



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR JOHNSON, CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, LABOR AND CORPORATE PARTNERS
WELCOME THOUSANDS OF CPS STUDENTS TO THE 2024 SKILLED TRADES CAREER
FAIR**

*Students Explore Careers in Architecture, STEM, Engineering, Construction Trades, and
Related Fields During Third Annual Skilled Trades Fair*

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Chief Education Officer Bogdana Chkoumbova today launched a three-day, in-person Skilled Trades Career Fair in collaboration with City agencies, City Colleges of Chicago and labor and corporate partners. The Fair, now in its third year, aims to give more than 3,000 CPS students an up-close look at high school and postsecondary opportunities within the skilled trades. The Fair takes place at the Lakeside Center McCormick Place through March 1.

"I've long said that the best investment that we can make in our city is to put W-2's into the hands of our young people," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Through partnerships with organized labor, City agencies, and our corporate partners, this fair provides young people with the knowledge and resources that they need to develop meaningful careers in the skilled trades."

The event brings students together with government institutions, community-based organizations, and companies offering potential employment, training, and internship opportunities to young adults ages 16-24. Applications for [One Summer Chicago](#), the City's summer youth employment and internship program, will be available on-site.

"Our teachers, school leaders, and external partners have worked tirelessly to ensure that our students are equipped with opportunities in the skilled trades, just as much as they are connected with other postsecondary opportunities," said **CPS Chief Education Officer Bogdana Chkoumbova**. "We want CPS students to take advantage of every resource

available to them. I am proud that events like this Skilled Trades Fair serve as a space for students and employers to make those connections.”

Mayor Johnson and CEo Chkoumbova met with several students Wednesday who are studying and applying their skills in plumbing, electrical work, construction and more. They spoke with students who have been involved with the Plumbers Union Bridge Program, a recently established program that began its first 10-week cohort of students in October of 2023. All 21 students who completed the program have received letters of intent to hire. This program, which began its second cohort on February 26, guides students through the plumbing union application process and provides them with hands-on experience in the trades.

“Throughout the [Plumbers Union Bridge] program, I gained valuable knowledge in plumbing, including mathematical principles, troubleshooting, problem-solving, safety protocols, working in teams and a real hands-on experience,” said **Angel Benites**, a senior from Benito Juarez High School. “This sparked my eagerness to continue learning about the trade. The Plumbers program has given me real-world practical experience that aligns with my future goals.”

Mayor Johnson and CEo Chkoumbova also spoke to students who have participated in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Low Voltage Electricity Program, a training program organized through a partnership between the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and Prosser Career Academy. This partnership, which began in 2018, has steadily grown since then and is expected to welcome its largest cohort this summer. Prosser Career Academy and the IBEW provide students with experiences such as solar technology boot camps, field trips, and union test training at the conclusion of their programming.

Prosser Career Academy senior Jesus Diaz participated in the CTE Low Voltage Electricity Program and serves as a student ambassador at the Fair.

“At first, I was nervous, as I had no prior experience, so I thought I would probably fail,” **Diaz** said. “Through the help of my teachers and staff, I went from not knowing what to do, to embracing my skills and finding my passion.”

The District aims to provide every student with the tools they need to propel them toward a successful career. CPS currently offers more than 50 [Career and Technical Education](#) (CTE) pathways at over 80 high schools across the city, including 12 programs in construction trades, five in carpentry, three in electricity, three in welding, and one HVAC program. The District’s CTE programs allow students to gain work experience for in-demand careers as well as provide opportunities to earn early college credit and industry-recognized certifications and skills training at seven CPS high schools. During the Skilled Trades Career Fair, current CTE students will have the opportunity to showcase their work and make connections with training programs and employers. Students will also have the opportunity to enhance their [Learn.Plan.Succeed.](#) post-secondary plan, a requirement for all high school seniors.

“During the [Plumbers Union Bridge] program, I made great friends and learned a lot,” said Michele Clark High School senior **Kahari Byas**. “It’s surprising how close you can get with people in just 10 weeks. I really think others should join the Plumbers Union Local 130 - it was a fun and educational experience. Overall, it’s not just a program; it’s a fantastic journey that I highly recommend to everyone.”

CPS has also developed a strong partnership with City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) through the [Chicago Roadmap](#), which aims to support students along a seamless path to and through post-secondary training on their way to their chosen careers. The Skilled Trades Career Fair will highlight this network of supportive and aligned government and community partner services that allow students to explore careers and connect them to opportunities that will make them competitive for high-demand occupations.

“The trades are a rewarding career path and that’s why the Skilled Trades Fair is a critical and dynamic event for students. It introduces them to the possibilities—the exciting paths into advanced manufacturing, IT, transportation, construction, and much more,” said **Chancellor Juan Salgado, City Colleges of Chicago**. “City Colleges of Chicago works closely with Chicago Public Schools so our students can choose a career that works for them and know that they can prepare for that high-demand job at City Colleges of Chicago.”

This career fair, open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day, is not just an opportunity for students to learn about current employment needs but will also inform them of future workforce needs and the steps they can take to make themselves competitive in those spaces.

“ComEd is building a strong talent pipeline to power the clean energy future, starting right here with the students from Chicago’s diverse communities,” said **ComEd President and CEO Gil Quiniones**. “Working with CPS and partners across the region, we are delivering programs that will help more local students gain the knowledge and skills to land jobs in the fast-growing energy industry, so they can play key roles in addressing climate change.” ComEd serves thousands of Chicago students every year with education programs that prepare a strong and diverse local workforce to take on new jobs in the transition to a clean energy economy. As one example, ComEd supports [Chicago Builds](#), a unique, two-year off-campus program that provides technical training in electricity and other skilled trades to CPS juniors and seniors. For more on Chicago Builds, as well as its workforce training and scholarship programs, please visit [ComEd’s website](#).

“The skilled trades offer career opportunities for young people with a variety of talents and interests,” said **George Wright, CEO of The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership**. “The Partnership is happy to once again be a part of this important event, exposing young people to careers in the trades that offer sustainable wages and opportunities for long-term success.”

The Skilled Trades Career Fair builds on the [District’s commitment](#) to equitable, student-centered education that prepares students socially, emotionally, and academically to enter

the workplace, a training program, or higher education. The District is now in the process of developing a five-year strategic plan that promises to offer more details about how the District will expand college and career preparation.

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About Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is dedicated to providing a high-quality education to all students, beginning with the District's free full-day preschool programming for four-year-old scholars and continuing through neighborhood, magnet and selective-enrollment elementary schools that provide a rigorous K-8 education with schools that specialize in the fine arts, world language and culture, dual language, STEM, International Baccalaureate (IB), classical programs, and more. The rising District-wide freshmen-on-track and high school graduation rates reflect the hard work of the CPS community, including families, staff, and students across 635 schools. CPS celebrates the diversity of its more than 322,000 students who cite 182 home languages. Learn more about CPS at www.cps.edu and connect with CPS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) is the non-profit umbrella organization that operates the largest public workforce system in the country. As the designated administrator of federal workforce development funding for the City of Chicago and Cook County, The Partnership oversees a network of more than 90 community-based organizations, American Job Centers, satellite sites, and sector-driven centers as well as approximately a dozen other workforce-related initiatives funded by public and private funds.

About City Colleges of Chicago

CCC is one of the largest community college systems in Illinois, with more than 3,800 faculty and staff serving 54,000 students annually at seven colleges and five satellite sites. City Colleges' vision is to be recognized as the city's most accessible higher education engine of socioeconomic mobility and racial equity – empowering all Chicagoans to take part in building a stronger and more just city. Learn more about City Colleges of Chicago at www.ccc.edu

About Chicago Roadmap

By providing access to high-quality programs, advising and supports, career exploration, and preparedness, the Chicago Roadmap strives to dramatically and equitably increase student outcomes in college enrollment, college degree attainment, and employment.

The Roadmap is made possible thanks in part to generous philanthropic contributions made to the Children First Fund: the Chicago Public Schools Foundation (CFF) and the City Colleges of Chicago Foundation (CCCF). Children First Fund serves as a fiscal sponsor for the Chicago Roadmap and works in close partnership with CCCF to support the advancement of the Chicago Roadmap.

About ComEd

ComEd, the electrical utility serving Chicago and the northern Illinois region, delivers workforce and education programs that collectively reach more than 3,500 local residents of all ages every year, including key STEM and trades training programs delivered in partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and local workforce agencies. This includes the Chicago BUILDS program, a vocational pathway for CPS high school students, as well as an array of out of school programs to provide students skills needed to compete for roles in the utility or construction sector.