



Arne Duncan and student outcomes in the Chicago Public Schools

On December 16, 2008, President Elect Obama introduced Arne Duncan, CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, as the Secretary of Education designate. Locally, and nationwide, Duncan has earned a reputation as a school reformer in the area of general education.

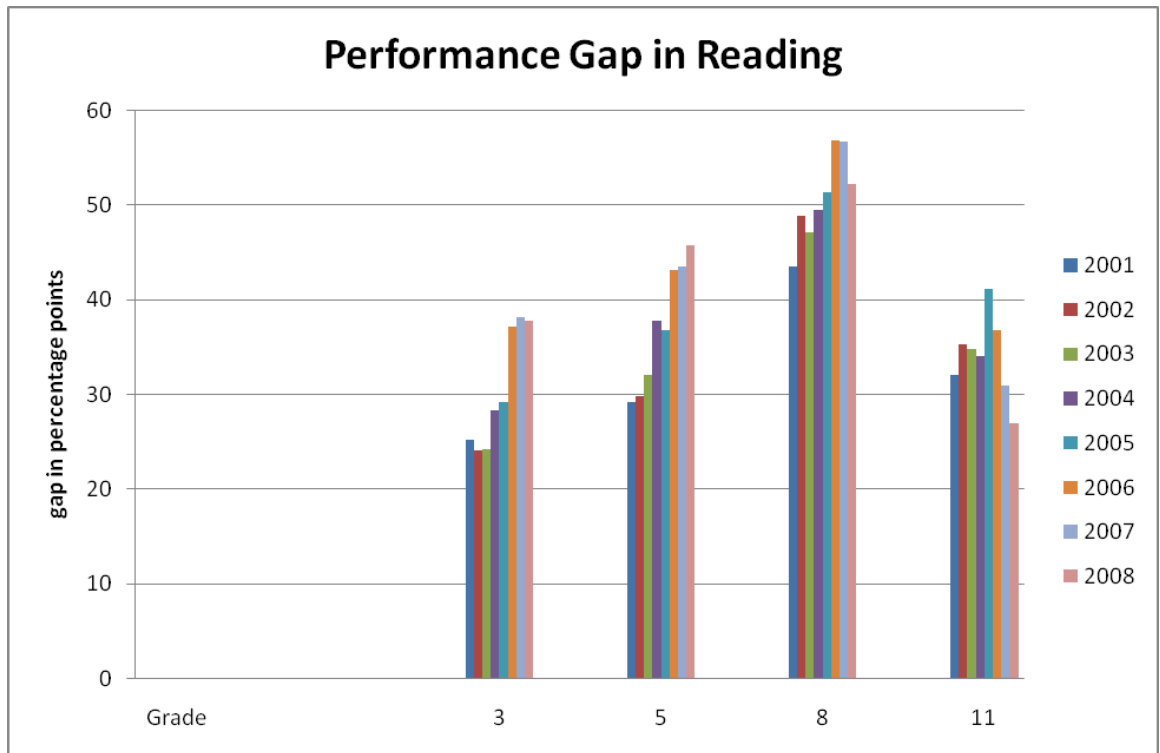
Since 2001, when Duncan's tenure began, CPS has:

- Increased the percent of elementary school students reading at or above the national norms by 3 percentage points to 43.2 percent. Reading scores increased in 72% of all elementary schools.
- Increased the percent of elementary school students performing at or above the national norms in math by 3.8 percentage points to 46.9 percent. Math scores increased in 74% of all elementary schools.
- Increased the percentage of students meeting State Standards, from 38.3% in the 2000-2001 school year, to 65.2% in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Started the Renaissance Schools initiative, including opening numerous new schools under an educational concept that has sought to serve as the model for replacing failing schools.

With regards to the 53,000 students with disabilities attending Chicago Public Schools, during Duncan's tenure:

- From FY 09 through FY 2012, CPS has committed \$23 million per year of Capital Project Funds for Americans with Disabilities Act projects. These projects will make numerous previously non-accessible schools available for students with disabilities, and will allow some students, who would have been bused long distances, to attend schools in their own communities.
- In November 2008, Access Living issued a report based on the survey dataⁱ collected by CPS Staff for former CPS Students with disabilities. The survey data indicated that, of those CPS students with disabilities who allegedly went directly into the workforce after dropping out or graduating, 67.5% were unemployed.
- Only 1.9% of former CPS students with disabilities surveyed were enrolled in a four year college one full year after graduation. Based on national longitudinal analysis, about 16% of students with disabilities gain a Bachelor's degree, 6% get an Associates Degree, and about another 19% gain a certificate of any type five years after graduation.ⁱⁱ

- In 2006, Duncan proposed to cut \$26.5 million from the CPS FY 07 Special Education Budget. If the cuts had been implemented, an estimated 200 special education teachers and 750 special education aides would have been laid off. The \$26 million would have been nearly 50% of the total cuts to the CPS budget for fiscal year 2007. Students with disabilities represent less than 20% of the overall CPS Student Body. After critical response from the Chicago disability community, Duncan restored nearly half the \$26 million in cuts.
- In 1997, the CPS entered into the *Corey H* Settlement Agreement, under which CPS agreed to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The Seventh Circuit ruled to extend the settlement agreement until 2010. During his tenure as CEO, Duncan appealed the extension of the settlement. The Court of Appeals rejected the appeal.
- The gap in reading performance between CPS students who were disabled and non-disabled grew consistently between 2001 and 2006 at most grade levels.ⁱⁱⁱ For the subgroup of students with disabilities, progress is required to be measured under NCLB by the extent they close the achievement gap with their non-disabled peers.^{iv} (see attached chart)



Performance Gap in Reading grades 3, 5, 8, and 11

While Duncan earned a reputation as an innovator with CPS, several of the points listed above indicate that outcomes for the 53,000 students with disabilities in Chicago have lagged behind. As Secretary of Education for the United States, Duncan would have the opportunity to dramatically impact outcomes for students with and without disabilities throughout the nation. Access Living urges Duncan, the Department of Education and the Obama Administration to adopt and support policies and programs that enable all students to have equal access to opportunities in education. With regards to students with disabilities, Access Living urges the Obama Administration to implement the goals listed below. These goals come from a coalition of consumer controlled disability groups that have developed recommendations for the new administration:

- Fully Fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure the rights of students with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting and the development of effective, innovative special education programs based on the needs and issues of students with disabilities.
- Protect students with disabilities from school abuse, including electroshock and aversive therapies. Require schools to enforce federal laws that protect people with disabilities from abuse in institutional and treatment settings.
- Expand and enhance the commitment to funding, effective monitoring and enforcement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Integrate the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and IDEA so they are accountability-focused, research-driven and advance opportunities for students with disabilities.
- Improve Student Transition: Work to create mechanisms and opportunities that allow students with disabilities to pursue higher education and a direct transition to work, and eliminate barriers that prevent students with disabilities from higher education and employment.

Chicago's only center for independent living, Access Living is a cross disability organization, nationally recognized as a leader in the field of independent living and a premier local provider of services for people with disabilities. As an advocate on behalf of students with disabilities in Chicago, Access Living has a long history of working on behalf of students in the Chicago Public Schools. For more information, contact Gary Arnold at 312.640.2199 (voice), 312.640.2102 (TTY); or Rodney Estvan at 312-640-2149 (voice).

ⁱ Estvan, R. D. (November 2008) "Post Secondary Outcomes For Chicago Public School Students with Disabilities" Access Living Chicago Illinois.

ⁱⁱ Horn, L and Bertold, J. (1999, June) *Students with Disabilities in Post Secondary Education* National Center for Education Statistics

ⁱⁱⁱ Data Source: Interactive Illinois Report Card for SD 299 Achievement Gap IEP non-IEP.

^{iv} NCLB requires that states set performance targets for students with disabilities to close existing performance gaps.