

Chicago International
CHARTER SCHOOL



About Chicago International Charter School

The mission of Chicago International is to **provide, through innovation and choice, an attractive and rigorous college-preparatory education** that meets the needs of today's students. *We expect the best* of every student and, in turn, *provide the support* each student needs to achieve their best.

Chicago International is one of the largest charter school networks in Illinois, with 13 campuses serving more than 8,100 students. Chicago International campuses are engaged with their local communities and dedicated to serving neighborhood children. As a result, the demographics and socioeconomic status of our students reflect the neighborhood of each campus and are similar to those of the traditional public schools. Network-wide, Chicago International students are 71% African American and 23% Latino, with 6% a mix of Asian, Native

American and Caucasian. Eighty percent of students are from low income families, qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Chicago International also serves students with disabilities (14%) as well as English Language Learners (5%).

Chicago International has a reputation for measurable student growth and fiscal responsibility, educating the public with public dollars. Local and federal public funds provide 95% of the \$65 million operating budget. Many charter schools must raise as much as 25% of operating costs privately. The Chicago International funding model is unique: the 82% per-pupil allotment from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) covers 100% of instructional costs. Chicago International is, in fact, providing **a better education at a lower cost.**

History

Chicago International Charter School was founded in 1997 by a group of Chicago's business and education leaders who recognized the need for high quality, college preparatory elementary and high schools in the city. Among the first charter schools approved by the Chicago Board of Education, Chicago International was also the first to open with more than one site, setting an influential precedent.

Since opening its first two campuses in 1997, Chicago International has grown in capacity and capability. In 2004, Chicago Public Schools named it a School of Excellence. The Chicago International model is educationally sound, financially efficient, and scalable, as made evident through the opening of, on average, one new campus each year. The organization has become a thought leader in charter school management and the wider national discussion on school reform. Its focus, however, is always educating today's Chicago International students and continually improving that education.

Business Model

Chicago International organizes its stakeholders as an independently accountable, collaborative network with four main goals: improved student performance, financial efficiency, network growth, and mission-aligned out-of-school activities.

A publicly funded, privately managed charter school, Chicago International takes a portfolio approach to managing schools. The board contracts with four different Education Management Organizations (EMOs). Responsibilities are divided among the central administration, EMO staff, and campus educators, allowing each team to focus work efforts within its areas of expertise.



What is a charter school?

Charter schools are public schools, free and open to all students, without entrance exams. If there are more applicants than available seats in a charter school, the school must hold an enrollment lottery. Charter schools enter into a 5-year accountability contract in exchange for freedom from many of the rules and regulations of traditional public schools.

Charter schools offer many benefits to students, parents, teachers, and communities. Decisions about how best to serve students aren't made at a district office. Instead, they are made in the school by teachers and administrators who know their students. Educators have more freedom to innovate and more local control, which means they can tailor their educational plans to their students' needs.

At the Crossroads of Urban Education

How does Chicago International measure performance?

CICS tracks student academic gains using Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) data and authentic assessments, allowing teachers and administrators to better identify students' skills and deficiencies in order to differentiate the needs of individuals within the group. CICS also monitors student progress on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT); and high school students' progress is measured through the PSAE, Plan, Explore, and ACT tests.

EMOs, campuses and individual teachers are all assessed against student achievement.



- The EMOs hire a dynamic and highly-qualified school staff, provide professional development, design and adopt curricula, and manage faculty and staff to meet performance objectives.
- The campus director (principal) and educators establish campus climate and culture, work collaboratively with parents and community members, and modify and implement the curricula to best meet students' needs.
- The central administrative office is responsible for the strategic management of the network and its partners. In addition, it is responsible for facilities maintenance and improvement; ensuring legal compliance with local, state and federal mandates; out-of-school activities, and fundraising.
- The Board of Directors oversees the strategic vision and direction of the organization as a whole.

The portfolio model has proven highly effective. Chicago International's EMO relationships moderate financial and academic

risk for all stakeholders. This model has placed Chicago International in a role of influence in the school reform and charter movements, especially in terms of the performance-based contracts with EMO partners.

Founding board member Craig Henderson describes the rationale behind the network portfolio model: "First, it allows us to be objective about how the EMOs are performing. Second, it creates competition among EMOs vying for more schools within our network, and competition yields higher performance. Third, we can build scalability, which enables economies of scale. Therefore, more dollars go to the classroom, where they should be."

Academic Model

The Chicago International education model is simple and effective. Expect the best of every student and, in turn, provide the support each student needs to achieve their best, all the while holding everyone accountable for student performance. This model is already proving successful:

- Graduation Rate: 83% graduate from high school (CPS: 54%)
- College enrollment: Of H.S. graduates, 85% go to college/postsecondary schools (CPS: 52%)
- 2008 Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) Math Scores: 75% met or exceeded state standards (CPS: 59%; other Chicago area charter schools: 63%)
- ACT scores: average 19 (CPS: average 17)

Academic Philosophy

Chicago International Charter School believes in the innate capacity of every child to succeed. This capacity is fostered through high academic and personal standards, competent and dedicated faculty members, involved and caring parents, and leaders who create a climate of continuous improvement. Chicago International is committed to high and measurable standards of excellence.

It is crucial that students envision themselves living fulfilling and successful lives, so the instructional focus is the development of broad academic, social, and problem-solving skills within rigorous core curricula. As CICS-Wrightwood's curriculum director explains: "Our goal is to get children into college so that they can build a strong life for themselves." Core classes are augmented by electives, extended day activities, and a variety of educational experiences. Fundamentally, Chicago International is driven by the belief that learning experiences that students find meaningful will have a deep

and personal effect on them. In turn, their knowledge and skills will affect the way they relate to the world.

Educational Environment

Many urban public school environments do not foster learning. Teachers cannot complete their lesson plans because behavioral issues force them to focus on crowd control, not teaching. At Chicago International campuses, staff and faculty minimize distractions by providing the best conditions for learning. Teachers are expected to provide “bell-to-bell” instruction, requiring students to report to class on time and arrive ready to learn. There is a network-wide zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate and disruptive behavior in classrooms, hallways, and common areas. Campus administration addresses behavioral concerns, so teachers can focus on instruction. To further enhance the learning environment, students wear uniforms. Many parents report that, while they appreciate Chicago International’s academic rigor, they are initially drawn to the school because of its **safe and disciplined environment**.

Minimizing disruptions allows teachers to focus on the academic needs of their students. **Differentiated instruction** is an essential practice in closing the achievement gap. Teachers are able to implement strategies that better meet the individual needs of each student. Chicago International has implemented multiple mechanisms for teachers to get immediate feedback on student performance. Assessment (i.e. NWEA, DIBELS, EPAS) and observational data inform teachers about students’ understanding of specific learning

How do teachers use differentiated instruction?

“I have some students whose weakness is Word Analysis and Vocabulary Skills, based on their NWEA results from September. So I’ve developed lessons around prefixes and suffixes, identifying root words, using context clues to define unknown words when they read, identifying synonyms and antonyms, and using them with weekly vocabulary words.” *3rd grade teacher*

How do parents respond?

“The teachers are wonderful, very interested in our students and everyone is willing to try new things. My son, with several learning disabilities, is integrated into classroom learning and receives specialized instruction. He came in at 4th grade and was still able to catch up. I feel he’ll do better in high school because of how well the primary school prepared him.” *Parent of two students*

Spotlight on Afterschool Mentoring Groups

“What really drew my attention to Antony was that in 8th and 9th grades he had a difficult transition. He had to repeat 9th grade. He was not involved in gang activity himself but was hanging out with some of the gang kids, so we hooked him up with the football and mentoring programs. He started getting more committed and he was doing really well. Then two years ago, his father died. I lost my father 14 years ago, and I felt for him. I made a vow to him that I’d look after him as a surrogate father. When you’re in a small school with a small football team you just look after people. Change is really difficult for kids so we just provide them with a stable environment.

“Antony mentored the junior academy kids and he wasn’t all talk. He really took pride in his academics and got all A’s this last year. Now, he’s going to Fayetteville State University, majoring in criminal justice. There are a lot of boys without fathers [in the mentor program] and he showed them that he was big in heart – his story connected with them.” *Afterschool Mentor and Coach*



objectives and provide direction on how to modify lessons and materials. Such differentiation enables the meaningful inclusion of students with differing learning styles, disabilities and English proficiency into the general classroom. As a result, Chicago International students’ reading and math scores have improved steadily over five years.

Another feature of a Chicago International education is its **extended school day and school year**. With 7.5 instructional hours per day, Chicago International students attend class almost two hours longer per day than their traditional public school peers. Chicago International’s school year is

at least 191 days, compared to 179 days at CPS. Over the course of a twelve-year school “career,” Chicago International students will have attended class almost six academic years longer than CPS students. More instruction time results, quite simply, in a better education.

Out-of-School Activities

Chicago International provides students with a variety of enrichment programs to broaden learning and offers free, extended-day (3:30 to 6:00 p.m.) programming to interested students. Out-of-school activities are open to all and allow Chicago International to provide recreational, interest-based learning and fun activities to students and their families within the campus safe-haven. Chicago International works with community programs to create on-campus partnerships between parents, neighborhood residents, businesses and the school community. These partners provide additional resources that support campus nutritional efforts and physical activity as well as the performing and visual arts.

Out-of-school activities are open to all students and provide balance, recreation, knowledge and enjoyment. These programs are quite popular, with 75% of students participating in at least one activity.

Academic support and enrichment programs include academic summer school for students not yet meeting their performance targets, Summer High School Readiness for incoming 9th Graders, homework assistance, and countless clubs like Science for Kids, National Honor Society and Hispanic Honor Society, student government, newspaper and drama.

Health and wellness programs include all types of competitive and intramural athletics, teen mentoring groups, band, Dance Team, Life Skills and even cooking and nutrition class. Such enrichment programs help to develop the broad character skills necessary to succeed in today’s world.

Growth Plans & Vision

Chicago International Charter School’s vision is for the faculty and staff to create a school community which ensures that all students master the 21st-century learning skills required to earn a college degree: communication, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Proven academic success will help Chicago International continue to grow in size. The demand for a Chicago International education is high, as demonstrated by a waiting list that could fill nearly three additional schools. With all campuses fully enrolled, Chicago International must open more schools if it is to serve more children. Over the next five years, Chicago International plans to grow from 13 to 19 campuses: 17 in



What do students say about the Chicago International Charter School difference?

“CICS-Longwood has great teachers. It was pretty tough; the academics were challenging. Longwood is stricter with their students. The best thing about the afterschool mentoring program is they taught us to be responsible – help out at home, give back to the community. I learned about time management and having a work ethic. If I hadn’t gone to Longwood, I’d probably be on a very different path, because I wouldn’t have had the same guidance. Older people I know are trying to get their kids into Longwood because they see the difference in me.”

CICS-Longwood graduate, peer mentor, football player, new Fayetteville State University student

Chicago and two in Rockford. Three high schools will expand to five, and ten elementary programs will grow to 14. The number of students served will increase by nearly 40%, from 8,000 to more than 11,000.

Even as it serves more students, Chicago International will work to deliver on its promise of a college preparatory education because network growth without academic quality is meaningless. Therefore, the goals have been set for 90% of students to graduate high school in four years, at least 85% to enroll in college, and 70% of alumni to graduate from college in 5 years.

School day core academics – math, science, social studies and language arts – cannot, of themselves, help students develop the 21st century skills required for success in college and career. Today’s students also require interest-based activities, teamwork experiences, medical support, supervision beyond the school day, English language skills for students and parents, motivated teachers, special education services, and supplemental academics.

Locations

Chicago International Avalon

1501 E. 83rd Place

- serves 420 students, K-8
- 99% African American
- 1% Multi ethnic

Chicago International Basil

1816 W. Garfield Blvd.

- serves 730 students, PreK-8
- 97% African American
- 3% Latino

Chicago International Bucktown

2235 N. Hamilton Avenue

- serves 640 students, K-8
- 68% Latino
- 25% African American
- 6% Caucasian
- 1% Multi ethnic

Chicago International Irving Park

3820 N. Spaulding Avenue

- serves 420 students, K-6
- 55% Latino
- 21% African American
- 9% Caucasian
- 9% Multiracial
- 3% Asian/Pac Islander
- 2% Multi ethnic
- 1% Native American

Chicago International Lloyd Bond

13300 S. Langley Avenue

- serves 349 students, K-8
- 97% African American
- 3% Multi ethnic

Chicago International Longwood

1309 W. 95th Street

- serves more than 1475 students, 3-12
- 98% African American
- 2% Latino

Chicago International Loomis

9535 S. Loomis Avenue

- serves 590 students, K-2
- 100% African American

Chicago International Northtown Academy

3900 W. Peterson Avenue

- serves 850 students, 9-12
- 48% Latino
- 26% Caucasian
- 11% African American
- 11% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 4% Multi ethnic

Chicago International Prairie

11530 S. Prairie Avenue

- serves 411 students, K-8
- 58% African American
- 42% Latino

Chicago International Ralph Ellison

8001 S. Honore Street

- serves 600 students, 9-12
- 99% African American
- 1% Latino

Chicago International Washington Park

6105 S. Michigan Avenue

- serves 450 students, K-8
- 99% African American
- 1% Multi ethnic



Chicago International West Belden

2245 N. McVicker Avenue

- serves 500 students, K-8
- 89% Latino
- 10% African American
- 1% Caucasian

Chicago International Wrightwood

8130 S. California Avenue

- serves 720 students, K-8
- 98% African American
- 2% Multi ethnic

CICS Rockford Charter School

Patriot's Gateway Center

615 S. 5th Street
Rockford, Illinois

- opens August 2010
- will serve students K-4
- opening a new grade each year
- in 2012, 9-12 high school opens

Board of Directors 2009 - 2010 School Year

DAVID J. CHIZEWER is a partner in Goldberg, Kohn, Bell, Black, Rosenbloom & Moritz's Litigation Group and is the chair of the firm's Education Industry Practice. Mr. Chizewer is vice president of the Board of Chicago International Charter School. He is a founding board member of the Illinois Network of Charter Schools and was a member of the Education Policy Group for the Barack Obama Presidential Campaign.

VIOLET M. CLARK is a partner with Laner, Muchin, Dombrow, Becker, Levin and Tom-inberg and serves as a Hearing Officer for the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations. She is a member of the Black Women Lawyers Association and the Cook County Bar Association. Ms. Clark is currently the Vice President of the United States Tennis Association/Midwest Section.

JOHN S. GATES JR. is Chairman & CEO of PortaeCo LLC, a private investment company. Prior to forming PortaeCo, Mr. Gates co-founded CenterPoint Properties Trust and served as co-Chairman & CEO for the prior 22 years. He is also chairman of The Metropolitan Planning Council and serves on the board of Children's Memorial Hospital & University of Chicago / Harris School of Public Policy.

DR. CATHERINE H. GOTTFRED is president of Gottfred Speech Associates, Ltd., a firm that provides language therapy to children and adults across Chicago. In 1988, she founded LEAP Learning Systems, a non-profit organization that oversees

programs designed to improve the language skills of children and adults. She is past president of the American Speech and Hearing Association.

TOM HAYDEN is a faculty member at Northwestern University's Medill School, teaching graduate courses in the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications. Prior to his faculty appointment, Tom served as Executive Vice President and General Manager of Chicago operations for Bozell Worldwide, a global marketing communications company. Tom currently serves on the board of the Oakmark mutual funds, and is the executive director of StandUp For Kids Chicago, an organization that provide outreach and other services to homeless youth and teens.

CRAIG W. HENDERSON is founder of C.W. Henderson & Associates, Inc., an investment-counseling firm that specializes in tax-exempt municipal securities and manages assets totaling approximately \$1.8 billion. Mr. Henderson is president of the Chicago International Charter School Board of Directors. He also sits on the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Foundation board and president's council.

GERALD L. JENKINS is a principal at Goldberg, Kohn, Bell, Black, Rosenbloom, & Moritz where he specializes in tax planning and corporate creation. He has served as president of Highland Park School District #108. Mr. Jenkins is also a board member of The Mundanus Foundation and Green Street Project.

VIVIAN LEE is a consultant with The Boston Consulting Group in the Chicago office. Previous project work has included strategic planning for a nationwide high school network and organization redesign of the Special Education department of a large urban district.

JORDAN MERANUS is a Partner in the NewSchools Venture Fund East Coast office, where he focuses on investment strategy and management assistance for the firm's portfolio ventures. Mr. Meranus brings a wealth of experience in the education, non-profit, and private sectors.

THOMAS J. NIEMAN is the owner and president of Nieman Inc., a privately held company that specializes in developing curriculum materials for educational publishers. Mr. Nieman's company specializes in writing and designing curriculum in reading, language arts, literature, ESL, and social studies for students in grades K-12. He is the secretary of the Board for Chicago International Charter School.

LAURA THONN is a manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP in their business assurance practice. Ms. Thonn is a licensed certified public accountant in the state of Illinois. She also has a Masters in Social Service Administration from the U of C. She is the treasurer of the Board for Chicago International Charter School.

Funding Opportunities

Chicago International receives no public funding for student support outside academics or for campus capital needs. To realize its vision, Chicago International's conservative annual budget must be supplemented by philanthropic support from the community. Therefore, over the next three years, Chicago International is undergoing a strategic fundraising plan to raise \$10 million. The Board of Directors has identified the following funding needs as priorities.

Program Funding

- **Great Teachers:** support teachers in the classroom with professional development opportunities and improved work environments
- **School-Ready Children:** facilitate success in school for all students, by increasing access to diverse programs such as wellness screenings and meaningful before- and after-school programming
- **21st Century Technology:** support network-wide access to and use of technology by teachers and students to develop 21st century skills: collaboration, communication, problem-solving
- **Access for Every Child:** increase the quantity and improve the quality of special education and support services to ensure full access to the Chicago International educational program
- **Bridge to College:** provide a college readiness program for rising high school seniors

Facilities Funding

- **21st Century Buildings:** add new campuses, fully update and renovate old facilities to create a physically-supportive learning environment
- **Space to Play:** add playgrounds, playing fields, sport courts and renovate gymnasiums so that children can improve their physical and emotional health

For Chicago International students, as for all children, only the best education is good enough. As a funding partner, you will make a college preparatory education reality for some of Chicago's most disadvantaged families. Gifts to Chicago International Charter School will have a significant impact on thousands of Chicago's young people today and well into the future. ■



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead



Chicago International Charter School

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