

Chicago Preparatory Charter Middle School (Chicago Prep) is a proposed single-site 5-8 charter middle school for the Bronzeville community. We propose to open with 120 scholars in grades 5 and 6 and add one grade each year until we are at full capacity, with 240 scholars, in 2024-25.

**Mission**

Chicago Preparatory Charter Middle School provides academic rigor in a structured and supportive community, preparing all 5th-8th grade scholars to succeed in college and positively impact the world.

**Vision**

Chicago Preparatory Charter Middle School (Chicago Prep) will establish a college-preparatory program that leads our scholars to flourish both academically and personally. Scholars will take pride in the success they experience in our focused, joyful school community and will consistently demonstrate our core values: **kindness**, **courage**, **gratitude**, **curiosity**, **responsibility**, and **perseverance**. Upon graduation from Chicago Prep, scholars will have the academic, social, and emotional skills to thrive in college-preparatory high schools throughout Chicago. Through continued effort and achievement in high school, the graduates of Chicago Prep go on to enroll in selective colleges and universities, well-prepared to excel. They are independent and intrinsically motivated, taking the initiative to find or create opportunities and to fully engage in their communities.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?” As college graduates, Chicago Prep graduates will be guided by this question. They will focus beyond their own success and think about how to uplift others and positively impact their communities. As doctors, lawyers, educators, entrepreneurs, scientists, activists, artists, and more, our scholars are courageous and compassionate leaders. They have the education and motivation to change the world.

**Educational Philosophy and Model**

As we collaborated with community leaders, residents, and families to develop and refine a proposal to make our vision a reality, we have been guided by four core beliefs. These beliefs are fundamental to our educational philosophy and will continue to guide all decisions we make.

1. All scholars can achieve academic excellence.
2. Strong character leads to lifelong growth and success.
3. Scholars thrive in a structured and supportive community.
4. Effective education motivates scholars and prepares them to excel in the real world.

Guided by our mission and core beliefs, and rooted in the strengths, needs, and desires of the Bronzeville community, Chicago Prep will implement seven key design elements:

1. **Academic Rigor**: We set high expectations for our scholars, challenging them to think critically about meaningful, relevant content and to create high-quality work.
2. **Character Development**: Our school culture is centered around our core values: **kindness**, **courage**, **gratitude**, **curiosity**, **responsibility**, and **perseverance**. We model and discuss our values every day, and we celebrate scholars for demonstrating them.
3. **Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship**: We build financial literacy early to prepare our scholars to navigate the monetary demands of college, career, and life. We couple this with entrepreneurship to ignite scholars’ creativity and equip them to directly impact their communities.
4. **Excellent Teaching**: High-quality teaching is the key to scholar growth and achievement. We prioritize professional development and one-on-one coaching, ensuring our teachers are knowledgeable, skilled, and responsive to scholar needs.
5. **Structured and Supportive Community**: Scholars learn best in an environment that is calm, safe, and predictable. We build meaningful relationships with all scholars and prioritize social and emotional learning (SEL) to support our scholars’ needs.
6. **Robust Supports**: We provide robust supports to ensure that *all* scholars meet our high expectations and experience academic success. We offer an extended school day and year as well as daily small-group tutoring and individualized supports.
7. **Family and Community Partnerships**: Our scholars’ success depends on collaboration with families and the community. We communicate consistently with these key stakeholders, actively seeking their feedback, support, and partnership.

**Culture**

Chicago Prep will create a school culture characterized by a profound sense of warmth and focus. Scholars and staff exude care for each other and find joy in their work, all while demonstrating that nothing is more important than teaching and learning. We intentionally refer to our students as “scholars” so that they internalize academic effort and achievement as core to their identity.

**Capacity and Meeting the Need**

The Chicago Prep model has been designed specifically to meet the needs of our targeted student population: 80% Black, 80% students from low-income communities, and 15% students with disabilities. The key design elements are informed by the input of key Bronzeville stakeholders and the practices of high-performing schools across the country serving similar demographics of students. The Bronzeville community is in need of an open-enrollment, academically rigorous program: all nine open-enrollment elementary schools in the neighborhood are performing below national, state, and city averages.[[1]](#footnote-0) Chicago Prep’s focus on excellent teaching, data-driven instruction, robust supports, and character/social emotional development necessary to succeed in college and positively impact the world.

The Chicago Prep design team is a diverse group of community members with a wide range of professional experience and skills. We have individuals with expertise in finance, law, real estate, marketing, development, governance, and education (school leadership, curriculum and instruction, assessments, data analysis, policy, and postsecondary student affairs). Five of nine members of the design team have experience serving the school’s targeted population, and three of nine members have close ties to the Bronzeville community. All design team members are deeply committed to the Chicago Prep mission.

**Community**

We propose to open in Bronzeville, with neighborhood boundaries defined as stretching from 26th Street south to 51st Street and east from the Dan Ryan Expressway to Cottage Grove Avenue. We aim to recruit 80% of our students from Bronzeville and the remaining 20% from neighboring communities that share Bronzeville zip codes – South Loop, Bridgeport, Chinatown, Pilsen, Oakland, Kenwood, Hyde Park, and Washington Park – to help ensure enrollment and add diversity. We chose Bronzeville because of its unique combination of assets – rich historical and cultural legacy, social capital, and current revitalization efforts – and demonstrated need for an academically rigorous, open-enrollment school. To date we have engaged with over 250 community members, including many leaders and families in Bronzeville, to share our model and seek feedback, and we will continue robust engagement throughout our planning year.

1. Based on NWEA MAP and IAR data. “Find Your School.” Illinois Report Card 2018-2019; Illinois State Board of Education, 2019; “School Data.” Chicago Public Schools, 2018. cps.edu/SchoolData/Pages/SchoolData.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)