

Barbara Byrd-Bennett is the Chief Executive Officer for Chicago Public Schools (CPS). CPS serves approximately 402,000 students in more than 681 schools. It is the nation's third-largest school system. In April 2012, Ms. Byrd-Bennett was appointed as Chief Education Advisor for CPS. Prior to her work in Chicago, she spent more than two decades as a teacher and principal in the New York City Department of Education, the largest system of public schools in the United States. She also served for more than seven years as the CEO of the Cleveland Municipal School District, Ohio's largest school district.

Ms. Byrd-Bennett was a teacher for more than 12 years in New York's public school system, where she taught at both the high school and elementary levels. She spent eight years as the principal of a Harlem school that was recognized by the New York State Department of Education for instructional leadership and featured in a PBS documentary. Ms. Byrd-Bennett went on to become the superintendent of New York's third-largest district, Crown Heights in Brooklyn, for two years, where she helped dramatically raise math and reading scores.

Following her success in Brooklyn, Byrd-Bennett was tapped to serve as the Superintendent of the "Chancellor's District" in New York, a special district composed of about a dozen of the system's lowest-performing schools. Under Ms. Byrd-Bennett's leadership, children in these schools received more one-on-one tutoring, smaller class sizes and specially trained teachers – a strategy that resulted in significantly higher reading scores. Ms. Byrd-Bennett's "high priority" zone approach laid the groundwork for New York's alternative schools programs and the eventual revamp of the city's GED program.

In 1998, Ms. Byrd-Bennett was appointed by Cleveland's mayor as the first Chief Executive Officer under mayor control, a role in which she served for more than seven years. During her time in Cleveland, Ms. Byrd-Bennett helped stabilize the district's finances, ensuring it was removed from the state's fiscal emergency list. Her targeted funding approach and aggressive academic reforms boosted academic achievement in math and reading and increased graduation rates. Ms. Byrd-Bennett increased spending for teacher training and support services, raised per-student expenditures and focused on hiring quality principals. Her dedication to training and supporting educators led the school district to name one of its buildings in her honor: the Barbara Byrd-Bennett Professional Development Center. She also is credited with building a strong relationship with the teachers union based on mutual respect and trust. With an emphasis placed on collaboration and transparency, Ms. Byrd-Bennett established a monthly "Conversations with the CEO" to keep parents and community members informed.

Ms. Byrd-Bennett spent four years as an Executive-in-Residence at Cleveland State University followed by a three-year stint as the Regional Executive Officer of New Leaders for New Schools in Washington, D.C. In 2009, Byrd-Bennett was recruited to serve as the Chief Academic and Accountability Manager for Detroit Public Schools at the request of Emergency Financial Manager Robert Bobb, who was appointed by the State of Michigan to put the district back on sound financial footing. During her two years in this role, Byrd-Bennett is credited with developing the district's academic reform plan, aligning curriculum and programming, developing teacher and principal evaluation instruments to increase professional accountability and improving achievement scores as measured by both the state and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests.

Ms. Byrd-Bennett is a member of numerous boards, commissions and advisory councils, including: Common Core, the United States Department of Education National Assessment Governing Board, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Education Commission of the States, the National Center for Education Accountability and the Albert Shanker Institute. She also was appointed chair of the American Federation of Teachers Innovation Fund, on which she currently serves.

Ms. Byrd-Bennett holds a Master's of Science from Pace University, a Master's of the Arts from New York University and a Bachelor's of the Arts from Long Island University. Ms. Byrd-Bennett also holds honorary doctorate degrees from Cleveland State University, Baldwin-Wallace College, John Carroll University and the University of Notre Dame.

She is married and has one daughter and twin grandsons.