



Dear friends and colleagues,

I hope your school year is off to a wonderful start. I am excited to share some updates with you and preview some of what is on the horizon. As the national education research and policy landscape continues to shift, the UChicago Consortium remains committed to conducting high-quality education research to support stronger and more equitable outcomes for students, and inform policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Making findings accessible to all and meaningfully engaging with partners and stakeholders around the research are central to our mission and how we conduct our work. I want to highlight two recent examples. Our latest Family Playbooks—in English and Spanish—provide key information and data to help families and community members make informed decisions and take action in their schools, including [understanding student progress](#), [principal leadership](#), and a [guide to understanding the 5Essentials Survey](#). Below, you will read about the Research-Practice Forum our Learning & Development Group co-hosted with the CPS Department of Student Voice & Engagement this past May. The event brought together district leaders, families, community partners, and philanthropic partners to be in community and engage in thoughtful, strategic conversations about centering the daily experience of students and fostering positive learning conditions in school.

One issue on which we are collaborating with many different organizations is the high rate of chronic absenteeism in Chicago and schools across the country compared to before the pandemic. Attendance is a powerful predictor of students' later outcomes, and critical for students' academic and social-emotional development. We have been meeting with many local organizations concerned about this issue, and participating in two national research networks working to provide post-pandemic research on chronic absenteeism. We look forward to releasing the first report from a study of the causes and consequences of absenteeism in grades 6-11 this fall. Look for that report in October, and more to come later in the school year.



Elaine M. Allensworth
Lewis-Sebring Director

Learning & Development Group

Focuses on Student Experience

We are kicking off another school year focused on how students are experiencing their educational environments. We know from both research and practice that the conditions in which students learn matter. The structures, norms, and everyday routines of schools and classrooms shape what young people come to believe about themselves—as thinkers and people—and how effectively they learn and thrive.

In partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the UChicago Consortium's Learning & Development Group has been working to build a system-wide understanding of how students' experiences of their schools and classrooms shape their learning and well-being. This work is not only about sharpening our collective understanding, but about advancing real improvements to students' experiences—work that can only succeed by working hand in hand with young people to develop learning environments that are engaging, affirming, and responsive to their needs and aspirations.

I'm writing with an update on these efforts, as well as an invitation to stay connected with us and consider what role you might play in this work going forward.



Pictured: Shanette Porter, Director of the Learning & Development Group, welcomes partners from across the city to the Research-Practice Forum.

Research-Practice Forum: Transforming Student Experience in Chicago

In May, we co-hosted a Research-Practice Forum with the CPS Department of Student Voice & Engagement.

The forum brought together Chicago educators, students, parents, district leaders, school partners, and researchers. In community with one another, we considered **how all schools and classrooms can be spaces where students' daily experience is valued and regarded, and where every student feels seen, heard, and supported**. We also examined the challenges and future opportunities for this work, surfaced many promising ideas, and reflected on how we might strengthen and align our collective efforts moving forward. The energy and expertise in the room left no doubt that our shared work is both urgent and possible.

In our time together, we:

- Heard directly from students, teachers, and school leaders about what it takes to elevate student voice in school improvement efforts and to build authentic partnerships between adults and young people.
- Learned from the To&Through Project's [Middle Grades Network](#) and the [Network for College Success](#) about the continuous improvement efforts that have proved effective in different schools with different needs and priorities for centering students' experiences.
- Explored data showing that a focus on students' daily experiences is leading to real, measurable improvements in students' classroom conditions, learning beliefs, and grades.
- Engaged in honest, reflective conversations across different professional and personal roles—recognizing that sustainable change requires deep alignment, coordination, and collaboration.
- Heard from former Chief Education Officer Bogdana Chkoumbova and Chief of Teaching & Learning Nicole Milberg about how the Cultivate Framework and Survey is a core part of districtwide efforts to center student voice and support strong learning environments across schools.



Pictured: Members of the Kellogg and Lozano Elementary School communities discuss the conditions for learning in schools and classrooms as participants on a panel at the Research-Practice Forum.

What's Next

Through our research and collaborations we're generating new insights into what it truly means to center student experience—not just as a value, but as a driver of improvement in classrooms and schools. In the months ahead, we'll be seeking to understand more about how this work varies across schools, students, and communities, and conducting new research on practices that support student experience and partnerships with students in Pre-k-4. We will also be expanding and deepening our collaborations—and continuing to foster alignment and coherence across efforts to improve student experience in Chicago. You can stay engaged with us via our website.

As we continue this journey, we invite you to join us in taking up these critical questions: What data, knowledge, tools, resources, and guidance do we—educators, young people, families, communities, systems leaders, school partners, researchers, and many others—need to ensure students' daily experiences are understood and responsively supported? From our youngest learners in Pre-k to seniors in twelfth grade, how do we ensure students' voices help guide the decisions that affect them every day? As our Research-Practice Forum so clearly demonstrated, every person who cares about young people and their ability to thrive has a role to play in the effort to ensure that every student, every day, everywhere experiences school as a place where they can grow, thrive, and be seen.

In collaboration,

Shanette Porter

Director, Learning & Development Group
Research Assistant Professor
UChicago Consortium on School Research

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Join us to learn more about recent research and new data tools

Precarious Prospects: College Completion and the Bridge to Employment

September 22, 2:30-4 p.m. at Forefront, 200 West Madison Street, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60606

What does it take to ensure that college truly opens doors to opportunity? This in-person event will explore the findings from [Precarious prospects: Education pays, yet socioeconomic disparities persist in Illinois students' later earnings](#), highlighting the importance of college completion and the pathways from degree to career. This new research from Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) and the UChicago Consortium on School Research shows that higher education boosts earnings for Illinois students across income levels—but wage gaps remain between those from lower- and higher-income families. We'll showcase promising initiatives, examine where progress has been made, and discuss the work still ahead.

Program Highlights:

- Brief research presentation by Sarah Cashdollar from IWERC and co-author of the Precarious Prospects report.
- Panel discussion moderated by Robin Steans from Advance Illinois, featuring leaders from two- and four-year colleges, nonprofit organizations, and research institutions.
- Panelists:
 - Sarah Cashdollar, Co-author of the Precarious Prospects Report, IWERC
 - Aarti Dhupelia, CEO, One Million Degrees
 - Jen Juarez, Director of Higher Education Policy, Latino Policy Forum
 - Jenny Nagaoka, Deputy Director, UChicago Consortium on School Research and Precarious Prospects co-author
 - Melissa Kisubika, Project Manager for Student Success, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Register for this event [here](#).

The To&Through Project Milestones Tool 101 Workshop

September 23, 2-3:30 p.m. at UtmostU at Impact House, 200 W. Madison St, Chicago, IL 60606

In this 90-minute introductory and interactive workshop, participants will dive into the [To&Through's online public data tool](#), which shows CPS students' outcomes on key academic metrics from the sixth grade through college. You'll understand our specific philosophy on data use, learn about the different “lenses” of available CPS outcomes data, and how this Milestones Tool can (and can't) be helpful in your work of strengthening student pathways to and through college. Alongside To&Through staff, you'll explore trends in a specific school or community you're interested in and find connections to your own work and story.

Who should attend? This workshop is geared toward people who are new to the To&Through Milestones Tool and do work to support CPS students.

Attendance is limited, so please confirm your RSVP ASAP to reserve your spot!

RSVP for this in-person workshop [here](#).

Coming Soon!

See you at SREE? If you're heading to the [Annual Meeting](#) of SREE (Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness) in Chicago next month, stay tuned for updates on Consortium presentations + events.

Upcoming webinars: Check out our latest [webinar](#) on how collaboration between school systems and research partners can drive improvement. This fall we'll offer webinars around issues of chronic absenteeism in schools, and on the use of data.

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.