



TURNING AROUND SCHOOLS

MEDIA KIT

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Facts about AUSL

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 seven 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, 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 currently manages 12 turnaround schools, 10 elementary schools and two high schools.

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.
- Less than 25 percent of CPS students attend college.
- Only 3 in 100 African American CPS graduates will earn a college degree.
- 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 new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching.

Proof of AUSL success:

- Almost all of the schools AUSL manages have seen steady increases in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores after years, even decades of no improvement. See our website for detailed results www.ausl-chicago.org.
- AUSL has trained 368 new teachers. Over 86 percent of them are still in education and 83 percent are still in CPS. The AUSL program is highly selective. This year less than 10 percent of applicants were accepted into AUSL’s residency.
- Parent and student testimonials speak to the improvement in safety and behavior at AUSL turnaround schools. Testimonials are available on our website www.ausl-chicago.org.

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 U.S. Department of Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation; NewSchools Venture Fund; Boeing Charitable Trust, Motorola and other Chicago corporations, as well as many generous individual donors and other philanthropies. For more information visit www.ausl-chicago.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

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 eight turnaround schools since 2006 and continue to partner with CPS to expand quality school options for Chicago families.

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 seven 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. 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 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. What and where are the Training Academies?

A. AUSL's Training Academies are:

Chicago Academy Elementary School, 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, opened by AUSL in 2005

National Teachers Academy, South Loop, managed by AUSL since 2007

Orr Academy High School, Austin, managed by AUSL since 2008 (also a turnaround school)

Solorio Academy High School, Gage Park, opened by AUSL in 2010

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. 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 Erikson Institute, 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. They owe a four year commitment to teach in one of our turnaround 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.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What and where are the turnaround schools?

A. The turnaround schools are:

Sherman School of Excellence, Englewood, managed by AUSL since 2006
Harvard School of Excellence, Auburn-Gresham, managed by AUSL since 2007
Howe School of Excellence, Austin, managed by AUSL since 2008
Morton School of Excellence, East Garfield Park, managed by AUSL since 2008
Orr Academy High School, Austin, managed by AUSL since 2008
Bethune School of Excellence, East Garfield Park, managed by AUSL since 2009
Dulles School of Excellence, Greater Grand Crossing, managed by AUSL since 2009
Johnson School of Excellence, North Lawndale, managed by AUSL since 2009
Bradwell School of Excellence, South Shore, managed by AUSL since 2010
Curtis School of Excellence, Roseland, managed by AUSL since 2010
Deneen School of Excellence, Auburn-Gresham, managed by AUSL since 2010
Phillips Academy High School, Bronzeville, managed by AUSL since 2010

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, students, community leaders, and others in the community as possible 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, CPS renovates the facility. 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. AUSL often raises private funds for additional improvements to the school campus.
- 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 same 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 35 children.

Q. How can I find out more about AUSL?

A. Visit our website www.ausl-chicago.org or call the main office 773-534-0129.