-invent the wheel to create models of success;
- Perform data collection and assessment to provide schools with the information needed to make educational and staffing decisions;
- Monitor schools’ progress to ensure that schools are meeting their goals and mandates.

GIVING PARENTS POWER

Empower parents to help their children

Parents must play a significant role in their children’s education. All too often, parents lack the resources and knowledge to effectively help their children succeed. As a result, our children suffer.

Parents need more information about selecting the right school for their children. They need to know how to help their children become good students. They need information on how to work with schools – and sometimes to challenge schools – to ensure their children succeed.

Gery believes that a critical step toward improving our schools is giving parents the power to become partners with their schools and to have a greater influence in the educational decisions that affect their children.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Create a Parent Academy for every school

Parent Academies will serve as networking, resource and education centers for parents, run by parents. Parent Academies will:

- Make information about school events and scheduling available to parents along with opportunities to volunteer in the classroom, office, or the sports or arts programs;
- Encourage parents to enroll in workshops and classes in life and parenting skills;
- Provide a network to help parents work with schools as decision-makers, select the best schools and educational programs for their children, and support classroom instruction at home;
- Assist parents in communicating with teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers or other school staff;
- Have a Lead Coordinator supported with parent volunteers.

Create a Parent Advocate General

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery will create the position of Parent Advocate General. The Parent Advocate General will serve as the liaison between the Parent Academies and CPS. He or she will be responsible for examining issues through the lens of a parent.

Strengthen Local School Councils

Local School Councils are intended to involve parents and the community in decisions affecting their schools. However, the councils often fail to attract parent and community participation and operate effectively. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery will work to:

- Provide better training for Local School Councils in principal selection, school budgeting and other matters.

EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Employ excellent educators to ensure only the best principals and teachers are in our schools

Research shows that the most important influence on a student's achievement is a high-quality teacher. We must ensure that we have only the best teachers and principals in every school. Gery knows that teaching is a challenging and demanding profession. He recognizes that the vast majority of teachers do the best they can to help our students learn. It is critical that teachers have the resources they need, the support they deserve, and that they be held accountable for their students' academic growth.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Lead nation-wide educational recruitment efforts

Just as the Mayor is responsible for attracting the best companies to Chicago, Gery believes the Mayor should also be responsible for bringing the best educators to our city. Gery Chico will lead nation-wide recruiting of the best principals and teachers in order to bring them to the Chicago Public Schools. Gery will also:

- Expand the system for recruiting the finest talent to CPS, through such programs as Teach for America, the New Teachers Project, and New Leaders for New Schools.

Ensure we have a research-based teacher evaluation system

- This evaluation system will be developed with the teachers' union, will be fair, and will utilize the best developments in evaluation methods.

Reward and recognize high-performing teachers

- Gery will implement a pay structure that ensures that those teachers who are succeeding are adequately rewarded.

Collaborate with the local teacher training colleges to ensure their graduates can meet needs of urban students

Raise the bar for teacher certification

- The current score required to pass the teacher certification exam is low;
- Gery will push to raise the passing score to one that is more rigorous.

Strengthen ongoing professional development of teachers

- Gery will ensure that the coursework for professional growth meets rigorous standards, is current and is relevant.

Dismiss teachers who are not performing

While nothing is more helpful to a student than a great teacher, nothing is more harmful than a poor teacher.

- If a teacher is not able to succeed in the classroom, Gery will not hesitate to dismiss the teacher, regardless of rank;

- While removing a tenured teacher can be costly and time consuming, allowing that teacher to stay in the classroom with children is far more harmful.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS

More time learning, more high-quality school choices, more reasons for kids to believe education is the path to a better life

Every student in every community should attend a high-performing school regardless of socio-economic status. This can be achieved by:

- Turning around under-performing neighborhood schools;
- Expanding the number of magnet schools;
- Increasing the number of selective enrollment college preparatory schools;
- Replicating successful charter and contract schools;
- Providing vouchers to students in chronically failing schools.

This is a big task, but Gery's record demonstrates his ability to see it through. Under Gery's leadership, CPS was one of the first school systems in the country to embrace and open charter schools. Further, under Gery's leadership, the number of high-performing magnet schools dramatically expanded, and the public school system opened the nation's first high school military academy. These initiatives expanded opportunities for quality education, and resulted in unprecedented growth in the student population.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Increase Learning Time

Studies have proven that increasing the time spent learning leads to an improvement in student achievement. The Chicago Public Schools has one of the shortest school days and one of the shortest school years in Illinois. As President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery developed extended school-day programs that kept more than 125,000 children in school longer and expanded summer school opportunities which served as many as 175,000 children each summer. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- **Seek to lengthen the school day and the school year.** Gery will work to extend the school day from a six hour day to an eight hour, and the calendar year from 176 to 200 days a year. More learning time will give teachers the ability to cover core subjects in greater depth and allows students- particularly in high school - to add more subjects to their school schedules;
- **Further promote the year-round school model**
Year-round schools, in which students and teachers have shorter breaks during the year, with no long summer break, prove academically beneficial. By eliminating the long summer break, teachers no longer have to reteach in the fall.

Expand School Choice

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will work to identify and expand high-quality schools so there are comprehensive school options in every community. Gery will:

- Identify high quality, existing local school models, whether neighborhood or charter, and expand, replicate, or franchise these school models;
- Expand highly effective magnet programs and magnet school educational opportunities by putting additional magnet programs in neighborhood schools (e.g., International Baccalaureate Program);
- Expand the highly successful network of college preparatory high schools.

Support a Voucher Initiative

For parents with children in chronically failing schools there must be an option that allows for children to receive a quality education. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will support a voucher initiative that will allow parents of students in chronically failing schools to receive a \$3,717 voucher toward elementary school tuition, and a \$7,500 voucher toward high-school children which can be used at private and parochial schools. The program could impact up to 30,000 students.

Integrate Career Curricula

While our goal is generally to encourage all students to achieve higher education, we need to prepare our students to succeed whether they choose to enter college or to go directly in the workforce. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Work with business partners to build technical and career programs that prepare students with the technical and occupational skills they need to find good employment;
- Work with the corporate community to expand work-study programs that allow students to participate in paid work-study while attending school.

CONQUER THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Schools of the future, laptops for every student

The Digital Revolution is having a profound effect on 21st century education. Schools now have the ability to incorporate internet, digital audio and video and smart boards into their instruction. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will empower our students in the information age.

We now spend millions of dollars on traditional textbooks, which wear and become obsolete. By redirecting a portion of these funds to digital tools, students can have constantly updated textbooks. Even better, they can have access to multimedia lessons integrated into their texts.

Teaching and learning will both be enhanced as our teachers learn how to effectively use the tools available.

Closing the Digital Divide will enable our children to compete with their peers in seeking college admissions and applying for jobs.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Ensure every student has a laptop. Every high school student will be issued a laptop immediately and every student in CPS will have a laptop within Chico's first term;
- Add interactive textbooks with lessons online;
- Accelerate the citywide wiring of Chicago for WiFi;
- Institute training for teachers to ensure that they know how to use new tools of learning in their instruction;
- Provide computer training for parents through the Parent Academies and the City Colleges;
- Offer courses for students online in individual and group settings.

SAFER SCHOOLS

An environment plagued by bullying, violence, and a lack of discipline is not conducive to learning. Students are unable to learn, teachers are not focused on teaching and parents are deterred from sending their kids to public schools.

As President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery's initiatives dramatically increased security in the schools.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Create effectively functioning alternative schools for disruptive or at-risk students by contracting with private providers and soliciting alternative school charters;
- Identify over-age but underachieving students, and place them into special transitional settings to separate them from the younger children while providing them with more intensive age-appropriate educational support services;
- Prevent bullying by initiating a proactive anti-bullying program in all CPS schools, coordinated with relevant LGBT organizations and other social service agencies;
- Evaluate and assess student behavior to identify problems early before they endanger teachers and other students;
- Put more Chicago Police in and around schools in need.

BRINGING BACK CULTURE



With the emphasis on language arts, math and science in standardized testing, the fine arts are frequently neglected or – when budgets are tight – eliminated. Research demonstrates that the arts are an essential part of a comprehensive education and a rich life; further, students in fine arts perform better on the standardized tests.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Restore the arts to their proper role in every school. Every school will have a substantive fine arts program that will include displays of student work and performances, with the use of portfolios to assess students' accomplishments;
- Continue partnerships with outside organizations such as museums, theaters and cultural centers to enhance art education.

LANGUAGES

Speech, language and communication are the indispensable tools that help our children to communicate and to share thoughts, ideas and emotions. Every student, in every community, must have an opportunity to learn these skills. Learning languages helps increase listening ability, memory, creativity and critical thinking and enriches the learning process by appealing to students' various learning styles. Further, as an internationally recognized city, we must teach our children to think and learn beyond our national borders so they can be equipped to compete in a global economy.

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will ensure:

- There are a greater number of language academies throughout the city;
- Bilingual students are transitioned to learn the English language skills they need to succeed in schools;
- Multiple languages are integrated into our schools' curricula.

MORE KEY INITIATIVES

As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

Increase Transparency

Information should be not only available to the public, but accessible and understandable to the average parent, teacher and community member. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will be committed to increasing transparency at CPS and all levels of government, by:

- Publishing an accounting for the public of how CPS spends its money. This would include a breakdown of how much is spent on central bureaucracy, schools and services to children, special education and early childhood education;

- Placing all budgets and financial reports, including updates for any changes, on the internet, and if necessary, providing a supplemental document that simplifies the data in a manner the public can easily comprehend;
- Releasing teacher performance data to the public, as was recently done in both Los Angeles and New York.

Engage the Community

In order to implement substantive and sustainable reform, we need strong Mayoral leadership that engages the community as a true partner every step of the way. Gery knows that while some decisions must be made at the administration level, the majority of decisions are enhanced by an inclusive and open approach that involves the input of parents, teachers, principals, students and the entire community. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Create a culture of leadership where innovation, transformation and entrepreneurship become the norm;
- Have an electronic forum where anyone can join a discussion, exchange ideas, or seek advice about educational issues.

Give Schools Flexibility and Autonomy

Highly-successful charter schools, like the charter schools run by the Harlem Children’s Zone, teach us that the freedom to implement new and creative strategies is one of the keys to academic success. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Promote autonomy for schools to implement creative ideas and respond to the evolving needs of the parents and their communities;
- Offer grants to top-performing schools so that they can replicate successful models.

Build community partnerships to benefit schools

Chicago is a culturally rich and diverse city, and each community provides unique opportunities for partnerships that can enhance our children’s education. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Partner with foundations, community groups, museums, government institutions, etc. to bring innovative and diverse programs and learning opportunities to our schools.

Institutionalize a Dual Enrollment Program

Some high-achieving high-school students are college ready while still in high school. We should be rewarding those students and incentivizing others to reach this level of success by offering a robust dual enrollment program available to all students citywide. The City Colleges of Chicago provide an extraordinary resource to our city, with access to higher-education facilities throughout the city. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery will:

- Introduce an ordinance that requires the City colleges to allow any eligible high school student to enroll in college courses where the courses are not otherwise available through their school.
- Ensure students who take courses through the Dual Enrollment Program will earn college credits.

Special Education

Gery will be wholly committed to ensuring that children with special needs and their families receive the services to which they are legally entitled. He will be sensitive to new options for addressing the needs for special education students and their families and fight for adequate funding for necessary services.

Build Schools as Community Anchors

Schools are often the anchors of their communities. Communities with strong schools enjoy increased property value, recreation and open space, reduced crime, and a host of other benefits. Unfortunately, Chicago's schools are under-maintained and under-utilized, missing a valuable opportunity and resource to serve their surrounding neighborhoods.

As President of the Chicago Board of Education, Gery created an office of school construction and repair, which implemented the largest, most ambitious and successful school rehabilitation program in the country. As Mayor of Chicago, Gery Chico will:

- Continue building new schools and commit to maintaining our existing facilities;
- Ensure that structural improvements to school buildings are modernizing buildings to make them more multi-faceted;
- Open schools to the community during non-school hours;
- Leverage private investment and create public private partnership opportunities to develop additional state of the art facilities;
- Encourage green initiatives that will reduce costs, increase social awareness and provide tangible benefits to the students and families in the surrounding community.