

# What's the matter with SQRP?

## What is SQRP?

The School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) is a CPS rating system that is supposed to provide parents with information about their child's school. SQRP, however, fails to live up to its promise. SQRP relies heavily on standardized test scores, which are themselves riddled with racial bias. These tests don't measure student ability, but rather the unequal access to quality schools with adequate resources. As a result, schools with white middle-class and upper-class students tend to receive higher ratings. These schools also tend to hire and retain white teachers. Meanwhile, segregated schools that serve large numbers of low-income students tend to receive lower ratings. So SQRP ratings tell us what we've already known for 50 years: students in better resourced schools do better on tests than schools with inadequate resources.

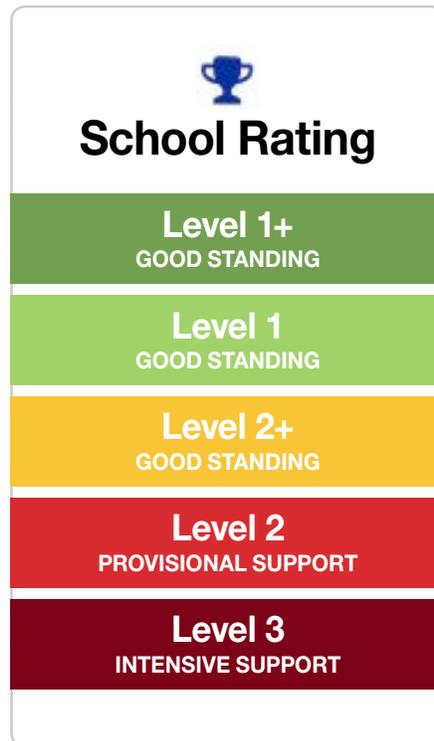
Such a rating system does not reflect what makes a good school, and it creates all kinds of negative incentives to narrow curricula and "teach to the test", deny students broad and rich educational experiences, and close schools based on unhelpful performance measures.

The Chicago Teachers Union proposes that CPS abolish SQRP and reject any rating system that evaluates schools based on test scores, attendance, or other measures that are to a large degree measures of the socioeconomic level of the students rather than the quality of the school. Instead, the CTU proposes that CPS assess schools based on the variety of programs offered at the school and according to the day-to-day needs of the students and staff.

## What's wrong with SQRP

### 1. It's racist

SQRP serves to reinforce patterns of segregation and poverty. About 70 percent of an elementary school's SQRP rating is based on standardized test scores, and those tests most directly reflect parents' income and education. What's more, a school's lack of educator diversity doesn't have a negative impact on SQRP ratings at all, which is further evidence of the racial bias baked into SQRP. Of the 71



### ■ ***SQRP reinforces patterns of segregation and poverty***

schools with no Black teachers, 57 have level 1 or 1+ ratings. The end result is that SQRP stigmatizes schools in predominantly Black and Brown communities while reinforcing white supremacy.

### 2. It's punitive

Although the Level 3 rating is labeled "intensive support," CPS doesn't actually provide any additional support to such schools. This low SQRP rating can quickly lead to falling enrollment, since it's often the only thing that parents know about a school. Then, the low rating could eventually trigger closure of the school, even though the school may offer a rich variety of programs and learning opportunities. The SQRP system also incentivizes schools to "push out" students who could potentially bring down SQRP scores. Principals often encourage students with significant special education needs or low test scores to go elsewhere in order to improve SQRP ratings.

### 3. It's superficial

SQRP ratings are not about the culture of the school, how students are treated, whether or not they enjoy going to school there, available extra-curricular or academic programs, or staff stability. Schools that focus only on increasing test scores could reach a high SQRP rating with "drill-and-kill" test prep that results in a narrow curriculum to the detriment of experiential learning.

## What's the alternative?

CPS should provide information that is truly useful to parents, such as summaries of academic and curricular programming, extracurricular activities, after-school programs, STLS supports, and other school offerings that enrich students' lives. Neither New York nor Los Angeles public schools use a single summative rating, and many school districts share information about a variety of activities and performance indicators. The Illinois State Board of Education already produces a report card for every school in Chicago. If the point is to improve school performance, there are better approaches than SQRP so that schools that serve low-income students aren't penalized. Such an approach requires regular feedback and opportunities to grow by building capacity within schools rather than face regular punishment through a summative rating.

## How we get there

CPS is conducting a survey about SQRP. Tell CPS what you think at [cps.edu/sqrp](http://cps.edu/sqrp). The CTU is launching a campaign to abolish SQRP ratings and replace them with more constructive information to help parents understand what various schools offer.

Crucially, CPS should commit to making every neighborhood school a high-functioning, fully resourced school. The CTU's new contract extends the Sustainable Community Schools (SCS) model for the next five years. SCS is a proven program based on providing low-income school communities the supports they need to provide rich educational settings. CPS should expand the number of Sustainable Community Schools to better serve students and families across the city.

## What you can do

- Bring your concerns about SQRP to the LSCs 4 All conference on January 25.
- Call and email Board of Education members expressing your concerns about SQRP. For contact information and ideas about what to say, go to [www.ctulocal1.org/sqrp](http://www.ctulocal1.org/sqrp).



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