Dear X

On behalf of the Chicago Area Deans of Education, a 22-member group that represents the schools and colleges of education within and around Chicago, we are requesting a meeting to review the proposed CPS contract. There are several new and significant changes in the proposed contract that may impact our ability to serve our teacher candidates. Additionally, we are facing a new, high-stakes assessment that is required by ISBE that is to be conducted during the student teaching semester. We would like to discuss the feasibility of addressing this assessment within the contract.

Listed below are areas where we feel that clarification and discussion are needed:

1. School Placement (pg. 5) – “The university shall only refer student teacher candidates to CPS who are in good academic standing; have satisfactorily completed the prerequisite courses….” Given that most teacher preparation programs have a logical progression of courses and field experiences that increase in expectations and intensity as candidates move through the sequence of courses, they typically do not complete prerequisites before they apply for student teaching. Grades for the pre-student teaching experiences and course work such as methodology courses (i.e., the successful completion of prerequisites) are not submitted until the end of the semester prior to student teaching. How will CPS manage a system where the staff will most likely want to know who is eligible for student teaching prior to our being able to ensure that all prerequisites have been met?
2. Stipends (pg. 7) – “The university must provide a stipend to every CPS cooperating/mentor teacher a participating student teacher is placed with. CPS will outline stipend guidelines based on semester placements. University will provide recommended stipends to each identified CPS cooperating/mentor teacher on a semester basis. CPS will issue guidelines for stipends to University to review by January 1, 2015.” It is our understanding the type and value of stipends varies by institution. How are we to sign this agreement without an idea of the financial impact of any guidelines that CPS may mandate?
3. All student teachers will be evaluated using the Board’s REACH evaluation system (pg 4). - Does this statement align with the expectations on page 7 that the university is responsible for aligning their student teaching assessment tool with the CPS Framework for Teaching and the REACH evaluation system used for CPS teachers? In other words, once CPS approves the university’s alignment of their evaluation tool with REACH and the Frameworks, does this constitute having been evaluated using the REACH system?
4. Placement Process – We seek clarification of the time line for the placement process. Based on our experience with student teaching placements, many factors enter into a successful match between a student teacher and a school (i.e., the school administration, the cooperating teacher). How will CPS ensure that the cooperating teacher has the appropriate license and endorsements? How will this process be managed to ensure the timely placement of student teachers? Many factors enter into the assignment of a university supervisor to a student teacher (i.e., intended licensure areas, geographic proximity to hold costs reasonable). Will placements be done in a time frame that allows us to match appropriate university supervisors to student teachers? Finally, will there be a process to safeguard any successful partnership arrangements between a university and a particular school(s)?
5. Page 9 – “Moveover, if the CPS School Program Coordinator determines that the Corrective Action Plan does not place unreasonable expectations on the CPS Cooperating Teacher, the Board nor the CPS Cooperating Teacher shall be obligated to participate in the Corrective Action Plan.” We are not sure that this intention of this sentence is conveyed clearly.
6. ISBE Mandatory Requirements – Beginning in the fall of 2015, the Illinois State Board of Education has mandated that each student teacher will successfully complete the edTPA (teacher performance assessment). If a candidate does not pass the edTPA (which is scored by reviewers from outside the institution), the university may not graduate the student teacher. While there are many unresolved issues with the edTPA, at this point we would like to be assured that CPS will support the implementation of this assessment during the student teaching semester in the multi-year contract you are asking us to sign. Most institutions have begun a pilot process and we expect that to continue this year. We are happy to share the Pearson documents for your review, but would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how this might fit into the contract.

We look forward to meeting to discuss and resolve these issues as quickly as possible.