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# Chicago Public Schools Celebrates Future Educators

## *Teach Chicago Tomorrow “Signing Day” Recognizes Students Who Are Pursuing a Career in Education*

**CHICAGO** — Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will honor students who have chosen to pursue a career in education during a Signing Day celebration today at the Chicago Cultural Center. This year, more than 60 CPS students committed to join the District’s Teach Chicago Tomorrow program, an initiative designed to help CPS graduates become CPS teachers by investing in research-based student support, including dedicated advising, career planning, financial planning, and paid work opportunities, among others.

“Teach Chicago Tomorrow empowers our students to build a strong foundation for their future career in education while expanding the District’s commitment to growing the teacher pipeline right here in Chicago,” said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. “These students are the future of CPS and our future has never looked brighter. I can’t wait to welcome them back into our classrooms as educators in four years.”

Teach Chicago Tomorrow is the result of an ongoing partnership between CPS, City Colleges of Chicago, and several local universities including Illinois State University, Roosevelt University and Northeastern Illinois University which is designed to provide CPS students with a pathway to complete college, earn a teaching credential and begin a career with CPS. Now in its third year, the program has more than doubled in size, with 62 high school seniors joining Teach Chicago Tomorrow so far this year. More than 80 percent of this year’s students come from the South and West sides of the city.

“As a District, we are committed to investing in current and future educators to build and maintain a pipeline of diverse teachers and school leaders who reflect the students they serve,” said CPS Chief Talent Officer Ben Felton. “We are proud to partner with City Colleges of Chicago and local universities to ensure our students have access to high-quality teacher preparation programs and the supports they need to succeed when they get there.”

Teach Chicago Tomorrow creates a clear pathway for CPS students to become a teacher while providing structured supports that help students achieve their goals. Participating students first earn an associate degree at City Colleges of Chicago by successfully completing general education coursework requirements and then earn their bachelor’s degree by completing the final two years of college at either Illinois State University, Roosevelt University, or Northeastern Illinois University. After undertaking a year-long student teaching experience within CPS schools and earning their Illinois teaching license, students will have priority for job placement at CPS schools.

Yehiri Gonzalez, a CPS graduate and current sophomore at Harry S. Truman Community College, will attend Illinois State University next year as part of Teach Chicago Tomorrow's Illinois State University Pathways Partnership to complete her teaching degree. While a student at CPS, Gonzalez was an English language learner and attended 10 CPS schools before graduation.

"I know how important it is for our teachers and schools to create a welcoming environment for students, especially students whose first language isn't English," said Gonzalez. "I was lucky to have teachers like that and when I graduate I hope to be a welcoming, supportive teacher for my students. Teach Chicago Tomorrow has given me the resources and opportunities I need to grow personally and professionally to make that dream a reality."

Teach Chicago Tomorrow is a core component of the District's Teach Chicago program, CPS' initiative to attract and retain highly qualified, diverse teachers for every classroom in the city. Through Teach Chicago, the District's staffing levels have improved substantially - up nearly 1,500 teachers since the beginning of the 2017-18 school year - with an emphasis on supporting hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff positions, like special education. The percentage of new teachers who are Black and/or Latinx has risen from 33 percent in 2017 to 48 percent in 2023.

Amir Jarrell, a senior at Englewood STEM High School who plans to become a high school English teacher, said he would encourage other students to apply for Teach Chicago Tomorrow.

"I want to teach so I can help students who look like me," said Jarrell. "Teach Chicago Tomorrow has helped me connect with people like me who want to make a difference in our schools. I can't wait to get started so I can come back to CPS and build a new generation of great writers."

Teach Chicago Tomorrow is just one of the District's efforts to build a diverse pipeline of educators and school leaders. The District's efforts include historic investment in recruitment and retention efforts, including the [CPS Residency Program](#) which aims to expand the pipeline of teachers and ensure that the District recruits and retains more teachers of color. The District was also the only K-12 school district in the country to receive a [2022 Teacher Quality Project](#) grant to better recruit, prepare, develop and retain a strong teacher workforce and enhance existing pathways in partnership with local colleges and universities.

High school seniors have until July 1st to sign up for next year's Teach Chicago Tomorrow program. More information can be found at [www.teach.cps.edu/teach-chicago-tomorrow](http://www.teach.cps.edu/teach-chicago-tomorrow). Key supporters of Teach Chicago include Crown Family Philanthropies and the Joyce Foundation. Additional support is provided by the US Department of Education.

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### **About Chicago Public Schools (CPS)**

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is dedicated to providing a high-quality education to all students, beginning with the District's free full-day preschool programming for four-year-old scholars and continuing through neighborhood, magnet and selective-enrollment elementary schools that provide a rigorous K-8 education with schools that specialize in the fine arts, world language and culture, dual language, STEM, International Baccalaureate (IB), classical programs, and more. The rising District-wide freshmen-on-track and high school graduation rates reflect the hard work of the CPS community, including families, staff, and students across 635 schools. CPS celebrates the diversity of its more than 322,000 students who cite 182 home languages. Learn more about CPS at [www.cps.edu](http://www.cps.edu) and connect with CPS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

## **Whitney Young Magnet High School Takes Second Place in National Decathlon Championship**

*Whitney Young Placed second in overall championship while Lane Tech College Prep Placed Second in the Division IV Competition at Nationals*

**CHICAGO** – Whitney M. Young Magnet High School's decathlon team took second place over the weekend at the rigorous and highly-competitive United States Academic Decathlon National Competition in Frisco, Texas, earning one of the school's highest scores to date at the national level. Of note, both Lane Tech College Prep High School and the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences also participated at the national level in Texas but in a separate division with Lane Tech taking second place in that division and both schools bringing home individual gold medals as well.

During the U.S. Academic Decathlon, each student competes in 10 events both objective and subjective: Art, Economics, Literature, Math, Music, Science, Social Science Essay, Interview, and Speech. Team scores are then calculated using the top two individual scores from each division.

Earlier this school year, the Dolphins, the city champions who represented Illinois in the national competition, landed the school's 20th consecutive state championship win at the 2023 Illinois Academic Decathlon State Competition with Lane Tech College Prep and Amundsen High School taking second and third place.

At the national competition, Whitney Young 11th and 12th graders Amber Sun, Leon Cao, Om Raizada, Renee Picard, Zara Khan, Gabriel Ratner and Daniel Lee all won gold medals across multiple subjects while Juniors Yiheng Gao and Taihei Eastwood earned silver and bronze medals in Social Science, Music, Math, and Economics. Whitney Young has participated in the state competition for nearly 40 years, earning the State title for the past 20 years and rising to the rank of second in the United States three times, in 1995, 2007 and 2012.

“Chicago Public Schools is extremely proud of all our students who qualified to participate in this rigorous national competition and then went on to show the nation what our students can do,” said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. “ Being recognized as among the top teams in the country is a monumental accomplishment and I want to extend my congratulations to the Office of Teaching and Learning, our dedicated high school principals, faculty, as well as parents, and, most importantly, these amazing decathletes.”

Whitney Young decathlon coach Ben Gucciardi hopes his team revels in the historic achievement.

“I am extremely proud of our team for posting Whitney Young’s best national Academic Decathlon performance in recent memory,” said Gucciardi. “While a national championship remains elusive, Whitney Young AcaDec remains steadfast as ever to bringing one to Chicago, and more importantly to supporting, challenging and celebrating the brilliant, talented and diverse young people of our school and city.”

Lane Tech College Prep High School took second in Division IV of the competition after taking second place in the state competition in March. It was the second time in the past 40 years that Lane Tech was invited to send a team to the Nationals competition and the first time they have participated in person. Lane Senior Oscar Stennes was recognized as the top scoring decathlete in Division IV making him the Division IV National Champion, as well as the Honors Division overall Gold Medalist. Lane Sophomore Elijah Jackson also received the award for the highest score and overall Gold Medal in the Scholastic Division for Division IV.

“What a historic moment for our school and for these students,” said Lane Coach David Campos. “It has been an absolute labor of love for all of us. Chicago Public Schools has one of the most competitive programs in the nation and it is exciting beyond words to have the opportunity to showcase the hard work and dedication of each of our students. This program at its core takes some of the best and brightest students in the city and nation and pushes them to heights unimaginable while they become a team and a family.”

Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences also participated in the Division IV competition, marking the second time the school has been invited to the competition but the first time they participated in person. Sophomore Catherine Lyons earned a gold medal in the Essay competition.

“I am so very proud of each and every one of my hardworking and talented decathletes and so grateful to be a part of this historic and incredible journey,” said Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences Coach Marianne Doulgeris.

CPS Students whose teams did not advance to the national competition also had the opportunity to compete as individuals in nationals online. Additional information can be found on the [United States Academic Decathlon website](#).

**Lane Tech College Decathletes:** Oscar Stennes, Aidan Lau, Mike Majewski, Elijah Jackson, Samantha Serrano, Iris Finelli, Michaela Wagner, Charlotte Cornell, and Nemo Kim.

**Whitney Young Magnet High School Decathletes:** Amber Sun, Leon Cao, Zara Khan, Gabriel Ratner, Renee Picard, Yiheng Gao, Taihei Eastwood, Daniel Lee, Om Raizada, Rhian Dixon-Yearby, Helen Kuenster, Jakob Caisip, Mathilda Taufmann, Derrick Jiang and Sebastian Thompson.

**Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences Decathletes:** Catherine Lyons, Grace Murphy, Elijah Spencer, Nicolette Carodine, Liam Curtin, Maggie Shannon, Michael Heenan, LaMariah Jackson, and Ashley Upchurch.

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