

Chicago School Principals Offer Solution to Safely Reopen Schools Goal is to Bring Together CTU, CPS and Community

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CHICAGO, IL, USA, January 28, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Chicago school principals, assistant principals and school leaders are calling for a school reopening pilot program as a solution to end the standoff and policy conflict between the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union on the best way to get students back into actual classrooms.

The [Chicago Principals & Administrators Association \(CPAA\)](#), AFSA Local 2, whose members have been staffing schools in person since the pandemic started last March, today offered the "Returning to an In-person Teaching Environment" plan, also known as the "R.I.T.E." plan, as an approach to school reopening in the city of Chicago.

"Principals and assistant principals have never left their schools, working daily ensuring the distribution of school-based meals and thousands of laptops and mobile wifi devices to our students and their families," said CPAA President Troy LaRaviere. "For the last few months, we have been the key people charged with making the district's in-person learning plan work in our schools. As a result, no group of educators has more insight than us on the best way to open schools, and on the safety and efficacy of the district's plan."

According to CPAA, less than 17% of principals and assistant principals surveyed thought the district is prepared and ready to open schools; only 28% of school leaders surveyed thought CPS provided sufficient reopening guidance; and 22% of respondents thought they had adequate staff to reopen.

"We appreciate the concerns of the teachers regarding the safety and instructional efficacy of the district's plan," the R.I.T.E. report states. "We also deeply appreciate the district's push to give



Troy LaRaviere, President of CPAA

students more access to in-person learning. We presume the district sincerely believes its plans will work and, in some schools, they might. However, no matter how sincere the district's faith in its plans is, we need district officials to understand that their faith does not square with the reality of implementation on the ground in most schools."

"We salute the district's goals," said LaRaviere. "However, their plans are not realistic or safe for most of our schools. Accordingly, we developed a more grounded and practical approach to resuming in-person learning."

The new three-step plan was developed by CPAA leadership based on input from 377 school leaders, and fine-tuning by more than 30 CPS principals and assistant principals throughout the district. The plan includes:

1. Open a small group of in-person pilot schools (e.g., 75) and make COVID-19 vaccinations a priority for the staff in that group.
2. Focus the district's human and material resources on ensuring the success of the pilot schools.
3. If successful, expand the pilot every three to four weeks as groups of schools demonstrate preparedness and readiness for in-person learning.

"The phase-in pilot gives the district the time needed to address preparedness issues at some schools, start in-person learning at schools that are ready and expand in-person learning over time," said LaRaviere. "It is a fair compromise between the positions of the district and CTU."

Benefits of the plan include:

- It acknowledges that some schools are ready to open, while others are not.
- It enables the district to focus resources on getting it right in a small group of schools before expanding in-person learning to the entire district.
- It will allow the necessary stress test for the district to assess individual school needs versus the "one-size-fits-all" approach of the current plan.
- It is a strong compromise that will avoid a strike.
- The pilot will create a group of peer experts and in-person ambassadors who can be a resource for administrators and staff in subsequent expansions of in-person learning.
- Priority COVID-19 vaccinations focused on staff who teach in the pilot schools will increase the number of staff who want to participate in the pilot program.
- The pilot would allow the district to find concrete answers to questions they thus far have not responded to adequately.
- If schools are successful, CPS can build the confidence and trust to bring other schools, teachers, and families back to in-person learning. The success of the pilot in a few communities of color will be a valuable incentive for families in other communities of color to opt into in-person learning when their schools are added to the pilot.
- While students of color would be the beneficiaries of a successful reopening, they also will bear the brunt of the consequences of a failed one. This approach makes failure less likely. It also narrows the number of students whose lives would be upended by the instability created if

reopening is unsuccessful.

For the [entire plan](#), click here.

For more information about the Chicago Principals & Administrators Association, please visit the website at <https://chicago.theschoolleader.org>.

The CPAA's national affiliate, the American Federation of School Administrators, offered a comprehensive school opening plan last summer.

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