

# Equity in Public Education: Using Detracking to Close the Learning Gap

Team Leader: Allan Fluharty, Prosser High School, Chicago Public Schools, [afluharty@cps.edu](mailto:afluharty@cps.edu), February 8, 2014



**Problem Statement:** Tracking creates classrooms of engaged students. It also creates classes of reluctant learners. All classrooms need a healthy mix of student abilities in order to produce equitable and effective learning communities.

**Goal:** Chicago Public Schools will pilot detracking in at least one school and monitor the progress/success using district assessment data over two years.

## Rationale:

A fundamental belief of public education is that each student has the ability to succeed..

Students are put in boxes and given labels, such as remedial, average and gifted, which is not a fair when it becomes a life-long label. It is difficult for students to move to a higher track, which causes an unfair gap in learning and opportunity.

## Inputs:

Teachers and administrators in CPS middle and high schools will conduct the study.

Current and past detracking efforts will be studied to collect exemplars of successful detracking efforts..

Current district and school policies on tracking will be analyzed..

Funding will be identified to support teachers doing this research.

## Activities:

Collect and analyze school data:

- Demographic data: What are patterns of race, geographic area of the city, and socio-economic status of tracked students?
- Resources: Is there a connection between resource availability and tracking?
- Teacher data: What are the educational credentials and student expectations of teachers in tracked courses.

Identify influential allies who are sympathetic to the detracking issue (school officials, politicians)

Obtain funding to promote the report through various outlets (VIVA Idea Exchange, local news media, etc)

## Outputs:

Create a report:

1. Prepare data to demonstrate the learning gap.
2. Develop conclusions and recommendations to generate further discussion among parents, teachers, principals and district administrators.
3. Present results to high level network and district officials.

## Outcomes:

### Short Term:

30 Days

1. Identify a cohort of key teachers to investigate the tracking issue.
2. Meet with cohort to assign roles and duties. Obtain necessary permission and access to school data. Begin to collecting data.
3. Create a cohort website.
4. Begin to to research, collect data, and draft report on the detracking issue.

### Medium Term:

60-90 Days

1. Identify schools that practice detracking in Chicago area and analyze the data from those schools.
2. Survey teachers and administrators in tracked schools.
3. Work on final draft of report.

### Long Term:

90 Days and Beyond

1. Identify and meet with key influential decision makers to discuss the issue and how to move forward.
2. Promote the report through various outlets (VIVA Idea Exchange, local news media, etc)

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**External Environment:** Who are our allies? Who is going to be the opposition? How do we convince the opposition? What will the funding need to be? What kind of professional learning is necessary? Coaching for administrators and teachers? What safety nets should we put in place for kids -- how do we keep them from falling through the cracks? How do we convince parents of high achievers?

**Ruthann: Kids are put in boxes and given labels (remedial, average and gifted), which is not an effective designation when it becomes a life-long designation. There is currently no path to moving outside of the track you have been placed in.**

Other considerations:

What funding is needed for teachers doing this research?

What evidence do you have that this will be successful?

When will you see evidence?

What resources does this research require?

How do we raise the expectation that all students can do well?

Teacher training in differentiated instruction will be needed.

What remedial training is required for students who fall behind?

Detracking will be a major culture change, particularly for parents and teachers of high achieving students.

Think about hurdles teachers face: need to create the knowledge base on how you reframe your content so that all levels of students can learn.

Culture/climate change—we will change the culture of the school. It is important to find allies.

How do you implement inclusion? How will this affect the high achieving students? Research shows that it does not affect high end students.