



Illinois State
**Charter School
Commission**

**FINAL
REPORT**

June 30, 2020

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A 8.5kg pigeon, initially at rest, heads east and collides with a blue jay. If the velocity of the pigeon is 16m/s, and the velocity of the blue jay is 18m/s, what is the blue jay's mass?



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STATEMENT FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR



Every so often life presents us with a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of others. From Waukegan to Elgin, Richton Park to the South and West Sides of Chicago, it has been a privilege to empower educators, parents, and community leaders to pursue educational options that are intentionally designed to serve some of the most vulnerable communities in the state of Illinois.

The Commissioners of the Illinois State Charter School Commission (SCSC) created more opportunities for students to participate in college-prep courses, project-based learning, language immersion programs, and culturally relevant curriculum. Faithful to the state mandate, SCSC has ensured that thousands of Illinois students and families have access to high-quality educational options.

In 2011, former-Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly appointed a nine-member panel of education experts in curriculum, district leadership, finance, and facilities to review the appeals of charter school applications and renewals that were denied by local school districts. Greg Richmond, Michael Jacoby, Rudy Valdez, Kathy Robbins were among the founding Commissioners who set the tone for the long road ahead. Initially when there were more than 950 authorizers nationwide, only 10 were Independent Charter Boards (ICB), and only three assessed charter appeals. It has truly been an honor to volunteer alongside the current bipartisan group of Commissioners and witness their unwavering commitment to serve in the **best interests** of the children and families of Illinois.



In nine years, the Commission received 58 appeals, less than 30% were presented for decision, a testament to a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation process. There was only one set of appeals that ever garnered a unanimous vote by Commissioners. Nine charter schools in nine years were granted an appeal, these schools represent less than 1% of schools across this state.

A few years ago, I envisioned that the bigger impact of the Commission would be to develop and disseminate model policies and practices in quality authorizing with charter school authorizers across the state. While our time to directly implement that work was cut short, the impact of the Commission will live beyond its dissolution in two ways: (1) greater protections for students attending charter schools were written into the Illinois Charter Schools Law; and (2) a plethora of best practices in *actual* monitoring and support of charter schools will transition to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as it assumes the role of charter school authorizer.

As the Commission ends its tenure, I would like to thank the countless supporters who year over year advocated *"to keep the Commission."* Commissioners, current and former, thank you for volunteering your time, sharing your expertise and knowledge in service of students and families. I must also acknowledge the professionals and parents on the front line--school principals, teachers, guardians and grandparents who attended public hearings, traveled to Springfield, and passionately brought forth their hopes and dreams for the schools in their respective communities. The collective impact of their school stories made it all worthwhile.

Sincerely,

DeRonda Williams. Chair



POSITION STATEMENT

Established in 2011, as an independent body with statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority, the vision of the Illinois State Charter School Commission is that ALL Illinois students and families have access to high-quality schools and academic experiences. Comprised of eleven schools (12 campuses) across the state, the Commission's portfolio of schools serves more than 4,300 students, which is more than 90 percent of school districts in the state. Commission schools serve as a stimulus for educational excellence and equity - exemplifying the legislative intent of the charter schools law (105 ILCS 5/27A-2).

*Guided by a **mission** of being a respected charter school authorizer, the Commission ushered in a new era of charter school authorizing hyper-focused on three (3) tenets:*

ACCESS

- *ensuring all students, especially those considered as at-risk, have an option to experience high quality public schools;*
- *serving as an approachable and helpful resource statewide to districts, applicants, elected leaders and the public regarding excellence in authorizing practices and techniques;*

ACCOUNTABILITY

- *resolving appeals fairly, timely, and according to the law;*
- *monitoring charter school performance according to transparent standards;*

AUTONOMY

- *supporting innovation, flexible learning models through strong leadership, governance and best practices;*
- *leading civil civic discourse on chartering issues, guided by data and the best interests of students.*

COMMISSION CORE VALUES

1. **SUPPORTS Local Control:** *Parents, grandparents, teachers, and caregivers – those closest to the students – are best suited to make educational decisions and school selections.*
2. **ENCOURAGES Collaboration (Between School Districts and Charter Schools):** *Before, during and after an appeal, school districts and charter applicants are encouraged to engage, collaborate, and leverage their respective capacities, in the best interests of students, especially at-risk populations.*
3. **VALUES Experienced Educators:** *Commissioners, staff, and independent evaluators collectively have more than 75 years of experience in traditional public and charter schools, as former principals, teachers, and administrators.*
4. **BELIEVES Neighborhood Schools are Important:** *Neighborhood schools are a great option when they offer high-quality academic experiences in a safe and accessible environment. All students deserve to have access to unique, innovative, and flexible educational options within their local community.*
5. **ACTS as an Independent Third-Party:** *The commission provides equal opportunity to districts and applicants, while ensuring fairness and accountability through a rigorous and comprehensive appeals process. Decisions are made with integrity, transparency, and in compliance with the Illinois Charter School Law.*

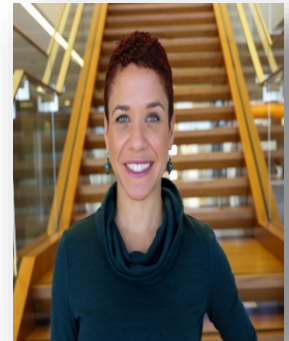
COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

Members appointed to the Commission shall collectively possess strong experience and expertise in public and nonprofit governance, management and finance, public school leadership, higher education, assessments, curriculum and instruction, and public education law. All members of the Commission shall have demonstrated understanding of and a commitment to public education, including and without limitation, charter schooling. (105 ILCS 5/27A-7.5 (d))



Dr. Catherine Burns is the chief academic officer for the Accelerate Institute in Chicago. She has served as the Vice Chair of the Illinois State Charter School Commission and was appointed to this governing body by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2015. Burns was a highly effective teacher and principal and now plays a critical role developing school leaders to have the mindset and skills needed to transform high-needs districts such as Chicago, New York, Newark, Milwaukee, Memphis, and Los Angeles. Burns earned a doctorate and master's degrees in educational leadership from Roosevelt University, a master's degree in history from Eastern Michigan University, and a bachelor's degree in history from Northern Illinois University.

Melissa Connelly is the chief executive officer of One Goal, a national college access and success organization that works to close the degree divide and create a more equitable future for students. Connelly was appointed to the Illinois State Charter School Commission by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2018 and has served on its Schools Committee. A former elementary school teacher, Connelly's career includes service as the managing director of STEM Teacher Leadership at Teach for America. Connelly is a first-generation college graduate who, in spite of starting high school in a truancy program, obtained three college degrees with a 4.0 grade-point average. She earned master's degrees in teaching and education administration from Dominican University and a bachelor's degree from University of Illinois-Chicago.



William "Bill" Farmer is a science teacher, instructional coach, and director of summer school at Evanston Township High School, where he began his teaching career in 2003. He serves as Secretary for the Illinois State Charter School Commission and the Chair of the Schools Committee. He was appointed to the Commission by former Governor Pat Quinn in 2014. Farmer is on the Board of Directors for the National Education Association (NEA) and is the former president and legislative committee chair for the local affiliate Illinois Education Association (IEA). Farmer holds a master's degree in school leadership and administration from Concordia University and a bachelor's degree in biology and secondary education from Northwestern University.

The Commission is the only independent authorizer in the state with extensive expertise and experience in charter school authorizing responsible for ensuring that the rights of charter schools across the state re protected.

COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

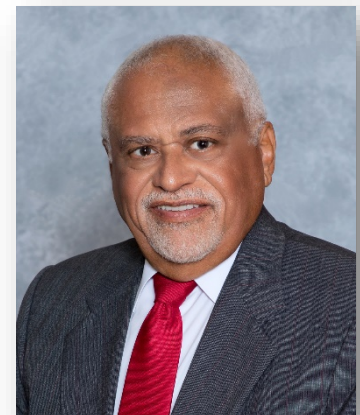
Established under the leadership of Democratic Governor Pat Quinn, Commissioners are nominated by the Governor and appointed by the State Board of Education. Collectively, Commissioners have more than 100 years of experience in advancing public education initiatives across the state.

David Feinberg is the managing director of regional real estate services at IFF, which is a mission-driven lender, real estate consultant, and developer for low-income communities and people with disabilities. Feinberg was appointed to the Illinois State Charter School Commission by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2016, and has served on its Schools Committee. Prior to joining IFF, Feinberg led the real estate development of more than 10 charter school campuses, totaling more than \$125M in facilities projects and impacting more than 5,000 students. A former teacher in Phoenix, Feinberg went on to become the CEO of the non-profit Charter School Support Services, co-founder of the non-profit Launchpad Development Corp, and regional director of Turner-Agassi Charter School Facilities Fund. Feinberg holds a master's degree in education from Arizona State University, a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Southern California, and a bachelor's degree in creative nonfiction from Hampshire College.



Carlos Perez is the executive director of Erie Elementary Charter School. He was appointed to the Illinois State Charter School Commission by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2017 and has served on its Schools Committee. A former executive director of Charter Parents United, Perez organized parents across various charter school networks around issues of school quality, educational equity, and parent and community empowerment and advocacy. Perez was also the director of public policy for the Illinois Network of Charter Schools. Prior to that, he worked to organize new immigrant and Latino communities in Virginia, Minnesota, and Missouri. Perez received a master's degree in public services from DePaul University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Truman State University.

Troy Ratliff is the executive vice president of the Better Boys Foundation and the vice president and executive director of the Joseph Kellman Family Foundation, where he also helped to found the Joseph Kellman Corporate Community School. He is also on the board of directors for the Noble Charter School Network. Ratliff has served as the Illinois State Charter School Commission's Operations Committee Chair and was appointed by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2015. He has worked in municipal and state government for more than 20 years. Ratliff holds a master's degree in public administration from Roosevelt University and a bachelor's degree in political science.



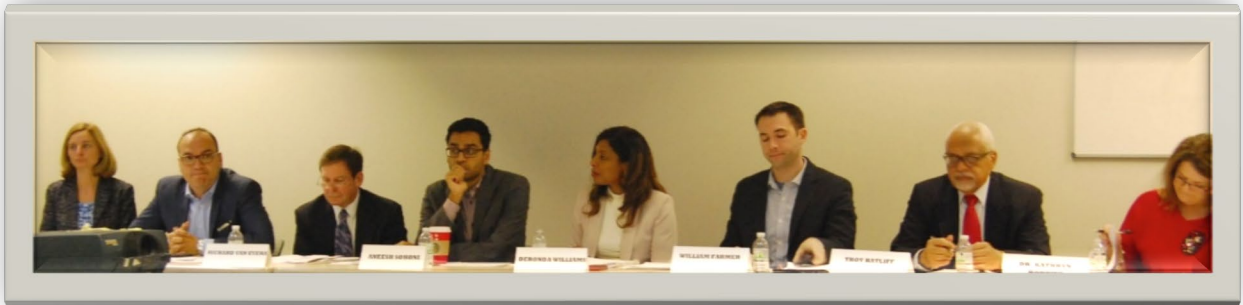
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Lisa Schuchart is a senior talent consultant in Chicago with more than 20 years of experience in education, financial services, insurance, and technology start-ups. Schuchart was appointed to the Illinois State Charter School Commission by former Governor Bruce Rauner in 2016 and has served on its Operations Committee. She has a record of success in helping companies increase their public footprint via strategic planning, branding and communications, as well as achieving a high performance workforce through talent acquisition, management and development, and fostering a diverse and inclusive corporate culture. Schuchart holds a bachelor's degree in communications with a focus in personnel management from Bowling Green State University.

DeRonda Williams is the CEO of DGW Consulting Group (DGWCG), an organization that provides executive recruiting services to identify and attract diverse talent for education and non-profit organization across the country. She has served as the Chair of the Illinois State Charter School Commission since 2015 and was appointed to the Commission two years prior by former Governor Pat Quinn. Williams has over 20 years of business experience across multiple industries, and has worked for the KIPP Foundation, Scott Foresman Publishing, Pearson Education's K-12 and college divisions, as well as the Olin Corporation. Williams earned a master's degree in Finance from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and earned a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Northwestern University.



LITIGATION, LEGISLATION & LOCAL CONTROL

Prior to the establishing the Commission, the Illinois Charter Schools Law mandated authority to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to receive and review charter school appeals. ISBE received more than 35 appeals statewide, from 1996 to 2009; and during the 14-year period granted two (2) appeals. Prairie Crossing Charter School (1999) and Southland College Prep Charter School (2010), initially approved by ISBE were transferred to the Commission in 2012 and are among the highest performing schools in the Commission's portfolio.

Throughout its tenure the Commission would endure the persistent challenges presented through **litigation and legislative opposition**. Almost each grant of an appeal elicited a lawsuit by the local school district. Flanked by big law firms, the school districts would file complaints challenging the Commission's authority. Every legislative session would bring forth newly sponsored bills amending the charter law to extinguish the Commission.

Commission's Counsel and the Office of the Attorney General¹ would successfully establish precedential charter school case law in Illinois. ***The Illinois Supreme Court has specifically held that, review of a charter school appeal from a district's denial, the decision need not be limited to the evidence submitted to the district. See Bd. Of Rich Twp. High Sch. Dist. No. 227, 965 N.E.2d*** The Southland case established the standard of review for appeals. The *De Novo standard, meaning no deference was given to the prior decision by the district, was applied to each appeal presented before the Commission.*

"The Commission may reverse a local school board's decision to deny a proposal when the Commission finds that the charter school or charter school proposal (i) is in compliance with this article [the Charter Schools Law] and (ii) is in the best interests of the students it [the charter school] is designed to serve." See 105 ILCS 5/27A-9(e).

This two-prong test was applied to determine whether the charter school and actions of the school district were in compliance with the law and the charter agreements. The Circuit Court would later rule that "[T]he Commission was not only entitled to consider the charter school agreements in reaching a decision, but was required to consider those agreements because it had a statutory duty to determine whether the Schools and CPS were operating under the terms of the charter agreements."

¹ As a state entity, the Commission was represented in court by the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, then Lisa Madigan.

THE COMMISSION'S COUNSEL

Since the Commission's inception Lisa Scruggs has served as Legal Counsel for the Commission. In the early days she prepared the Commission's governing documents, including bylaws and organizational policies. She managed all legal functions ranging from the negotiation of charter agreements and employee contracts, to developing conflicts of interest statements, to serving as the organization's ethics and FOIA officer.



Lisa Scruggs is a Partner at Duane Morris LLC, is recognized as notable figure in school reform law and has managed a vast range of litigation, transactions, and policy matters connected to new school development, teacher evaluation, credentialing and certification reforms, public/privates education ventures, virtual education, school finance and parent and student civil rights.

Scruggs is a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School and where she was articles editor for the University of Chicago Roundtable. She holds a Master's Degree in Education Policy from the University of Chicago and she is a cum laude graduate of Georgetown

IMPACT STORIES

The Illinois Schools Charter Law, 105 ILCS 5/27A-2(a)(2) states, “[T]here are educators, community members and parents in Illinois who can offer flexible and innovative educational ...programs, but who lack an avenue through which to provide them within the [traditional] public school system.

THE IMPACT OF AN APPELLETTE AUTHORIZER ON ACCESS

In October 2017, a group of committed Elgin residents were granted approval to open the Elgin Math and Science Academy (EMSA) Charter School. Hoping to serve 450 students in grades K - 8 on a campus located along the Fox River Nature Preserve, a group of committed residents who call themselves (ECSI) applied twice to the local school district, Community Unit School District U-46, and were approved to open after a second appeal to the Illinois State Charter School Commission.



Charter applicants are expected to write strong proposals; yet, best practice charter authorizing also requires an assessment beyond a ‘plan on paper.’ Central to the Commission’s evaluation of charter appeals is the **Joint Capacity Interview** with the charter school design team (board and prospective educators) and the host district. Directly tied to the Commission’s mission is the practice of transparency. The goal and purpose of the Joint Capacity Interview is to ask clarifying questions of both parties and assess the capacity of the charter school leadership.

“The **Joint Capacity Interview** provides evaluators with a deeper look into the who and how the charter school would execute its proposal, and more details regarding who and what informed or influenced the district’s denial decision.” Expert Evaluator, Dr. Lynda Williams.

During the Elgin appeal, it became apparent to the Commission that the district’s denial of the EMSA’s proposal was rooted in “questionable charter authorizing practices,” and subversive tactics of the Elgin School District U-46. It was confirmed during the joint interview that the U-46 Board of Education approved the charter and delegated authority to district personnel to negotiate the charter agreement. In the subsequent months, U-46 elected a new school board and district administrators decided to re-present EMSA’s proposal, not as an approved negotiated contract but on the merits of the initial proposal. By a slim margin, the newly constituted board issued a denial of the proposal. The 75-day appeal process, which included a public hearing in the city of Elgin, formed a body of evidence to substantiate findings that the charter proposal was in compliance with the law and designed to serve the best interests of Elgin students. Further, the Commission found that the district’s denial was not supported by the law.

The Commission’s written decision to grant the schools appeal reads: “ECSI’s impetus to start a charter school is to ‘create a diverse school that provide[s] an exceptional and unique education to students of varied races and ethnicities, socioeconomic and language backgrounds.” During the evaluation, the Commission discovered that District-U46 presented ECSI with a proposal to establish EMSA as a magnet school; thus, acknowledging that some students should be afforded access to attend a school like EMSA.”

Today, EMSA students experience the *Wow and Wonder of Learning* through a project-based, inquiry-based learning model with a focus on math and science exploration and expeditions. One of only a few schools awarded federal Charter School Program grant funds, which is a three-year grant that allocates funds during pre-opening phase of development, EMSA serves a diverse student population, ????[insert demos], of which speaks more than ???### languages. In the 2019-20 school year, more than 20% of EMSA students were English Language Learners (ELL) and 47% qualified for free or reduced lunch. The waitlist for the 2020-21 school year exceeds 200 students. EMSA will grow to serve 450 students in grades K – 8 by the 2024-25 school year.

THE IMPACT OF AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER THROUGH SCHOOL MONITORING AND SUPPORT



On April 21, 2015, the Commission voted to grant the appeal and approve the charter school proposal filed by the Lawndale Educational and Regional Network Charter Schools (“LEARN”) to establish LEARN 9 Waukegan. The Commission and LEARN 9 acknowledged that entry into Waukegan was the first time the network would serve a high percentage of ELL students; and this fact would be a point of contention during the appeal. The Waukegan Community Unit School District No. 60 or “Waukegan District 60” would challenge this decision in court for three years. LEARN 9 Waukegan student demographics mirror those of the District #60: almost 90% of students are low income and 60% of students are classified as English Language Learners. The school offers a Transition Bilingual Education (TBE) and an Emergent Bilingual program, which includes self-contained and monolingual instruction for English language learners.

During the appeal evaluation, the Commission reported “ELL students attending a LEARN Campus greatly outperformed ELL students in Chicago District 299, North Chicago District 187, Waukegan District 60 and the State in both reading and math on the ISAT.” Even LEARN CEO Greg White acknowledged that LEARN 9 had a “bumpy start,” which would impact student performance.



The Commission first adopted its Accountability System for Commission-Authorized Schools in June 2013, amended² in November 2017 and again in December 2019. The Commission’s Accountability System is incorporated in the Charter School Agreement and guided by both the Illinois Charter Schools Law and national best practices in charter school authorizing as codified by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

The Commission recognized the importance of obtaining a comprehensive view of each school’s performance outcomes; therefore, our accountability system provided a multi-layered approach to understanding overall school performance, including multiple touchpoints to support and encourage continued improvement. The

Commission’s accountability system consisted of the performance measures and standards set forth in the accountability plan for all charter schools; the Commission’s compliance reporting and monitoring practices; **accountability actions taken to support best practices or improve performance**; annual performance reviews, the charter renewal process; and the Commission’s school closure policy.

The Commission believed that transparency is integral to the relationship between an authorizer and its schools. While interventions are methods authorizers nationwide employ through monitoring and oversight practices, the Commission’s approach toward interventions was executed as supportive instead of punitive. Most importantly, the Commission considered that the relationship with schools was “an accountability partnership,” one that requires both parties to acknowledge their mutual responsibility to ensure the school serves the best interests of students.

The Commission’s Intensive/School Support Strategies provide non-binding feedback and support is provided through regular monitoring and assessment conducted by independent, external experts.

² Amendments reflected changes to the approved statewide assessment, an adjustment to weights and re-alignment of the student growth model approved by the state board.

“Their accountability was very clear, so we knew exactly what we were responsible for doing. They modified the accountability plan to make sure that it was relevant and aligned with what’s best for the students we served.”

Greg White
LEARN CEO

Experts engaged in honest discussions with school leadership to help schools identify levers and opportunities for improvement and to codify what works well for their students and teachers.

“The same type of engagement would traditionally occur during a high stakes decision interval, but this time the evaluation was provided to LEARN 9 in efforts to identify levers for improvement, without threat of closure.”

“We were able to translate [what we learned about serving EL students] across the network...not just with Waukegan but across all the schools North Chicago and South Chicago. It reinforced the value of partnering with the authorizer to improve the schools performance,” said LEARN CEO Greg White.

LEARN 9 belongs to the LEARN Charter School Network which operates a portfolio of 10 schools across Illinois (Chicago, North Chicago, and Waukegan), and recently was approved via a national search to open a charter school in Washington DC on a federal naval base. The vision for LEARN 9 is that it will prepare students for college by promoting lifelong learners who are critical thinkers, as well as global

citizens appreciative of a multicultural society. Its mission is to provide children with the academic foundation and ambition to earn a college degree. LEARN measures its success by ensuring students have the aptitude and opportunity to pursue selective high school programs. To meet these objectives, LEARN 9 practices the key core values among its leadership, teachers, and students: a culture of respect, high expectations, a safe and nurturing environment, developing the whole child, and family involvement. These values are reflected in the LEARN 9’s extensive waitlist of more than 700 students, the largest in the network, and being rated in the top 10% of schools in Lake County for student attendance.

“Commission staff have built strong and transparent relationships with schools based on open and regular communication. School leaders expressed that staff would “bend over backward” to help them, are always available by phone, and work diligently to meet school requests despite the staff’s limited capacity.” 2019 Authorizer Evaluation



SOUTHLAND COLLEGE PREP CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL, UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

THE IMPACT ON AUTONOMY AND CHARTER RENEWAL

By 2015, with six schools in its portfolio, the Commission shifted from primarily focusing on appeals to ensuring its accountability system and authorizing practices were a value-add to the schools within the portfolio. Given the small size of the Commission staff, it became apparent that the Commission would protect charter autonomy by “minimizing administrative and compliance burdens on schools and focusing on holding schools accountable for outcomes rather than processes,” which is promulgated by NACSA’s Principles and Standards of Quality Authorizing.

The charter agreement is the legally binding document that protects charter autonomy; yet, how an authorizer approaches the renewal evaluation and material modification processes will directly impact the extent of charter autonomy.

Illinois Charter Law permits district authorizers to extend charter terms up to ten years for schools authorized before 2017. 105 ILCS 5/27A-9(a) Yet, state legislation limits the Commission (and the State Board) to a five-year term renewal, which directly impacts “Exemplary” schools like Southland College Prep Charter School.



In nine years, the Commission granted seven (7) material modifications and renewed six (6) charter agreements. Renewal and material modifications present an opportunity for the charter school and the authorizer to establish or adjust performance standards, increase enrollment, relocate or expand facilities, and most importantly ensure the charter agreement is reflective of the autonomy and accountability principles.

As the only charter school in the state to receive an “Exemplary,” accountability status for two consecutive years, Southland is the “epitome of excellence,” said a Southland parent at a Renewal Public Hearing in 2019. Consistently outperforming the *Assigned School Composite Comparison (ASC)*, Southland graduates have a college persistence rate of 88%, which is well above the national average.

Southland College Prep’s mission is to “prepare all its graduates for academic success in college and to see them through to persist in, and to graduate from, college.” Every year, beginning with its first graduating class in 2014, 100% of Southland’s graduates have been accepted to college and awarded more than \$150 million merit-based scholarships. To date, in the 2019-20 school year, Southland students have been awarded \$25 million in merit-based scholarships.

In December 2019, the Commission approved Southland for a second, five-year renewal term. During the charter term, the 2015 – 2019 school years, the school achieved the following on the Commission’s accountability system.

- Exceeds¹⁴ or Meets on **83%** of the **academic metrics**
- Meets **100%** of the **financial metrics**
- Meets on **99%** of the **organizational metric**

EVIDENCE OF DEMAND – SOUTHLAND COLLEGE PREP (2010-2018)			
Lottery Year	Number of Applicants	Available Slots	Students Not Admitted
2010	272	130	142
2011	291	141	150
2012	294	135	159
2013	231	149	82
2014	253	126	127
2015	303	142	161
2016	280	145	135
2017	317	133	184
2018	333	125	208
Total	2574	1226	1348

During the most recent renewal, public hearing families repeatedly likened the feeling of hearing their number called in the lottery to winning the Illinois Powerball. Not everyone can attend Southland or a school like Southland, and limits to its charter term or number of seats allowed by regulation are viewed as *barriers to access*. In 2018, in advance of the renewal year, the Commission approved a charter modification allowing Southland to increase its enrollment cap to 600 students by school year [2020-21](#).

Originally chartered in 2010 by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Southland College Prep Charter School is the dream of highly esteemed educator, Dr. Blondean Davis. A former Chicago Public Schools teacher and administrator, Dr. Davis often speaks of the “dream of Southland.” Opening with 122 students in grade nine, Southland’s charter was transferred to the Commission in 2012. Renewed twice by the Commission and approved material modifications to increase student enrollment, Dr. Davis’ dream made attending college and now graduate school a reality for hundreds of predominately African American students for the last decade.

In recognition of the charter school principles (i.e. curriculum flexibility, an independent governing board and freedom to manage school operations are integral elements in the equation of autonomy in exchange for accountability), the renewal application and process is designed to provide evidence relevant to the respective school’s performance, education philosophy, and stewardship of public finances. In the Commission’s view, these details are pertinent to ultimately allow the Commissioners to reach a merit-based decision regarding renewal.

The Commission’s renewal application is not a rehash of the original proposal, instead it allows the authorizer and the school to reflect on how well the school is serving the best interests of the its students. The application is reflective of this approach and requests that schools:

- I. **Look Back and Respond to the Record of Performance**
- II. **Reflect on Best Practices**
- III. **Look Forward to the Next Charter Term**

Similar to the manner in which school monitoring and oversight is conducted, the Commission’s practice is to differentiate the renewal evaluation process based on the school performance over the term of the charter. Schools consistently receiving an accountability status of “Good Standing” as outlined in the Commission’s accountability system follow a “streamlined” process, including a shorter, one-day site visit while other renewals undergo a more intensive two-day site visit. Focus groups with staff and stakeholders are conducted to further ascertain best practices, trends and clarity related to the application. Each school’s renewal site visit is tailored to areas of inquiry identified for that school. Regardless of the school’s performance, the renewal process requires the collaboration of the school and Commission staff over a period of several months.

THE COMMISSION'S IMPACT BEYOND ITS DISSOLUTION

"It is in the best interests of students, families and the local community ... to be able to trust that the Charter Agreement [between the school and authorizer] will be followed and that the due process protections owed to students, teachers and others in the school ... be afforded to them before the school is closed and students and families are forced to attend a different school." Decision SCSC Appeal 16-001, 16-002, 16-003

2020 Revisions to the Illinois Charter Schools Law

In every appeal, a consideration of whether an adverse action was worth the disruption, destabilization and diminishing impact on the academic, social and emotional well-being of children. These considerations are relevant according to a study by the University of Chicago which found that closing schools and moving students into designated welcoming schools...did not automatically expose them to better learning environments and result in greater academic gains³.

In the nine-year tenure of the Commission, there was only one set of decisions rendered by the Commission unanimously. Commissioners respectfully deliberated on each appeal that came before them and given its bipartisan origins, the Commission never had a "rubber stamp" moment. The findings of fact and application of law set forth in the unanimous decision to grant three charter appeals in 2016, established the language that is codified in statute that dissolves the Commission.

Three schools Amandla, Barbara Sizemore Academy and Bronzeville were identified to close based on a failure to meet or make reasonable progress toward achievement of the content standards or pupil performance standards identified in the charter section 105 ILCS 5/27A-9(c). To close the schools the district retroactively applied a new set of policy standards. The Commission found this action was not supported by the charter law or the parties' charter agreement.

At the time of the appeal, the only guaranteed placement option for impacted students were to the assigned or zone schools in the district. Analysis conducted by the Commission revealed that for each charter school more 50% of the students to schools rated by CPS as Level 2 or lower (the same level of charter schools). Testimony from students, parents, teachers and community members recounted stories of displacement due to massive school closures just a year prior.

The relegation of more than 1,600 students, who are considered at-risk at minimum, or highly vulnerable, to schools not performing any better than those they were currently attending did not pass the best interest analysis. Throughout the process, Commission staff persistently encouraged the parties to negotiate in hopes that a settlement can be reached.



No local school board may arbitrarily or capriciously revoke or not renew a charter.

Except for extenuating circumstances outlined in this Section, if a local school board revokes or does not renew a charter, it must ensure that all students currently enrolled in the charter school are placed in schools that are higher performing than that charter school...

In determining whether extenuating circumstances exist, a local school board must detail, by clear and convincing evidence, that factors unrelated to the charter school's accountability designation outweigh the charter school's academic performance. 105 ILCS 5/27A-



³ Gordon, Molly, et.al, School Closings in Chicago,p.57

The District is provided with an opportunity to submit written briefs detailing its rationale for its decision, responding to the inquiry about from the evaluation team, which often centers around addressing the impact to students and families. Transportation options were finally offered to parents less than 24 hours before the decision meeting.

Today, all three schools remain challenged and demonstrate high levels of proficiency. The tumult of the appeal leads to ripples of instability - forced to find a new school facility, the loss of teaching staff, adjusting to status as a single-site district all have a significant impact on the serving students.



Amendments to the Illinois Charter Schools Law, passed under Senate Bill 1226, no longer allowing for the appeal of a new charter school proposal. Individuals and entities seeking to create new innovative public education charter schools only have recourse through a court of law. New charter school applicants must seek judicial review to appeal local school district decisions.

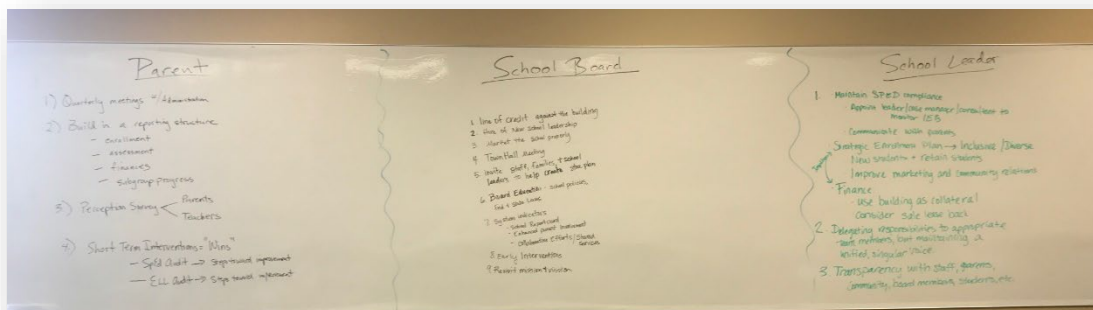
The expense of filing a lawsuit for a small group of educators, parents, community leaders, who are often working full-time jobs while preparing a charter school proposal will be substantial and likely untenable. This new regulation limits education options for more than 3,200 students in the following schools:



- *Prairie Crossing*
- *Southland*
- *HSA-Belmont*
- *HSA-McKinley*
- *LEARN 9 - Waukegan*
- *Elgin Math & Science Academy*
- *Intrinsic II High School*

Existing district-run charter schools have a right to appeal a revocation or nonrenewal to ISBE; however, an appeal based on a district's refusal to act or vote no longer exists. The Commission also served as a resource and pressure-test

valve for districts who had not yet designed open and transparent policies. This support mechanism will no longer exist.



Professional Authorizer Tools & Resources

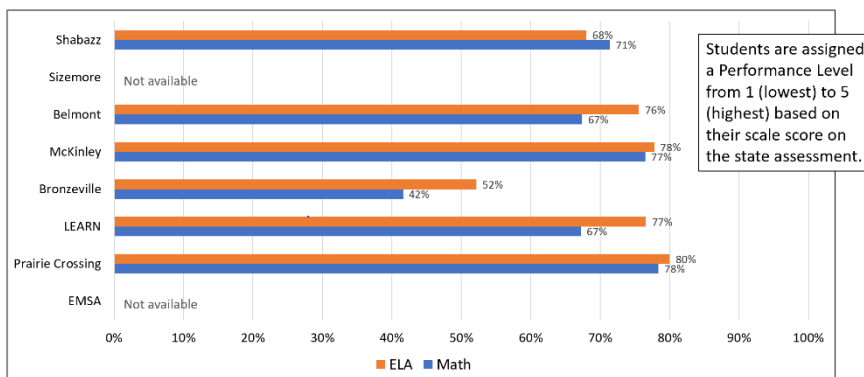
The Commission respects the right of all Illinois districts to establish and their own performance standards and application processes; however, it is imperative that the standards and policies are fair and transparent. The Commission developed an arsenal of tools for district authorizers including a Model Request for Proposal and Rubric.

“Great authorizers make decisions based on what will drive student outcomes, not based on checking boxes or on personal beliefs.”
NACSA Quality Practice Project

The Commission’s Accountability System, including the Accountability Plan and Performance Framework is based on national model developed in conjunction with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and Public Impact.

The Academic Performance Framework has been amended several times as result of changes to the mandated statewide assessment⁴. The most recent amendment in 2019 returned the student growth measure to the Framework. Based on a recommendation during the NACSA Evaluation, the Commission established a threshold for schools performing below the standard, based on the student growth percentile – ***schools must demonstrate that students achieve growth equivalent to or higher than the Assigned School Composite and minimally in the 50th percentile to be removed from the revocation or non-renewal status.***

% of Lowest-Performing Students (PL 1 or 2) Moving Up at Least One Performance Level



- At five of six schools included in the analysis, at least two-thirds of lowest-performing students moved up at least one performance level in both ELA and math.

APF Ratings, 2013-14 to 2018-19

Rating	Requirements
Exceeds Standard	APF score: 89-100
Meets Standard	APF score: 63-88
Below Standard	APF score: 39-62
Far Below	APF score: Below 39

School	Overall Score by Year						Change from Year 1
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	
Amandla	N/A	N/A	N/A	53	64	66	+13
Shabazz	N/A	N/A	N/A	63	68	60	-3
Sizemore	N/A	N/A	N/A	63	41	41	-22
Belmont	41	41	56	76	78	81	+40
McKinley	56	71	80	84	91	89	+33
Bronzeville	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	41	43	+2
LEARN	N/A	N/A	43	67	47	70	+27
Prairie Crossing	85	75	80	91	95	93	+8
Urban Prep West	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	74	N/A
EMSA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	81	N/A
Southland	N/A	N/A	82	93	96	93	+11

- Performance for seven of nine schools improved from their first year of operation with Commission to 2018-19.
- Three schools - McKinley, Prairie Crossing, and Southland - exceeded Commission standards in 2018-19.

⁴ Amendments to the Academic Performance Framework were based on a transition from the Illinois Standardized Assessment Test (ISAT) in 2017, the PARRC and then the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Commission extends its sincere appreciation to the students and families who called their state leaders and elected officials on behalf of the Commission.

Our deepest gratitude is extended to Senator Iris Martinez who consistently acknowledged that families in her district chose to attend a charter school approved by the Commission. To ignore that fact, Sen. Martinez said, would be to ignore her constituents.

We also offer special thanks to Senators Chuck Weaver and Jason Barrickman who exemplified leadership in the face of opposition.

To those who have served alongside us:

Former Commissioners – Richard Van Evera, Aneesh Sohoni, Greg Richmond, Michael Jacoby, Rudy Valdez, Angela Rudolph,
State Senator Patricia Van Pelt,

The Illinois Network of Charter Schools – Andrew Broy, Ariel Johnson, Allison Jack and Matt Major

Former Executive Directors – Hosanna Mahaley, Jeanne Nowaczewski

Former Staff – Robbie Curry,
Teresa Diaz, Treyana Burris

Former fellows, friends,
supporters, expert consultants,
and school leaders—we hope
we have served you well!



Concluding Remarks – From the Desk of the Executive Director

To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible – and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people – must be prepared to “go for broke.” --- James Baldwin



The year 2020 made an indelible mark in the history -- in addition to the dissolution of the Illinois State Charter School Commission, a mandated moral reckoning has been marshaled by a global health crisis and global civil protests. From policymakers to parents, each of us dutifully and literally sought refuge and reflected our respective roles and collective accountability for the current state of affairs and a path forward.

During my five-year tenure in leadership with the Illinois State Charter School Commission, I discovered the role of the charter school authorizer is not solely resigned to compliance and regulation. An authorizer, and even more so, an appellate authorizer must also, apolitically, strike the right balance of serving the public in the interest of social justice for the students and families whose voices have been silenced.

Uniquely positioned, and statutorily mandated, to analyze with a lens beyond that of strict compliance, the Commission measured what was is in the **best interest** of students. Before the aftermath of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arberry and Breonna Taylor, before the stark disparity in health outcomes resulting from Covid-19, the Illinois State Charter School Commission said the lives of Black children matter. Acknowledging that multiple school closings create vulnerable education experiences for students and further destabilizes neighborhood communities. And as a result, the 2019 amendments to the charter law compels Authorizers with a duty to protect student rights and critically examine what best interests mean in the context of school closures.

I am forever grateful for the privilege and experience of reporting to bi-partisan group Commissioners whose experience in this work is broad and deep. Paramount to the Commission was the role as an accountability partner. Transparent standards, open lines of communication and resources to support academic growth and leadership development were Commission priorities and how we added value to schools as an Authorizer. I would be remiss not to mention during this historical moment, where matters of diversity are prevalent, but often not present on the balance sheet -- the Commission **exemplified diversity** across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability among Commissioners, staff, fellows/interns, consultants, vendors, school and network leadership, and governing boards.

In the wake of Illinois State Charter School Commission's dissolution, Illinois is reimagining how teaching and learning will occur in the fall. COVID-19 has prompted an undeniable right to exercise *Instructional Choice*: affording parents with the right to prioritize safety, learning style, and environmental preferences amid the pandemic. As we pass the baton to ISBE, we hope that the 12 campuses of state-authorized charter schools will find a new 'thought partner, colleague and advocate' who will strive to strike the right balance and 'dare greatly,' to re-imagine the construct under which charter school authorizing developed, especially given Instructional Choice is the primary reason families exercise their respective rights to attend a charter school.

In service,

Shenita Johnson

Background

The General Assembly voted near Unanimously to establish an “independent commission with statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority” in 2011.



102-6 **52-0**
House **Senate**

Charter schools that have since been renewed by the Commission have demonstrated **high academic performance, fiscal solvency, sound and compliant organizational ability.**

58

APPEALS

9

GRANTED

- In Illinois, only school districts and the Commission can authorize charter schools - of the 141 charters in Illinois, **over 95% were granted by the local school district.**
- **In 9 years, 58 appeals have been filed with the Commission** and only 9 were granted. This General Assembly acted promptly to create the Commission because of the anticipated volume and resources needed to implement a rigorous and transparent appeals process.

Commissioners

- **Represent diverse backgrounds**, affiliations and collectively have more than 50 years of experience in public education and education reform.
- **Do Not Always vote the same way** but they are all committed to serving as an independent, high-quality charter school authorizer.

50+ YEARS OF
COLLECTIVE
EXPERIENCE

The Existence of the Commission

- **Promotes increased opportunities for innovation and improved pupil learning**, which is the declared purpose of charter schools in this State of Illinois.
- **Increases access to high performing schools for at-risk populations.**



4,300 STUDENTS SERVED



25% OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS
(BASED ON
ENROLLMENT).



Illinois State
**Charter School
Commission**

Local Control

The Commission believes the definition of local control must recognize the individuals closest, and most knowledgeable about the needs and interest of students and that includes: parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

Schools approved by the Commission have demonstrated **high levels of parental and community support.**





6820 South Washtenaw Avenue, Chicago, IL 60629 | 773-535-7150
 Grades Served: 9-12

ACE Amandla Charter High School is an inclusive community that prepares students for rewarding careers in architecture, construction, and engineering.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Joan Archie					
School Leader(s)	Turon Ivy					
Year Opened	ACE Tech (2004) & Amandla (2008) merged in 2018					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	203					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	1%					
Black	89%					
Hispanic	10%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	86%					
English Learners	5%					
Students with Disabilities	25%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
SAT	765.0	795.2	784.6	794.4	827.3	792.6
4 Year HS Graduation Rate	77.7%	53.3%	74.5%	75.9%	82.5%	90.1



Betty Shabazz International Charter School
7823 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60619 | 773-651-1221
Grades Served in 2018-19: K-8

The mission of this African centered school is to provide an academic and culturally relevant program that integrates and balances cultural knowledge and improves competencies in reading, oral and written language, mathematics, science, technology, social studies, and the arts and humanities.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Carol Lee					
School Leader(s)	Shannon Mason					
Year Opened	1998					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	303					
Statutory Application	<i>There are educators, community members, and parents in Illinois who can offer flexible and innovative educational techniques and programs, but who lack an avenue through which to provide them within the public school system. 105 ILCS 5/27A-2(a)(2)</i>					
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Underperforming School Rating by ISBE for 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	0.0%					
Black	99.0%					
Hispanic	1.0%					
Asian	0.0%					
Low Income	96%					
English Learners	9%					
Students with Disabilities	0%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	18.8%	11.7%	30.5%	15.8%	23.8%	14.5%
Math	9.3%	8.1%	13.8%	10.1%	13.5%	10.6%



Barbara A. Sizemore Academy
6547 South Stewart Avenue, Chicago, IL 60621 | 773-651-1661
Grades Served in 2018-19: K-8

Our mission is to provide an academic and culturally relevant program that integrates and balances cultural knowledge and improves competencies in reading, oral and written language, mathematics, science, technology, social studies, the arts, and the humanities.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Carol Lee					
School Leader(s)	Jocelyn Mills					
Year Opened	1998					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	239					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	0.0%					
Black	99.0%					
Hispanic	1.0%					
Asian	0.0%					
Low Income	96%					
English Learners	0%					
Students with Disabilities	6%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	4.9%	9.9%	1.4%	11.1%	14.6%	14.5%
Math	6.0%	7.3%	5.7%	8.2%	13.5%	10.6%



BRONZEVILLE ACADEMY[®] CHARTER SCHOOL

Bronzeville Academy Charter School
4930 South Cottage Grove, Chicago, IL 60615 | 773-285-8400
Grades Served in 2018-19: K-8

The mission of Bronzeville Academy Charter School is to prepare our scholars for success beyond college through rigorous, innovative, engaging and culturally rich STEAM instruction across all core subject areas coupled with high quality sports programming.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Lance Jefferson					
School Leader(s)	Simcha Baker-Dixon					
Year Opened	2006					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	312					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Lowest Performing School Rating by ISBE for 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	0%					
Black	99%					
Hispanic	1%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	100%					
English Learners	0%					
Students with Disabilities	13%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	7.0%	11.1%	8.6%	13.2%	6.5%	11.6%
Math	2.5%	10.0%	0.0%	8.6%	5.6%	7.9%



Elgin Math and Science Academy
1600 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois | 630-883-5013

Our mission is for students and teachers to reach their highest potential through active exploratory learning and social responsibility.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Kerry Kelly					
School Leader(s)	Lezlie Fuhr					
Year Opened	2018					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	261					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	No ISBE Rating for 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	33.7%					
Black	13.9%					
Hispanic	36.6%					
Asian	13.9%					
Low Income	4%					
English Learners	20%					
Students with Disabilities	14%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	35.3%	10.6%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Math	47.1%	23.8%	NA	NA	NA	NA



Horizon Science Academy – Belmont
2456 North Mango Avenue, Chicago, IL 60639 | 773-237-2702

We foster an environment of inquiry and a love of learning, so students are prepared to thrive in STEM-focused high school, college, and the world.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Stephanie Gladden					
School Leader(s)	Serdar Kartal					
Year Opened	2013					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	547					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	0%					
Black	60%					
Hispanic	35%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	90%					
English Learners	17%					
Students with Disabilities	9%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	36.3%	13.8%	31.5%	13.9%	28.2%	13.7%
Math	25.4%	11.2%	20.5%	9.9%	17.3%	10.7%



Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park
2245 West Pershing Road, Chicago, IL 60609 | 773-247-8400

We foster an environment of inquiry and a love of learning, so students are prepared to thrive in STEM-focused high school, college, and the world.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Ahmet Uysal					
School Leader(s)	Stephen Palmerin					
Year Opened	2013					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	845					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	6.9%					
Black	4.0%					
Hispanic	84.2%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	76%					
English Learners	24%					
Students with Disabilities	10%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	49.0%	22.3%	45.4%	23.2%	32.4%	22.3%
Math	43.0%	18.3%	38.6%	17.3%	29.4%	17.9%
SAT	936.1	835.9	962.3	865.4	948.4	862.4
4 Year HS Graduation Rate	95.0%	62.1%	95.0%	77.9%	NA	NA



Intrinsic II Campus
79 West Monroe, Chicago, IL 60608 | 708-887-2810

Prepare all students for postsecondary success and world-changing endeavors by flexing time, space and people to increase student outcomes and improve students' life trajectories.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	James Frank					
School Leader(s)	Tim Ligue					
Year Opened	2019					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	92					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	No ISBE Rating for 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2019-20						
White	NA					
Black	NA					
Hispanic	NA					
Asian	NA					
Low Income	NA					
English Learners	NA					
Students with Disabilities	NA					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
SAT	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4 Year HS Graduation Rate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA



LEARN 9 Waukegan
1200 Glen Flora Avenue, Waukegan, IL 60085 | 847-377-0690

Our mission is to provide children with the academic foundation and ambition to earn a college degree.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Vineeta Raketich					
School Leader(s)	Maytee Diez					
Year Opened	2015					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	407					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	4%					
Black	21%					
Hispanic	73%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	93%					
English Learners	59%					
Students with Disabilities	8%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	28.4%	17.3%	15.6%	15.2%	9.8%	11.7%
Math	19.5%	16.3%	9.2%	15.7%	28.9%	14.5%



Prairie Crossing
1531 Jones Point Road, Grayslake, IL 60030 | 847-543-9722

We believe that children are our best hope to improve the world

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Ed Jamison					
School Leader(s)	Geoff Deigan					
Year Opened	1999					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	432					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Commendable School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	65.7%					
Black	3.9%					
Hispanic	5.9%					
Asian	16.7%					
Low Income	4%					
English Learners	10%					
Students with Disabilities	13%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
ELA	54.4%	38.7%	71.2%	43.3%	64.3%	46.2%
Math	57.5%	38.3%	56.0%	40.5%	56.4%	39.6%



SOUTHLAND
COLLEGE PREP
 CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL
 UNLIMITED POTENTIAL, UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

Southland College Prep
4601 Sauk Trail, Richton Park, IL 60471 | 708-748-8105

Southland's mission is to prepare all its graduates for academic success in college and to see them through to persist in, and to graduate from, college.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Ron Bean					
School Leader(s)	Dr. Blondean Davis					
Year Opened	2010					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	555					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	Exemplary School Rating by ISBE in 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	1%					
Black	93%					
Hispanic	3%					
Asian	0%					
Low Income	44%					
English Learners	1%					
Students with Disabilities	9%					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
SAT	997.4	863.1	1041.4	881.8	1012.8	898.9
4 Year HS Graduation Rate	98.3%	86.5%	100.0%	83.2%	99.1%	86.5%



URBAN PREP ACADEMIES
WE BELIEVE.

Urban Prep West Academy
1900 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 0230, Chicago, IL, 60602 | 312-276-0259

The mission of Urban Prep is to provide a comprehensive, high-quality college preparatory education to young men that results in our graduates succeeding in college.

Link to school website: [School Website](#)

Board Chair	Tim King					
School Leader(s)	Cory Cain					
Year Opened	2009					
Student Enrollment 2019-20	96					
Statutory Application						
Highlight/Quote						
Performance	No ISBE Rating for 2018-19					
Student Demographics 2018-19						
White	NA					
Black	NA					
Hispanic	NA					
Asian	NA					
Low Income	NA					
English Learners	NA					
Students with Disabilities	NA					
Academic Performance						
	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
	School	ASC	School	ASC	School	ASC
SAT	824.4	799.5	784.6	794	784.6	794
4 Year HS Graduation Rate	83.8%	51.2%	784.6	794	784.6	794

COMMISSION STAFF

SHENITA JOHNSON, ESQ. - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



SHENITA JOHNSON has worked in the public and private sector with diverse groups and various constituency levels for more than 15 years. She is currently the Executive Director and General Counsel of the Illinois State Charter School Commission. She is an effective consensus builder and a manager of group and interpersonal dynamics. Ms. Johnson is a licensed attorney and previously practiced for four years as an Assistant State's Attorney with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, the second largest prosecutor's office in the country.

Prior to law school, Ms. Johnson worked with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) managing the high-profile charter authorization work in Detroit and New Orleans, post-Katrina. She also worked for the Chicago Public Schools, New Schools Development Department, for five years. Throughout her time at Chicago Public Schools, Ms. Johnson coordinated recruitment of high-quality school operators, guided and supported applicants, and conducted community outreach. Shenita also played a pivotal role in the launch and implementation of Renaissance 2010, Chicago's initiative to close low-performing schools and re-open 100 high quality, high performing public-school options.

Ms. Johnson holds a B.A. in Journalism from Howard University, a M.A. in Public Administration from Baruch College in New York, a Juris Doctor from Chicago-Kent College of Law, and an M.B.A. from Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management. She is an alumna of the Surge Institute Fellowship Program and NACSA Leaders Program. Shenita lives in Chicago with her husband and nine-year-old son.

ROBBIE CURRY - DIRECTOR OF PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE

Robbie began his career in public education as a special education teacher working for the New York City Department of Education in the South Bronx. He is a first-generation college graduate who has dedicated his career to closing the achievement gap by focusing on the development of teachers and school leaders. Following his time as a classroom teacher, Robbie coached and developed special education teachers as Director of Special Services at Achievement First before becoming an elementary school principal with Chicago International Charter School. Robbie was responsible for monitoring the performance of the Commission's schools to ensure students, families, and communities continue to have access to high-quality, public education. Robbie earned his bachelor's degree from Pitzer College and holds a master's degree in Education from Bank Street Graduate School of Education. Whether as a classroom teacher, a school principal, or in his current role, Robbie believes in ensuring equity for all children.

ALEXANDRA RODRIGUEZ - ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST

Alexandra Rodriguez is a Noble Charter School Alum from the Little Village neighborhood in Chicago. She began her studies at Saint Xavier University to major in Business Administration with a focus in Management at their Graham School of Management, a school accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), along with a minor in Writing. Alexandra is continuing to earn her BBA at Robert Morris University.