

Chief Executive Office

42 West Madison Street, 3rd Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602
Telephone: 773/553-1573 • Email: CEO-Jackson@cps.edu

June 1, 2018

Dear CPS Parents and Families,

Nothing is more important to Chicago Public Schools than the safety and wellbeing of your children. You entrust us to educate and safeguard your children, and that trust is sacred. Over the years, CPS has continuously improved efforts to protect students, but we must be vigilant and address any issues that could endanger our students.

As CEO and as a CPS parent, I will not be satisfied until I am confident that the district is doing everything possible to protect students. I'm writing to share several additional steps we will take in this effort.

Last week, the Board of Education asked an independent, outside expert to review all of our practices, policies, and procedures for addressing instances of alleged sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse. Maggie Hickey, former Assistant United States Attorney and Illinois Executive Inspector General, will lead this top-to-bottom review. We will share her recommendations and our plans for implementing the recommendations with you as soon as her review is complete.

In addition to this review, we are taking several immediate steps to strengthen vetting and background checks of current and future staff, supports for students, investigation process, and staff training. For a comprehensive list of actions we are taking to further protect our students, please read *Protecting Chicago's Children: CPS Plan of Action* in its entirety at bit.ly/cpsplanofaction.

A few examples of additional steps include the following:

- CPS will begin conducting background checks for all current employees on a periodic basis. In addition to the existing pre-employment background check process, this will provide an avenue for CPS to learn about employees who are accused or convicted of committing a crime *after* they have been hired. While the Board has an agreement with the Illinois State Police, Chicago Police Department, and other agencies to notify CPS in these instances, implementing ongoing checks will provide an additional layer of information.
- CPS will develop a standard framework for comprehensively investigating and addressing each reported incident, with a particular emphasis on providing support for victims. Responses to each incident will include a review of whether the appropriate services and supports were provided to the student and family and a protocol for following up with the student and family to identify and address ongoing challenges.
- CPS will establish a centralized eligibility process for all athletic coaches and assistant coaches, whether volunteers or employees.
- CPS will propose new policies to require all employees to report inappropriate staff-student relationships or early signs of "grooming," which are potentially predatory behaviors by adults, expanding beyond employees' current obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

- During the 2018-19 school year, CPS will retrain all employees on their obligations as mandated reporters of any physical or sexual abuse of children. We will also implement a public awareness campaign in schools, district offices, and City of Chicago facilities to raise awareness of child abuse and the responsibilities of reporting suspected abuse.
- CPS will continue to work with principals to conduct an audit of all school volunteers to ensure that they have been screened in accordance with CPS policies.

Most importantly, we all must work to ensure that our children are safe from harm. If you see evidence of abuse, please call the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The 24-hour hotline is: 800-25-ABUSE, or 800-252-2873. In addition to calling DCFS, you can also report evidence of abuse to your school principal.

CPS is committed to providing safe, supportive, and healthy learning environments for all students, and we will not rest until we have met that commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janice K. Jackson".

Janice K. Jackson, EdD
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools