

January 15, 2024

## **New Poll Finds Chicagoans Overwhelmingly Support Public School Choice in CPS**

Tulchin Research recently conducted a survey among 500 registered voters in the city of Chicago in order to assess attitudes about Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and district policies relating to neighborhood schools and public school choice. Our polling finds that Chicagoans overwhelmingly believe that families in CPS should be able to choose the public school that best meets their student’s needs, that the city can have both strong neighborhood schools and public school choice, and that eliminating choices for families will limit opportunity and lead more students to leave CPS altogether. Additionally, the survey finds voters widely agree that the Chicago Board of Education, which is undergoing a transition from a body appointed by the mayor to an elected board, should not pursue major policy changes before a new board is elected.

### **Chicagoans Overwhelmingly Support Public School Choice, Reject Zero-Sum Thinking**

Last month, the Chicago Board of Education passed a resolution asserting their intention to transition away from CPS’s network of selective enrollment, magnet, and charter schools in order to increase enrollment in neighborhood schools. In light of this official action, we asked voters about their attitudes toward public school choice and neighborhood schools. Our polling finds that 82% of voters in the city, including 86% of parents, agree with the statement that *“Families in Chicago Public Schools should be able to choose the public school that best meets their student’s needs, whether that’s their neighborhood school, a school in another neighborhood, a magnet school, a selective enrollment school, or a charter school.”* Notably, 92% of Black voters, 79% of Latino voters, and 74% of white voters agree with this statement. And while opponents of public school choice assert that it undermines neighborhood schools, our polling finds that 78% of voters and 81% of parents agree that *“We don’t have to choose between strong neighborhood schools and public school choice for Chicago families. We can have both.”*

<b>Chicagoans Overwhelmingly Support Public School Choice</b>						
<i>“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”</i>	<b>ALL VOTERS</b>			<b>PARENTS</b>		
	<b>Total Agree</b>	<b>Total Disagree</b>	<b>Agree – Disagree</b>	<b>Total Agree</b>	<b>Total Disagree</b>	<b>Agree – Disagree</b>
<i>Families in Chicago Public Schools should be able to choose the public school that best meets their student’s needs, whether that’s their neighborhood school, a school in another neighborhood, a magnet school, a selective enrollment school, or a charter school.</i>	<b>82%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>+69</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>+72</b>
<i>We don’t have to choose between strong neighborhood schools and public school choice for Chicago families. We can have both.</i>	<b>78%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>+65</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>+68</b>

**Strong Majorities of Chicago Voters and Parents Say Eliminating Public School Choice Limits Opportunity for Black and Brown Students, Will Lead More Students to Leave CPS**

While the recent resolution passed by the school board asserts that existing CPS policies fostering public school choice “further stratification and inequity in CPS and drive student enrollment away from neighborhood schools,” our polling finds Chicagoans are concerned that *eliminating* those choices will limit opportunity for Black and Brown students and drive students away from the city’s public schools.

More than 6 in 10 voters (64%) and more than 7 in 10 parents (71%) agree with the statement that “Eliminating public school choices for Chicago families and restricting them to the school in their immediate neighborhood will limit opportunity for Black and Brown students in Chicago and increase school segregation.” Similarly, more than 6 in 10 voters (61%) and more than 7 in 10 parents (71%) agree that “Eliminating public school choices for Chicago families and restricting them to the school in their immediate neighborhood will lead more students to leave Chicago Public Schools altogether.”

<b>Chicagoans Say Eliminating School Choices Limits Opportunity, Drives Students Away from CPS</b>						
<i>“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”</i>	<u>All Voters</u>			<u>Parents</u>		
	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>	<u>Agree – Disagree</u>	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>	<u>Agree – Disagree</u>
<i>Eliminating public school choices for Chicago families and restricting them to the school in their immediate neighborhood will limit opportunity for Black and Brown students in Chicago and increase school segregation.</i>	<b>64%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>+39</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>+48</b>
<i>Eliminating public school choices for Chicago families and restricting them to the school in their immediate neighborhood will lead more students to leave Chicago Public Schools altogether.</i>	<b>61%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>+33</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>+48</b>

We asked parents of students who attend a CPS school other than their neighborhood school – either a school in another neighborhood or a magnet, selective enrollment, or charter school – about what they would do if their neighborhood school was the only public school option available to their student. Just 27% of these parents said that they would send their student to their neighborhood CPS school, while nearly *half* (49%) stated that they would move to find a school that is a better fit for their student (including 30% who would move out of Chicago and 19% who would move to another neighborhood in the city) and another 13% said they would send their student to a private or parochial school. The findings among these respondents who would be the most directly impacted by the districts moving away from public school choice reinforce voters’ concern that eliminating public school choices will lead more students to leave CPS altogether.

<b>Most Parents of Students in Choice Public Schools Say Their Student Would Leave the District if Neighborhood School Was Only CPS Option</b>	
<i>“If your neighborhood school was the only public school option available for your student in Chicago Public Schools, which of the following best describes what you would do?”</i>	
<i>I would send them to our neighborhood CPS schools</i>	<b>27%</b>
<i>I would send them to a private or parochial school</i>	<b>13%</b>
<i>I would move out of Chicago to find a school that is a better fit for them.</i>	<b>30%</b>
<i>I would move within the city of Chicago to find a neighborhood school that is a better fit for them.</i>	<b>19%</b>
<i>Don’t Know</i>	<b>12%</b>

**Chicagoans Believe Appointed School Board Should Not Force Through Major Policy Changes**

The resolution passed by the Chicago Board of Education represents a major shift in district policy at a time when the board is itself undergoing a major transition, from a body whose members are appointed by the mayor to one whose members are popularly elected. Our polling finds that more than two-thirds of voters (68%) and nearly three-quarters of parents (74%) agree with the statement that “Chicagoans will soon elect a new school board and the appointed board should not force through major policy changes before then.”

<b>Voters, Parents Reject Major Policy Changes Before School Board Elections</b>						
<i>“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”</i>	<b>All Voters</b>			<b>Parents</b>		
	<b>Total Agree</b>	<b>Total Disagree</b>	<b>Agree – Disagree</b>	<b>Total Agree</b>	<b>Total Disagree</b>	<b>Agree – Disagree</b>
<i>Chicagoans will soon elect a new school board and the appointed board should not force through major policy changes before then.</i>	<b>68%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>+52</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>+64</b>

**Longer Renewal Periods Favored for Charter Public Schools That Meet Goals**

We asked respondents about renewal periods for public charter schools and find that strong majorities favor longer extensions for schools that are succeeding. More than 6 in 10 voters (61%) and nearly 7 in 10 parents (69%) say that “Charter public schools that have met their academic goals should be granted approval for a longer period of time than charter schools that have not met their goals.”



<b>Longer Renewal Periods Favored for Charter Public Schools That Meet Goals</b>						
“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”	All Voters			Parents		
	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>	<u>Agree – Disagree</u>	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>	<u>Agree – Disagree</u>
Charter public schools that have met their academic goals should be granted approval for a longer period of time than charter schools that have not met their goals.	<b>61%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>+44</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>+54</b>

**Survey Methodology:** From January 4-9, 2024, Tulchin Research conducted a multi-modal survey of 500 registered voters in the city of Chicago. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 4.38%. The margin of error for parents – 133 respondents who report they have children 18 or under living at home – is +/- 8.49%.