OVERVIEW  School leaders, teachers and staff need not only the skills to excel in their individual work but also the commitment to work effectively as a team in order to reach every child. The district must support a culture of collective responsibility, high performance and continuous improvement by helping all employees understand their role in meeting system-wide goals and by supporting them to succeed and grow in their daily practice. We must set the tone with a rigorous and well-coordinated hiring process, on-going professional development that meets school needs, individual performance evaluation and recognition aligned with district goals, and clear and timely communication with all staff. People who feel connected, supported and respected and who understand their part in a greater mission are better motivated to solve problems creatively and deliver results. They are driven to remain and grow within the organization over time, and they help develop the district’s reputation as a place where the best talent comes to work.

OBJECTIVES

• **Recruit talented teachers, principals and school staff.** Attracting exemplary candidates will first require a modernized application process, a competitive benefits package and strategic recruitment and screening. In the past, applicants have found open positions by scrolling through a lengthy, online list that was updated only weekly and was frequently out-of-date. A new online system, updated real-time, will allow applicants to quickly search for open positions that match their interests. We will continue to “grow our own” talent, building on the great expertise and potential within CPS to identify school and district leaders. In addition, we will step up our national recruiting efforts — especially of proven leaders from other districts — to expand our talent pool. At the same time, we are raising the bar for what it means to be a part of the CPS team. A more rigorous assessment of principal candidates is already in place, and in partnership with the Chicago Teachers Union, we will set higher standards for teacher applicants.

• **Implement an evaluation system for all district employees that requires them to deliver results — not simply comply with requirements — and that supports their professional growth.** In collaboration with the Chicago Teachers Union, the CPS teacher evaluation system was recently redesigned for the first time in 45 years. The new system, called Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago (REACH) Students, evaluates teachers based on student growth and quality of instructional practice. Principal evaluations have also been revised to include a combination of student growth and standards for effective school leadership. Senior district leaders, too, will be evaluated on measurable outcomes related to their area of responsibility, and going forward, evaluations of all district and school-based staff will be tied to meeting the commitments outlined in this plan.
CPS knows the critical role that principals play in the academic achievement of all students and has made it a top priority to place a high-performing principal in every school. To achieve this goal, the Principal Quality Initiative (PQI) has established the following five critical levers which are embedded throughout Pillar #4 Objectives:

- **Provide on-going professional development for educators in content areas, pedagogy and leadership.** The core work of our district lives in our schools, in our classrooms, in our teachers’ ambitious instruction. All teachers will be supported by a common vision for effectiveness, yet professional development should be tailored based on each school’s unique needs. Each school should create a culture that encourages collaborative teacher planning to improve instruction, reflection on strengths and development areas, and ongoing discussions about how individual employees can improve their practice to grow student achievement. To support teachers’ learning, the district can provide professional development directly to school teams or guide schools toward vetted, high-quality resources that best serve their local needs.

- **Provide professional development to principals at all stages of their career.** Through the Chicago Leadership Collaborative (CLC), we have partnered with four of the nation’s strongest principal preparation programs to develop a pool of aspiring principal candidates. CLC candidates will receive intensive coaching, mentoring and training and will be evaluated regularly on their progress toward becoming a high-quality CPS principal. The Chicago Executive Leadership Academy (CELA) contains a systemic curriculum for our current school leaders, including induction, on-boarding and coaching of our new principals; supporting “rising” principals in accelerating their student growth; and finally, working with experienced, successful principals to expand their impact through career advancement opportunities.

At all times, regional superintendent offices will continue to provide both formal training and individual coaching to principals, their instructional leadership teams and teacher leaders based on school and employee needs.

- **Reward high performers, and empower great leaders.** We must celebrate and reward success. The CPS Excellence in Teaching Awards will celebrate Chicago’s many outstanding teachers and will build community awareness around the powerful work CPS teachers do in our schools. Principals who drive exceptional student growth will receive bonuses and recognition at an annual awards ceremony honoring their leadership and impact. Their schools will also be publicly recognized.

We furthermore must empower our highest-performing school leaders while also leveraging their expertise. We will create an Empowerment Zone to provide our strongest principals with greater autonomy to innovate, and in turn, they will be expected to share their best practices with principals district-wide.

- **Establish systems to clearly communicate progress on this plan to CPS employees and to receive their feedback.** We want every employee in the district to understand the vision in this plan and his/her own role in achieving it. Through means such as town hall meetings, webinars and a monthly newsletter, we will keep employees updated on the plan’s progress. At the same time, we will seek feedback on the plan itself and obstacles to achieving it through focus groups, employee surveys, reports from regional staff, and advisory councils comprised of students and school staff. Our goal is to create a communication system that generates enthusiasm for the vision on the ground-level while continuously providing information that enables us to make quick course corrections in our efforts to support schools and ensure student success.

**SPOTLIGHT: CPS PRINCIPAL QUALITY INITIATIVE**

CPS knows the critical role that principals play in the academic achievement of all students and has made it a top priority to place a high-performing principal in every school. To achieve this goal, the Principal Quality Initiative (PQI) has established the following five critical levers which are embedded throughout Pillar #4 Objectives:

- **Chicago Leadership Collaborative:** Partnership with four external program partners to provide year-long internships to aspiring principals
- **Leadership Development and Training:** Provide leadership training and support for new and incumbent principals through the Chicago Executive Leadership Academy
- **Principal Eligibility:** A more rigorous principal candidate assessment process to maximize the probability of success in the principalship
- **Principal Evaluations:** Provide clear performance standards for all CPS school leaders
- **Principal Achievement Awards:** Incent and recognize the district’s highest performing school leaders