



FACT SHEET

AUSL is a not-for-profit that partners with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to transform chronically underperforming schools, typically in high-poverty areas.

AUSL accomplishes this through a two-pronged approach:

- **Special training for teachers** – AUSL’s Training Academies prepare quality teachers using an innovative urban teacher residency (UTR) program, which is an intense, full-year apprenticeship with a mentor teacher at a Chicago school. Graduates earn their Illinois teaching certification and a master’s degree through a partnership with National Louis University, the University of Illinois at Chicago or the Erikson Institute.
- **Transforming schools top to bottom** – AUSL transforms CPS-chosen “turnaround schools” by completely overhauling them. The overhaul takes place over summer break and includes renovated facilities, a new curriculum, a new principal, and new teachers, many of whom are graduates of the UTR program.

AUSL manages six Training Academies.

- AUSL has trained more than 240 teachers, 35 percent of them African American, 13 percent Hispanic, 5 percent multi-racial and 2 percent Asian. There are currently 70 residents and our acceptance rate for this year’s class was 18%. Our selectivity ensures that only the highest caliber candidate is accepted.
- AUSL-trained teacher retention is significantly better than the national average. Over 87 percent of the 312 graduates of AUSL’s teacher training program are still working in education; 83 percent are still working at CPS. Nationwide half of all new teachers leave teaching within five years.
- The Training Academies are:
 - The Chicago Academy (Portage Park) – opened by AUSL in 2001
 - Dodge Renaissance Academy (East Garfield) – re-opened by AUSL in 2003
 - Chicago Academy High School (Portage Park) – opened by AUSL in 2004
 - The Tarkington School of Excellence (Marquette Park) – managed by AUSL since 2005
 - Collins Academy High School (North Lawndale) – managed by AUSL since 2007
 - National Teachers Academy (South Loop) – managed by AUSL since 2007

Since 2006, AUSL has transformed five “turnaround schools” and will overhaul three more during the 2009-10 academic year.

- The turnaround schools are:
 - The Sherman School of Excellence (Englewood) – managed by AUSL since 2006
 - The Harvard School of Excellence (Auburn-Gresham) – managed by AUSL since 2007
 - The Howe School of Excellence (Austin) – managed by AUSL since 2008
 - The Morton School of Excellence (Austin) – managed by AUSL since 2008
 - Orr Academy High School (Austin) – managed by AUSL since 2008
 - Dulles School of Excellence (Woodlawn) – managed by AUSL in 2009
 - Bethune School of Excellence (North Lawndale) – managed by AUSL in 2009
 - Johnson School of Excellence (North Lawndale) - managed by AUSL in 2009

The need for reform:

- More than 180,000 CPS students attend a low-performing school – those in which more than one-third of the students don’t meet state academic standards.
- Only 50 percent of CPS high school graduates attend college.
- Teacher turnover is a major part of the problem: teachers are 27% more likely to leave the profession if they begin teaching in a high poverty school. Half of all teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching.

Proof of AUSL success:

- All of the schools AUSL manages have seen steady increases in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. Three of AUSL’s four turnaround elementary schools in 2009 broke the 50% barrier for the first time in over a decade.
- 98 percent of AUSL’s first high school graduating class (2008) enrolled in college.
- AUSL’s teacher retention is over 87%, significantly higher than the national average of 50% for new teachers.
- Parent and student testimonials speak to the improvement in safety and behavior at AUSL turnaround schools.

About the Academy for Urban School Leadership: AUSL was founded in 2001 by Martin J. Koldyke, venture capitalist and founder of The Golden Apple Foundation, who inspired business, community and education leaders to design a program that would reform teaching. AUSL is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation; NewSchools Venture Fund; Boeing, Motorola and other Chicago corporations, as well as many generous individual donors and other philanthropies.

For more information, contact Bridget Altenburg at baltenburg@ausl-chicago.org or (773) 534-0129.



Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) Frequently Asked Questions

- **There have been other attempts to fix under-performing Chicago Public Schools. Most haven't worked. What makes the AUSL turnaround approach different?**
- **What is the proof that the schools need changing?**
- **Why do you replace the entire school staff?**
- **What happens to the teachers and staff who are displaced?**
- **Aren't you just shifting bad teachers to other schools?**
- **Can you prove that this approach is successful?**
- **How do you know you're really providing the students what they need?**
- **Isn't AUSL just a private institution taking over public schools?**
- **Wouldn't it be better for AUSL to focus on the training academies? Why do turnaround schools, too?**
- **What and where are the Training Academies?**
- **What makes the urban teacher residency (UTR) program different from other teacher training programs?**
- **Can anyone become an AUSL Training Academy resident?**
- **Why is this type of training so important?**
- **Are AUSL Training Academy graduates employed under the same terms as CPS teachers?**
- **What is the background of AUSL Training Academy residents?**
- **Where do the principals for new Turnaround schools come from? Have they been principals before?**
- **What and where are the turnaround schools?**
- **How is the turnaround accomplished? What is the timeline?**
- **Do parents have any input?**
- **Who may attend an AUSL turnaround school? Are there fewer students in turnaround school classrooms than other CPS schools?**
- **Chronically under-performing schools often have major discipline problems. How does AUSL address discipline?**
- **What is AUSL's history? How did it get started?**
- **How is AUSL funded?**

Q. There have been other attempts to fix under-performing Chicago Public Schools. Most haven't worked. What makes the AUSL turnaround approach different?

A. AUSL school turnaround works, and creates successful students, because of two things: top-to-bottom school transformation, and special teacher training.

AUSL **transforms under-performing CPS schools** by completely overhauling them without re-locating students. Students return in the fall to renovated facilities, a new curriculum, new leadership and staff (principal, teachers and all other staff), and an entirely new culture of success. We have transformed five turnaround schools since 2006 and continue to partner with CPS to expand quality school options for Chicago families. Three more schools have been approved for AUSL turnaround during the 2009-10 academic year.

Specially trained teachers are our “secret sauce.” Many of the teachers in new turnaround schools are graduates of AUSL's urban teacher residency (UTR) program. Through the UTR program, we recruit and develop teachers in training (we call them residents). The residents spend an intense year working alongside a mentor teacher in one of six AUSL Training Academies, all of which are Chicago public schools. Residents also take graduate-level academic course work, and receive tools and support tailored to prepare them to meet the specific challenges of transforming an under-performing urban school.

Q. What is the proof that the schools need changing?

A. There is, unfortunately, a wealth of evidence that many schools are failing to adequately educate their students. By the time they reach high school, more than half of CPS students – that's more than 71,000 children – attend schools that are chronically failing, defined as schools in which more than two-thirds of the students don't meet state standards for academic achievement. Overall, nearly a third of CPS students are failing to meet state standards in math, and more than 40 percent are failing in reading. Only 51 percent of CPS high school students graduate, and of those graduates, only half go on to attend college. Even those who complete their CPS education are often poorly prepared for further learning; for every 100 African-American and Hispanic males who graduate from CPS, only three earn a college degree.

Q. Why do you replace the entire school staff?

A. For a school to be selected by CPS for turnaround, it must have a long history of poor performance. Sherman and Harvard, the first two turnaround schools, were ranked among the 10 worst out of more than 3,000 Illinois elementary schools, and both had been performing poorly for many years in spite of many other attempts at intervention. During all of those years, these schools – despite good intentions and staff efforts – were failing to adequately educate the children enrolled there.

The students at these schools needed and deserved a radical change, quickly. AUSL's school turnaround model starts fresh. An entirely new and highly qualified staff brings the talent, resources, and high expectations needed to get the school back on track. A turnaround creates a new climate and culture of success, based on high expectations for student achievement and supported by new school leaders, teachers, programs and facility improvements, and other upgrades.

Q. What happens to the teachers and staff who are displaced?

A. Teachers and staff who are displaced when a school is turned around have time, with pay from CPS, to find another position within the school system. There are openings each year in CPS's 600 schools.

The fact that teachers and staff are displaced by CPS is one of the most difficult things about the turnaround process, but it's important to keep in mind that the students are the focus of the turnaround effort. Children have only one shot at a quality education, and CPS has asked AUSL to create an environment where great teachers, school leaders and students can flourish.

Q. Aren't you just shifting bad teachers to other schools?

A. No. Even in failing schools there are some good teachers and staff, and they find opportunities elsewhere. School turnaround isn't about any individual teacher. It's about creating a team of teachers who are specially trained for the challenges of re-creating an entire school culture and transforming an urban school from failure to success. The system-wide, whole school transformation brings in new talent and resources, and dramatically raises expectations for everyone in the school: school leaders, teachers, staff, students and parents. And it is working.

Q. Can you prove that this approach is successful?

A. AUSL opened its first turnaround school, the Sherman School of Excellence, in 2006. We've seen steady gains in the achievement of Sherman's students since that time. The percentage of Sherman students meeting state testing standards have improved from nearly 29 percent to over 40 percent, a significant gain of more than 11 percentage points in comparison with an overall CPS improvement rate of just under 3 percentage points.

AUSL's second turnaround school, in 2007, was the Harvard School of Excellence. Before it was turned around, Harvard was ranked in the bottom five out of more than 3,000 Illinois elementary schools. The percentage of students meeting state standards improved from 31 to 40 percent in the first year as an AUSL turnaround school. Steady, positive improvements in achievement and attendance results are a hallmark of all 11 of the CPS schools managed by AUSL.

Q. How do you know you're really providing the students what they need?

A. AUSL relies on a variety of tools to continually assess student needs and determine if they are being met. For instance, AUSL has developed special assessment tools for math, science, reading and writing, and we assess each K-8 student periodically throughout the year to determine progress and gaps in knowledge. Teachers have immediate access to the results, so they know what needs to be done to supplement the curriculum and meet the needs of individual students. That way, the students don't continue to fall behind. When the time comes for the annual tests, the students are better prepared and their performance shows it.

Q. Isn't AUSL just a private institution taking over public schools?

A. AUSL is a not-for-profit enterprise created specifically to help develop a pipeline of teachers selected and trained for the demands of urban schools. AUSL manages turnaround schools under contract with CPS. AUSL schools are and remain CPS schools during their turnaround. The teachers are all CPS Union teachers and all school staff members are CPS employees.

Q. Wouldn't it be better for AUSL to focus on the training academies? Why do turnaround schools too?

A. Pairing teacher training with the management of school turnaround allows AUSL to optimize the impact of our teacher graduates, while also providing a critical piece of what is required to transform an under-performing school. Successful graduates of our urban teacher residency program are placed in turnaround schools under the leadership of an AUSL-chosen principal who is committed to creating an environment where they can use and further develop the skills they have gained during their training year. AUSL graduates apply their training and continue to strengthen the professional learning community they started together as residents. AUSL teacher coaches work full time in our turnaround schools to provide individualized support to these new teachers as they continue to develop as professionals. AUSL provides all of these supports to help teachers perform and grow professionally as they in turn help the students in their classrooms perform and grow academically.

Teacher Training Academies

Q. What and where are the Training Academies?

A. AUSL's Training Academies are:

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Q. What makes the urban teacher residency (UTR) program different from other teacher training programs?

A. AUSL's urban teacher residency program combines a full year of graduate level university course work with a full year of progressively responsible student teaching under the guidance of a mentor teacher. This full-year, full-time commitment to training is greater than the time

required to complete other teacher training programs, which typically involve six to 16 weeks of full-time training. AUSL residents receive pay and benefits during the training year. They spend an intense year working four days per week under the guidance of a mentor teacher who provides opportunities for the resident to observe, practice and receive coaching evaluation and support during and after each school day. AUSL's university partners, National-Louis University and the University of Illinois-Chicago, offer residents a graduate level program over the summer and one day per week that is customized and complements the residents' in-classroom work with their mentor teachers. Residents who successfully complete this integrated program become certified teachers and are awarded a master's degree from one of our university partners.

Q. Can anyone become an AUSL Training Academy resident?

A. Anyone with a Bachelor's degree, a commitment to teach, and a passion for our special mission of transforming Chicago's under-performing schools is welcome to apply. We carefully screen candidates to select those who possess the dedication, commitment and resilience that are required to succeed in an urban public school. The program is popular and selective; typically we accept fewer than one in six applicants.

Q. Why is this type of training so important?

A. AUSL believes that intensive training is necessary to prepare someone to succeed in the demanding, difficult professional work of teaching in urban schools. Nationwide, half of urban school teachers leave the profession within three years, citing inadequate preparation and lack of support. Our program is designed to address those problems by fully training our teachers for the challenges of urban school teaching, and by providing plenty of support during the training and in the critical early years of teaching. AUSL-trained teachers stay with the profession much longer than most new teachers: 87 percent of our program's 243 graduates are still working in education, and 80 percent of our graduates are still classroom teachers with Chicago Public Schools.

Q. Are AUSL Training Academy graduates employed under the same terms as CPS teachers?

A. Yes. AUSL graduates are employees of CPS, members of the Chicago Teachers Union and earn a salary based on their education and experience, as is the case for all CPS teachers.

Q. What is the background of AUSL Training Academy residents?

A. AUSL has graduated six classes of residents since 2003, totaling 243. These teachers are diverse in many ways:

- Race/ethnicity: 45 percent of our residents are white, 35 percent are African-American, 13 percent Hispanic, 5 percent multi-racial and 2 percent Asian.
- Education: All of our residents have undergraduate degrees, but join the residency with a variety of backgrounds. In our current class, 47 percent have an education or teaching background; 27 percent have a business background; 16 percent come from the not-for-profit or government sector and 10 percent are recent college graduates with majors other than education.
- Age: 42 percent are younger than 25; 38 percent are 25 to 29; 11 percent are 30 to 39; and 9 percent – nearly one in 10 – are 40 and older.
- Gender: 73 percent are female, 27 percent are male.

Q. Where do the principals for the AUSL turnaround schools come from? Have they been principals before?

A. Many of the principals selected for AUSL schools have experience as principals or assistant principals. Principals are selected through a rigorous and competitive process, and meet all CPS and Illinois requirements. Also, principals for new turnaround schools are employed full time for at least 6 months prior to the opening of their school, so they can, with help from many others at AUSL, be at the center of the effort to recruit staff, meet and listen to parents and community leaders, and plan for the launch of their turnaround school.

Turnaround Schools

Q. What and where are the turnaround schools?

A. The turnaround schools are:

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Q. How is the turnaround accomplished? What is the timeline?

A. In the months leading up to January, CPS evaluates the performance of schools to identify schools that are in need of reconstitution. CPS selects and announces those schools in January. After a public comment period, the Board of Education makes final decisions at its February board meeting on which schools will be reconstituted (turned around), as well as who will manage them. Regarding schools AUSL manages:

- Principals hired for each school are announced when the reconstitution decision is final. The principal begins interviewing and hiring teachers and other staff. A significant portion of the teachers for new turnaround schools are selected from the class of AUSL residents who are wrapping up their training year.
- During the spring, the principals also meet as many parents, community leaders, and others in the community as possible – including students, in the case of high schools – and listen carefully to what the community wants for the school. For example, community requests implemented by AUSL in prior turnaround schools include extended learning time and extra-curricular arts and sports programs.
- The entire school staff for a new turnaround school comes together in mid-July for five weeks of planning to prepare for the opening of school. During the summer, the school's

facility is renovated, using money provided by CPS and AUSL's donors. Physical improvements may include new outdoor athletic facilities, paint, landscaping and science and computer labs, which signal to the community that the school is going to be a different place in the coming year.

- In the final weeks before school starts, the principal and staff open up the new school to the community, hosting a picnic and tour of the school and visiting the homes of students to introduce themselves.
- On the first day of school in September, the students return to a completely different experience of school.

Q. Do parents have any input?

A. They definitely do. AUSL believes that parent and community involvement are important to student success. Several community meetings in the spring are used to introduce the principal and listen to the concerns and ideas of parents and others in the community who are committed to the school's success.

Principals also show parents they are valued by offering many opportunities for them to volunteer. One of the parent volunteers at AUSL's Orr High School, Johnny Parker, who is a grandfather of an Orr student, said he was thrilled he finally had a chance to really get involved. "I've been in this neighborhood 28 years," Parker told us, "and I've been waiting all that time for a chance like this. Now I can't stay away from the school."

Q. Who may attend an AUSL turnaround school?

A. AUSL turnaround schools are neighborhood public schools, and any child living within a school's attendance boundaries is automatically admitted.

Q. Are there fewer students in turnaround school classrooms than other CPS schools?

A. No, the class sizes are the same, ranging from 25 to 28 children.

Q. Chronically under-performing schools often have major discipline problems. How does AUSL address discipline?

A. It sounds simplistic, but when a turnaround school first opens the new staff sets the stage by letting the students know from day one that they have high expectations. Also, every adult in the school understands and is committed to ensuring that the school's culture and climate are orderly, safe, and conducive to learning. Culture and policies are determined on a school-by-school basis. They may include things such as uniform requirements, requiring the students to assemble in straight lines before entering the building at the start of each school day, not allowing students to be in the halls without adult supervision, not allowing cell phones, gum chewing, etc. The school's policies and procedures are consistently applied and the students adapt to the changes very quickly.

Adults at AUSL schools know that "letting things slide" does students a disservice. For example, if a discipline problem continues with a particular student, the principal typically will meet as soon as possible with the parents to address the issue. This lets the student and parents know that the administration cares about each and every child. We have heard from many parents who are happily surprised by the positive changes they've witnessed in their children and in the school culture (see the testimonials on our website).

Q. What is AUSL's history? How did it get started?

A. AUSL was founded in 2001 by Martin J. Koldyke, a retired Chicago venture capitalist who was also the founder of The Golden Apple Foundation, which supports excellence in teaching through teacher recognition and scholarships. Mr. Koldyke assembled a group of experienced educators, with support from CPS, business, and community leaders, to launch AUSL's urban teacher residency training program. National-Louis University and the University of Illinois at Chicago have also been key partners. From its start at The Chicago Academy, AUSL expanded its program to develop training academies at several other Chicago public schools.

In 2006, CPS engaged AUSL to transform Sherman, which became the first Chicago public school to be transformed using the turnaround model. Since then, we have begun transforming three additional elementary schools and one high school, and AUSL will manage new turnaround schools opening in the 2009-10 school year.

Q. How is AUSL funded?

A. AUSL's financial support comes from a variety of sources. CPS provides resources to support part of the cost of AUSL's urban teacher residency program and its turnaround schools. AUSL also is supported by donations from foundations and individuals. Major donors include The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (which has donated \$10 million over four years), New Schools Venture Fund, The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and other groups and individuals.

Q. How can I find out more about AUSL?

Email baltenburg@ausl-chicago.org.