



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**MAYOR EMANUEL NAMES BARBARA BYRD-BENNETT AS THE NEW CEO OF CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Byrd-Bennett Brings Over 30 Years of Experience as a Teacher, Principal and Executive in Large Urban School Districts*

Mayor Emanuel announced today that he has named Barbara Byrd-Bennett the Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). A former teacher and principal, Byrd-Bennett is a lifelong educator with experience running schools and districts in New York City, Detroit and Cleveland. She replaces Jean-Claude Brizard who is departing after leading CPS since May 2011.

"Barbara is a proven leader and educator with the breadth and depth of experience that make her uniquely qualified to serve Chicago's students and lead Chicago's schools and I am incredibly proud to welcome her into this position," said Mayor Emanuel. "She taught in the classroom for over 12 years; was a principal for eight; has put struggling schools on the path to higher achievement and balanced her school districts' finances. Most importantly, she has helped students in urban centers across the country succeed, and I know she will use that experience here to help our children learn and excel."

Byrd-Bennett currently serves as the Chief Education Officer at CPS, where she oversees the development of curriculum and instructional policy for the district and helps guide the district's school and neighborhood administrators, from network chiefs to principals. She also played an integral role in guiding CPS during contract negotiations with the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU), which resulted in a contract that preserved more time in the classroom for students, maintained principal autonomy over hiring decisions in schools, recognized the great work teachers do in the classroom every day and, for the first time in 40 years, updated the evaluation system for teachers to provide more support and feedback to help them hone their craft.

"I am honored by the opportunity to further serve Chicago's students and lead the District in providing a high-quality education in every school and every neighborhood across the city," said Byrd-Bennett. "First and foremost, I am a teacher at heart and my focus is providing the tools teachers and students need to boost student achievement and help them succeed."

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Byrd-Bennett has over 30 years of experience working in schools. She began as a teacher in the New York City public school system. After 12 years in the classroom, she became a principal and held that position for 8 years. In 1994, she was appointed to serve as the superintendent of the Crown Heights school district, the third-largest school district in New York City, overseeing the district's budget and focusing resources back towards the classroom and instruction, reducing class sizes, ensuring students received more one-on-one tutoring and access to after-school programs, and providing more support and training for teachers. Under her leadership, student performance in both math and reading increased. As a result of her leadership and improved student achievement, in 1996 she was chosen to lead a special district in New York City comprised of twelve of the lowest performing schools. In her two years in that role, student scores rose dramatically.

Following her tenure in New York City, Byrd-Bennett spent over 10 years leading large urban public school districts, first in Cleveland (1998-2006) and then in Detroit (2009-2011). As the Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland public school system, she successfully balanced the school district's budget each year of her tenure after inheriting a more than \$150 million deficit. The number of fourth and sixth graders who met standards on math and reading tests grew by an average of more than 160 percent over a 5 year period, improving more than twice as fast as statewide averages over that time. The district's graduation rates also climbed from 28 percent to 50.2 percent under her leadership. In Detroit, as the District's Chief Academic and Accountability Auditor, she worked side-by-side with the District's emergency financial manager where she helped implement a central office restructuring, developed a five-year academic reform plan for the district that aligned with the district's financial planning and deficit reduction plan, expanded instructional time in math and reading to 120 minutes a day for all K-8 students, and developed and implemented a fair academic performance evaluation system for teachers and principals.

"We are excited to welcome Barbara into this role on our team," said David Vitale, President of the Chicago Board of Education. "Over the past year, Barbara has displayed impressive talent and leadership and has been a trusted voice on issues ranging from curriculum to supporting teachers throughout the district. As JC transitions out after months of hard work and achieving great milestones for our students, Barbara is the right choice to lead."

Byrd-Bennett replaces Jean-Claude Brizard, who is departing after leading CPS since May 2011, one of the most transformative periods for Chicago's schools, with the introduction of expanded opportunities for students, including 5,000 more seats for pre-kindergarten, five new STEM high schools, 10 new IB schools, and six new AUSL turnaround schools.

Byrd-Bennett will begin immediately. Her appointment to the CEO position will be heard and is expected to be approved by the Chicago Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting on October 24, 2012.

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