



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO



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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CPS Office of Communications

773.553.1620

MAYOR EMANUEL AND CPS CEO BYRD-BENNETT ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR NEW SELECTIVE ENROLLMENT HIGH SCHOOL, ADDING 1,200 MORE HIGH-QUALITY SEATS

School to Be Named After President Barack Obama

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett today announced plans to build a new selective enrollment high school for School Year 2017-18 (SY17-18) that will be named the Barack Obama College Preparatory High School. The school will ultimately enroll 1,200 students, creating more opportunities for students and continuing Mayor Emanuel's pledge to provide more high-quality options for families across the city.

"We must seize every opportunity to ensure our students receive a world-class, 21st century education and that they are able to take advantage of the academic opportunities they have earned," said Mayor Emanuel. "Year after year, too many of our students who have put in years of hard work are turned away because as a city we haven't had the capacity to meet their capability and this important investment will help us fix that."

This will be CPS's eleventh selective enrollment high school and, as with other selective enrollment high schools, students from across the City will make up the student body. It will open in the fall of 2017 with an inaugural freshman class of nearly 300 students and will add subsequent grade levels each year following. Approximately 70 percent of the school's seats will be made available to students through the selective enrollment admissions process. The school will also establish a neighborhood preference for students to fill the remaining seats. This enrollment model has proven successful at Jones College Prep and Westinghouse College Prep.

Selective enrollment schools are highly competitive and the demand from parents and students far exceeds the capacity. Applications for these schools grew 8 percent this school year with 16,440 students vying for one of approximately 3,200 seats throughout the district. As in years past, more than 2,400 students this year who qualified for admissions into a selective enrollment school were denied because there were not enough seats available.

"All of Chicago's children deserve a rigorous academic environment that is well suited to their individual needs and designed to prepare them for college and beyond," said CEO Byrd-Bennett.

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

“When a student has worked hard to make the grade and excel, we need to do our part to provide them with opportunities that will ensure they can live up to and achieve their full potential.”

The new selective enrollment school announced today builds on Mayor Emanuel’s and CEO Byrd-Bennett’s plans to expand selective enrollment options throughout CPS. The recent expansion of Jones College Prep will accommodate an additional 800 students by SY16-17, raising the school’s total enrollment to 1,700. Similarly, Mayor Emanuel and CEO Byrd-Bennett announced plans last year to expand the nationally ranked Walter Payton College Prep by additional 300-400 students in coming years.

"I am pleased to join the Mayor and CPS CEO Barbara Byrd Bennett in providing another high-quality education option for parents of CPS students from the Cabrini Green, Near North neighborhoods and City-Wide," said Alderman Walter Burnett, 27th Ward. "We have seized an incredible opportunity to continue to invest in our future through education."

The school project will be funded through approximately \$60 million in TIF funds and will be built on Chicago Park District property near Skinner North Classical School, a high-performing, Kindergarten through 8th grade elementary school. The expansion and renovation of Jones College Prep in the South Loop was made possible thanks to \$115 million in TIF funds, part of \$1.2 billion in TIF dollars committed to CPS to support building and improving local schools.

The school will be centrally located and accessible to mass transit and expressways, making it accessible for students from across the city.

Mayor Emanuel and CEO Byrd-Bennett have taken a series of steps to improve access to high-quality schools. Other investments have included 5,000 additional seats in early education centers, a full day of school for all students starting in kindergarten, and more access to rigorous courses such as IB or STEM that are aligned with the job market to prepare our students for the 21st economy. Early this week, Mayor Emanuel and CEO Byrd-Bennett also announced that five elementary schools across the city will establish new International Baccalaureate programmes beginning next fall, adding an additional 1,500 IB seats in the district and making CPS the nation’s largest operator of IB campuses.

CPS serves 400,000 students in 658 schools. It is the nation’s third-largest school district.

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