

Proposal to Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Ron Huberman to revise the CPS student promotion policy

*by Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE)
August 10, 2009*

The evidence is overwhelming that **the current CPS promotion policy does not work**. It disproportionately harms African-American and Latino students and accelerates the drop out rate.

At this time, when we are experiencing a national economic emergency, there can be no excuse for perpetuating a wasteful, costly program that research has shown offers no benefit to the children it purports to help. CPS flunks an average of 10,000 children every year and spends more than \$10,000 on each child in worthless grade repetition. **That adds up to more than \$100,000,000 per year in unnecessary spending.**

Our proposal will not take CPS back to social promotion, which also did not work but was actually more effective than flunking students. We believe it's time to move forward, cognizant of the mistakes of both social promotion and flunking. PURE proposes a wholistic policy that builds on students' strengths and proactively addresses their needs in the context of the often overwhelming structural constraints on individual progress and the social supports necessary for all children to succeed in school.

Summary of recommendations

1. Because retention has not worked in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and has harmed children, PURE recommends that CPS stop flunking students.

2. Because single high-stakes test scores are not good indicators of student progress, PURE recommends that CPS implement an accurate, sound assessment system using high quality formative and summative assessments in all subjects, as well as other indicators to provide evidence of improved student learning and school quality. These assessments must be based on state standards and the local curriculum, assess higher-order thinking and other 21st century skills, and provide multiple opportunities and approaches for students to demonstrate their learning. The primary use of these assessments should be to improve instruction and enable teachers to better address each student's strengths and needs.

3. Because too many children are not receiving the help they need, PURE recommends that schools create a personal learning plan (PLP) for any child determined to be behind or at risk of falling behind academically. CPS's role would be to assure that schools have adequate resources to implement each PLP, that PLPs are being implemented, and that they are effective.

4. Because we are wasting between \$100 and \$200 million annually on flunking students, PURE recommends that CPS redirect those resources toward implementing high-quality early childhood education programs such as the now-defunct Child Parent Centers, strengthen parent involvement, create student PLPs, reduce class sizes in the most at-risk schools, and replicate other proven programs and practices.