
Sustainable Community Schools

*Bringing Racial Equity and Justice to Chicago
Public Schools*



What are Sustainable Community Schools?

- **Fully funded, fully staffed schools** that are deeply rooted in and controlled by their communities
- Community hubs providing **comprehensive wraparound support**—academic, health, and social supports—to the entire school community through external partnerships and collaborations



SCS have always existed in CPS

- Wall to wall IB programs
- Before and after school care
- Fine arts at all grades
- Enrichment courses
- Year round sports: volleyball, soccer, basketball, flag football
- Art club
- Year round art and music showcases
- Guitar, ukelele, violin and piano lessons
- Garden Club
- Yearbook Club
- Yoga
- Theatre
- Choir
- Friends of...



Schooling on the South and West Sides...

Consolidations

Closures

Privatization



Cuts

Phase outs



“Turnarounds”

What are Sustainable Community Schools?

- SCS are designed to heal and **revitalize neighborhoods** and communities experiencing the trauma from historic disinvestment and privatization



Origins

The Sustainable Community school model is an **antiracist, community response** to years of racist disinvestment and displacement of Black and Brown people in this city.

SCS was crystallized in the Black liberation struggle for Dyett High School:

- Community self-determination
- The valuing of community wisdom
- True shared leadership

These became 3 key principles grounding the SCS model.



Shifting Power

Because Black and predominantly Brown, low-income schools have not operated with autonomy, **SCS establishes structures and processes to shift power to parents and students:**

- co-governance with a community organization
- representative leadership team
- a dynamic, continuous study of the community



Community Wisdom + Academic expertise = Real school improvement and transformation

Research on Effectiveness

- A large body of research dating back decades highlights the effectiveness of the community school approach
 - **No privatization reform has similar “return on investment” results**
- Since 2020, there has been increased energy and investment in implementing the community school strategy:
 - federal government has expanded the Full Service Community School grant five-fold from \$25 million to the current \$150 million
 - ISBE created the Community Partnerships Grant in 2021
 - ISBE allocated \$50 million in this last budget to afterschool programming

States/Cities making historic investments in community schools:

- California: Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco
- Maryland
- New York
- Cincinnati, OH
- New Jersey
- Minnesota
- Dallas, TX
- Washington

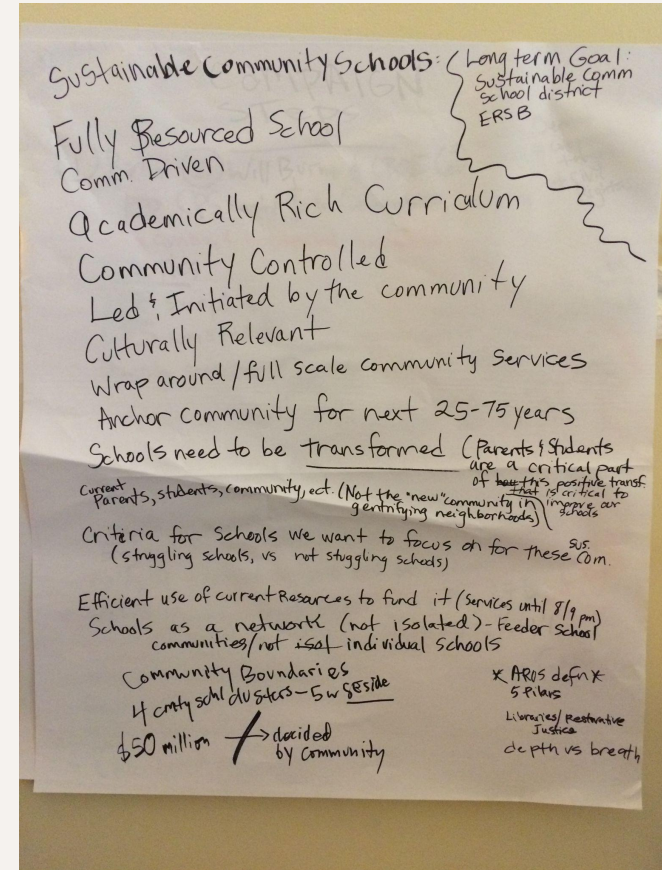
and more...



SCS: A More Antiracist Model

The Sustainable Community School model shares pillars of traditional community schools but goes farther by **transforming how schools function and operate** through:

- **Community self-determination**
 - Explicitly seeks to disrupt displacement and *sustain* low-income Black and Brown folks in their communities for 25-75 years
 - Requires co-governance with an organization with deep ties in the community
 - Cultivates and develops the leadership of parents, students, community, etc. so that they are empowered and involved in **every facet of school decision-making**



Dyett High School: Extraction vs. Investment



2012-2015

- No AP or Honors
- One world language offering (I and II only)
- Physical Education online
- Removal of all extracurricular activities
- Students forced to use back door to enter and exit school

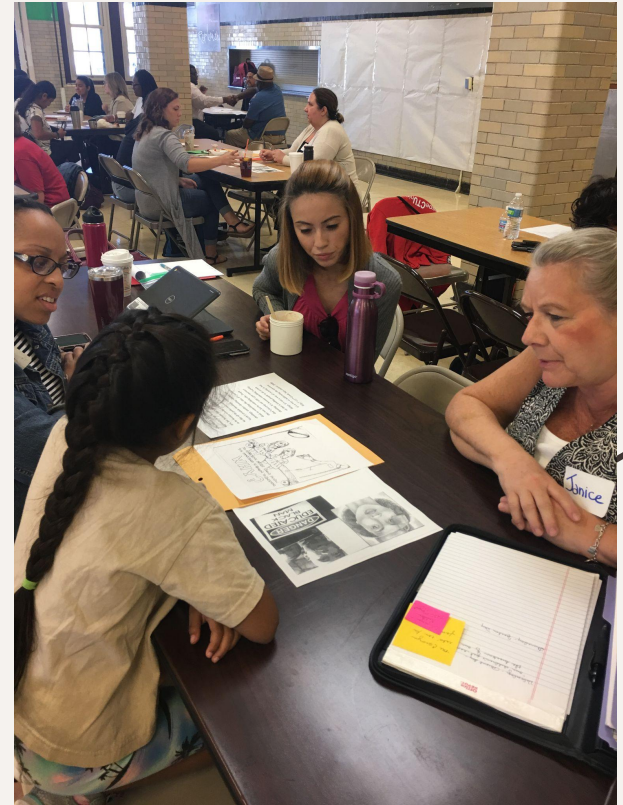


2017-present (an SCS)

- Year round sports
- Dozens of clubs (including robotics, coding, gaming, entrepreneurship)
- Full array of arts: digital media, visual arts, dance, theatre
- Annual international trips

SCS: A More Antiracist Model cont'd

- **Critical, culturally relevant curricula and assessment—and the community's role in co-creating these—is a pillar of SCS**
- Collective Learning
 - In at least 3 meetings per school year, students, parents, administrators, school staff, community organizations from each SCS come together for popular education
 - In the annual Summer Institute, these groups each plan a full day of professional learning for the full cohort



CTU proposals: Removing barriers to community participation

The SCS model seeks to redistribute power by **ensuring community organizations with deep roots in the community co-govern the schools in their communities**. This requires removing barriers that impede their participation:

- current LPA-CPS contract
- reimbursement structure hinders smaller organizations (and those without big budgets) from being able to participate



CTU proposals: School-based staffing of SCS

The SCS model seeks to redistribute power and resources to those who have been most denied and marginalized. To do so requires **increased and intentional school staffing at each school designated as SCS:**

- “Resource Coordinator”
- Restorative Culture Coordinator
- Partnerships and Programs Coordinator/Assistant*
- Parent Leadership and Development*
- Youth/Student Leadership and Development*
- Antiracist Educator Lead*



CTU proposals: Expanded Professional Learning System

To transform the way schools function requires the **development and cultivation of student, parent, teacher and principal leadership.**

This requires a team who works to co-design, coordinate and support professional learning opportunities for current SCS, new SCS and schools that will be preparing to become SCS.



CTU Expansion Proposal

Currently, there are 20 SCS schools.

School Year	SY 24-25	SY 25-26	SY 26-27	SY 27-28
Additional SCS	+10	+10	+15	+20

200 SCS Schools in the pipeline by the end of 2027-28

SCS Pipeline: Cohorts of schools and partners - established and grown each year - supported through professional learning and resources, to build infrastructure and readiness conditions for full SCS implementation

EDUCATION

GOAL #1 → **LOVING, LIBERATORY & FULLY STAFFED SCHOOLS**

NEAR TERM

- * Prioritize highest needs schools that have been historically underfunded for resources
- * **RESOURCE AUDIT** * Inventory/prioritize/assess: School resources and what those schools are lacking

LONG TERM

- * Expand early childhood access - free/full day for all 3-4 years old with robust SPED & ELL programming
- * Ramp up quality pipeline for Black and Brown educators that is also open to working mothers
- * Remake CPS into a sustainable Community School District
- * Prioritize underfunded schools

(Note: The infographic also features a small illustration of a person walking on the right side.)

Mayor's Education Plans

Education Goal #1

1. Prioritize the highest needs schools that have been historically underfunded for resources.
2. Resource audit
3. Inventory/prioritize/assess school resources and what those schools are lacking.
4. Expand early childhood access free/full day for all 3-4-year-olds with robust sped & ELL programming.
5. Ramp quality pipeline for Black and Brown educators that is also open to working mothers.
6. Prioritize underfunded schools
7. Remake CPS into a sustainable community school district.

NEAR TERM RECOMMENDATIONS: Make the expansion of the Sustainable Community Schools model a district priority, including the creation of a dedicated department within CPS. Consider how other priorities, including dual language, special education, and early childhood intersect with expansion.

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS: Expand equitable school practices: Maintain focus on equity goals established in the first year and continue to meet implementation benchmarks for support for BIPOC students, newcomers, and diverse learners.

Continue to expand Sustainable Community Schools: Engage in feedback gathering with new cohorts of SCS participants, and use best practices garnered through this process to effectively increase the number of participating schools to 200.

NEAR-TERM: Expansion of Sustainable Community Schools: **50 participating schools.**

LONG-TERM: Expansion of Sustainable Community Schools: **200 participating schools.**

SCS Alignment to Black Student Success Plan Recommendations

SCS Pillars	Black Student Success Plan Recommendations	Example Language from Black Student Success Plan Recs
1. Critical, culturally relevant curriculum	Student Daily Experience SDE 1.A, B, C SDE 3.A, B, C, D, E	Pillar 1: “Engage Black students in the design of curricula; Integrate curricula that includes: local Chicago history; requirements for students to use skills and tools learned in school to make impact outside of the classroom and in their own community.”
2. Emphasis on high-quality teaching, not testing	Adult Capacity and Continuous Learning ACCL 2.A, B	Pillar 2: “Ensure educators have dedicated time and space for collaborative planning, data analysis, and instructional improvement to support Black student success. Provide educator resources...”
3. Wraparound supports and opportunities	SDE 2.A SDE 3.A,B,C	Pillar 3: “Offer robust after school, sports, enrichment, and diverse extracurricular programming driven by students' interests (e.g., arts, chess, debate club, environmental justice, gaming, etc.)”
4. Restorative, student-centered school culture (inclusive of positive discipline)	SDE 2.A, B Inclusive and Collaborative Schools and Community Partnerships: ICSCP 1.A,B	Pillars 4 and 5: “Establish partnerships with community-based organizations that have experience with — and appreciation for — Chicago's Black communities to provide in-school wrap-around services for Black students and their families in the areas of Mental health, Restorative justice, and Healing-centered practices.”
5. Authentic parent and community engagement	SDE 2.B ICSCP 1.B	Pillar 6: “Grow and strengthen Student Advisory Councils and engage Local School Councils (LSCs) to empower Black students in decision-making processes. Elevate Black students' voices through student-led initiatives, including Black Student Unions within and across schools.”
6. Inclusive school leadership	SDE 2.B, ICSCP 1.A	

**Through investment in SCS,
we can transform this school
district.**

**We can bring joy and healing
to our students and
communities.**

**CPS can be a national model
for educational justice and
equity.**



