



Accessibility in Chicago Public Schools: Students with Mobility Disabilities Are Not Yet Equal

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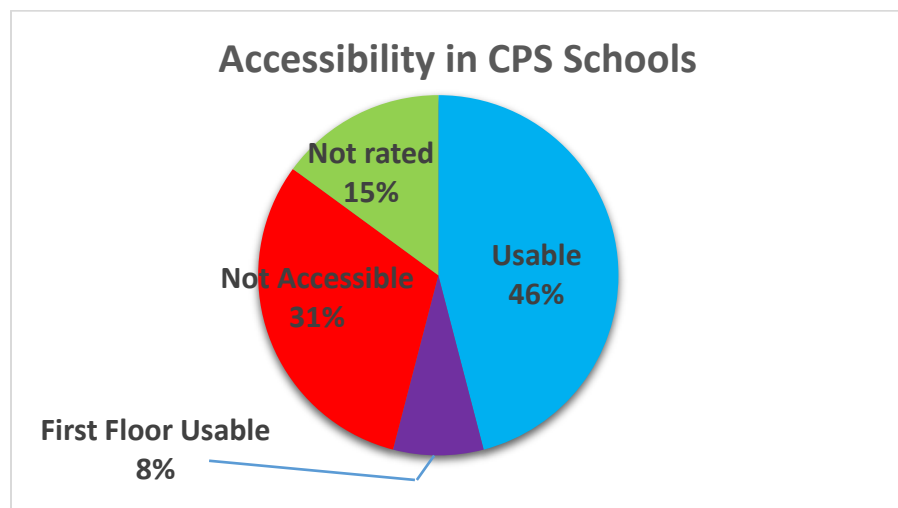
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Executive Summary

Since 2006, Access Living has provided an analysis of the accessibility of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) along with its annual review of the CPS special education budget, as both impact students with disabilities. This year, in collaboration with Harris Community Action of the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, Access Living provides geographical analyses of school accessibility in CPS, including regional school networks' maps with the locations of usable schools to students with mobility disabilities and accessibility ratings based on the level of school accessibility in each regional network.

Access Living finds the level of CPS school accessibility inequitable for students with mobility disabilities because more than half of CPS schools are not available for students with mobility disabilities to attend.¹ As shown in the below chart, almost 40% of schools, including the first-floor usable schools, are not available to students with mobility disabilities due to a lack of full accessibility. Another 15% of schools are mostly charter schools and CPS's own data does not include these schools' accessibility ratings.² As a result, their accessibility level is unknown to any student with mobility disability who is interested in applying for these schools even though charter schools are offered to CPS students no different than district-run schools. The proportion of usable schools is higher among high schools than elementary schools, but a significant number of CPS high schools, mostly charter and option schools, are not rated for accessibility.³

As of the 2019-20 school year, CPS is offering only 295 schools (46%) to students with mobility disabilities out of 642 schools in total.



¹ 642 schools in total: Usable schools (295); First-floor Usable schools (52); Not Accessible schools (199); Not rated schools (96), CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from school websites.

² CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419.

³ Out of the 165 high schools in total, 52 high schools, mostly charter and option schools, are not rated for accessibility.

CPS ranks school accessibility on a three-tiered scale (Usable, First-Floor Usable, and Not Accessible). CPS's term, "usable" is not equivalent to "accessible" under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), however, a student with a mobility disability can still attend a usable (generally accessible) school and participate in school programs, although not every element may be perfectly accessible. Meanwhile, a small number of "usable" schools are ADA accessible schools because they were newly constructed or significantly renovated (on or after January 1993) after the passage of the ADA so the buildings are subject to the ADA accessibility requirements. These schools have much better accessibility features compared to pre-ADA built "usable" schools. Still, most of the "usable" schools in CPS are not meeting the ADA accessibility standard so this report uses CPS's terminology, "usable," to refer to both generally accessible and ADA accessible schools. CPS should rate ADA compliant schools separately and make the information easily available on its website for students and parents with mobility disabilities because the difference between "usable" and "ADA accessible" is important for them to make school choices.

This report also refers to "first-floor usable" and "not accessible" schools as "not usable" schools because students with mobility disabilities cannot attend either type of schools due to a lack of full accessibility, as well as a lack of reasonable modifications CPS is supposed to provide to meet the accessibility needs of students with disabilities. Instead of accommodating the students by reasonably modifying building features to be accessible, CPS transfers them from not usable neighborhood schools or preferred choice schools to usable schools based on their disability.

Since FY 2019-20, CPS has been allocating funds primarily to make schools first-floor accessible.⁴ Access Living opposes CPS's district-wide first-floor accessibility plan because doing so will not increase educational opportunities for students with mobility disabilities. The district does not provide all educational spaces, including classrooms, on the first floor. With first-floor accessibility, students with mobility disabilities may very unlikely be able to access all classrooms, attendance offices, cafeterias, gymnasiums, pull-out rooms, libraries, art rooms, and other necessary spaces if they are located above the first floor.

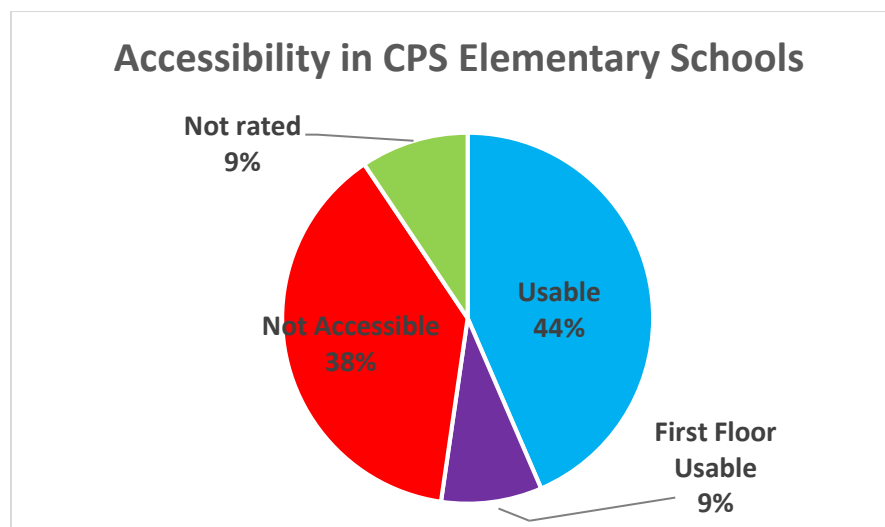
First-floor accessible schools also exclude any parent with mobility disabilities from parenting and equally engaging in their child's education by limiting their access to first floors, when many educational spaces are on higher floors. Even for basic parent teacher meetings, first-floor access does not mean there is a reasonable first-floor space for a parent to meet with a teacher. First-floor accessible school buildings may offer some accessibility to community members but it still falls short of what is needed for students and their parents with mobility disabilities. The only way to increase accessibility for students, parents, teachers, and caregivers with mobility disabilities is making a school fully accessible vertically, not just first-floor accessible.

⁴ CPS budgeted \$10.5 million in FY19 and \$20 million in FY20 prioritizing first-floor accessibility in schools, CPS FY20 Proposed Budget, pp. 5, 161; CPS FY21 Proposed Budget, p. 183.

Accessibility in CPS Elementary Schools

Access Living identifies three critical issues with elementary school accessibility in CPS. First, the inequitable level of school accessibility is more prevalent among elementary schools than high schools due to the relatively lower percentage of usable schools and regional attendance limit for elementary students. Out of 477 elementary schools in total, only 208 schools (44%) are usable, therefore available to students with mobility disabilities.⁵ The less-than-half proportion of accessibility is also consistent with most of the district's regional elementary school networks and school quality rating categories. In each school rating category, not usable schools outnumber usable ones, except in the Level 1+ category.⁶

Because the majority of CPS elementary schools are not available for them, in most areas of the city, students with mobility disabilities only have half the level of program access to their neighborhood schools or school of their choice, compared to their peers without mobility disabilities. Students with mobility disabilities are not only separated but also concentrated in usable schools. Moreover, the shortage of usable schools burdens students with mobility disabilities with traveling a further distance to a usable school or forces them to give up their preferred school of choice due to lack of accessibility features.



Secondly, Black and Brown communities in the South and West sides of Chicago are in acute need of more usable schools for elementary students with mobility disabilities. Notably, in Pilsen-Little Village, Englewood-Auburn Gresham, and Chatham-South Shore areas, two out of three schools are not usable for students with mobility disabilities. The inequitable burden of traveling further to a usable school is heavier on Black and Brown students with mobility

⁵ 477 Elementary schools in total: Usable schools (208); First-floor Usable schools (42); Not Accessible schools (183); Not rated schools (44), CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites.

⁶ CPS ranks school quality on a five-tiered scale (Levels 1+, 1, 2+, 2, and 3). Level 1+ schools are considered the highest quality schools while Level 3 schools are the lowest quality schools.

disabilities in these areas due to the significantly lower number of usable schools than the other areas in the city. This report provides the number of usable and not usable schools per network in the Accessibility in CPS Elementary Schools chapter.⁷ In addition, an interactive version of the CPS elementary school accessibility map is available at https://csheils9.shinyapps.io/HCA_CPS_Elementary_Schools_Accessibility_Map/.

Lastly, Access Living finds that the degree of accessibility within respective elementary schools is unequal among geographical regions. In general, networks encompassing socioeconomically disadvantaged minority communities, such as the West and South sides, also tend to have fewer usable schools with less resources. We rated CPS elementary school networks in four categories (*Good*, *Fair*, *Poor*, and *Very Poor*) based on various accessibility and education quality factors. No elementary school network in CPS is rated as *Good* because not even a single network has a vast majority of its schools as usable ones. Out of thirteen elementary networks in total, five networks are rated as *Fair* based on a higher percentage of usable and highly rated (Level 1 or 1+) usable schools.⁸ However, the remaining eight networks are rated as *Poor* or *Very Poor* because of the dearth of usable schools, as well as the scarcity of usable schools with higher quality ratings.

All of the networks with the *Very Poor* school accessibility level encompass several marginalized Black and Brown communities in the West and South sides of Chicago. In these neighborhoods, the number of usable schools is significantly lower than the number of not usable schools. Among those, Chatham – South Shore region (Network 12) has the lowest level of elementary school accessibility in CPS with only nine usable schools out of 32 schools in total.⁹ CPS must prioritize improving school accessibility in these networks by making robust, multiyear capital investments.

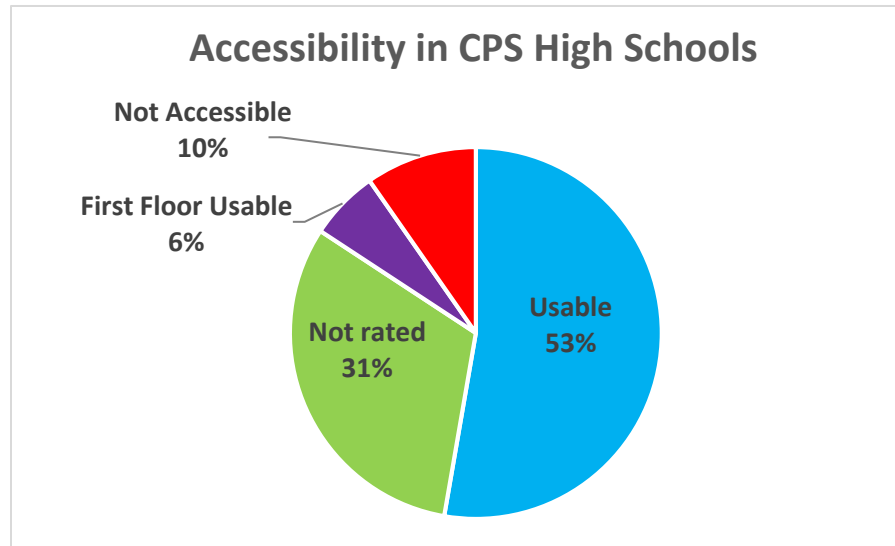
Accessibility analyses of CPS high schools require different considerations. With the district's competitive high school selection process, prospective high school students are a lot less bound to their neighborhood schools and can choose a preferred school far from their home. Thus, in high school, each regional network's accessibility level is less important than elementary schools. However, the dearth of usable schools still inequitably impacts students with mobility disabilities by limiting their choice of high schools. An interactive version of the CPS high school accessibility map is available at https://csheils9.shinyapps.io/HCA_CPS_High_Schools_Accessibility_Map/.

⁷ For more discussion, see the Accessibility in CPS Elementary Schools chapter, pp. 13-33.

⁸ More than half of schools in the network are usable. For more discussion, see pp. 18-23.

⁹ See p. 33.

Accessibility in CPS High Schools



The first finding of the CPS high school accessibility analysis is that only half (53%) of the CPS high schools are available for students with mobility disabilities, which is partly due to a high number of schools not rated for accessibility.¹⁰ Although almost all district-run high schools have accessibility ratings informing if a school is usable, first-floor usable, or not accessible, district-run schools make up only about half of CPS high schools.¹¹ Over 30% of CPS high schools, mostly charter and option schools, have no accessibility ratings. Thus, incoming high school students with mobility disabilities cannot have the full extent of high school choice because only half of the high schools are usable, and therefore available to them. To provide an equal opportunity for these students, CPS must provide an accessibility rating of all CPS schools, including charter schools, and make further accessibility improvements based on the completed school accessibility data.

Second, regardless of the high school choice program, the disparity in CPS school quality hurts Black and Brown students in the South and Southwest regions. In CPS, there are almost three times more high schools with Level 1 or higher ratings in the Center and Northern regions than the South and Southwest regions, where most of the schools with Level 2+ or lower ratings are located.¹² Due to the scarcity of highly-rated schools in the South and Southwest regions, the residing Black and Brown students, including students with mobility disabilities, are forced to spend more travel time and resources to receive higher quality education services in schools

¹⁰ 165 High schools in total: Usable schools (87); First-floor Usable schools (10); Not Accessible schools (16); Not rated schools (52), CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites. Not rated schools are mostly charter and option schools and CPS's own data does not include accessibility ratings of those schools.

¹¹ Out of 165 high schools in total, 93 schools are district-run schools, 64 schools are charter schools, including charter option schools, and 8 schools are either contract or safe schools, https://cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_andfacts.aspx.

¹² For more discussion, see pp. 34-38.

further north. In these areas, a student with a mobility disability may face tradeoffs between choosing a highly rated and preferred school far from their home versus a usable school with lower quality ratings in their region.

Access Living's recommendations to improve CPS school accessibility are briefly summarized as follows:

- 1. CPS Must Use the ADA Capital Investment Funds to Make Schools Fully Accessible** so students with mobility disabilities can access and enjoy the same academic programs as their peers without disabilities. Under the ADA, CPS is required to make any newly constructed building or major renovations accessible. Furthermore, the district's capital investment on improving accessibility should prioritize projects making pre-ADA built schools fully accessible. CPS's current plan of improving first-floor accessibility is a significant cost that provides minimal benefit, especially since there is no guarantee that it would complement future plans for full accessibility.
- 2. Make the Accessibility Information Easily Available and Complete Accessibility Rating of All CPS Schools.** CPS should make detailed ADA school accessibility information, if a school is "usable (generally accessible)" or "fully ADA accessible," easily available on the CPS website, School Locator, as well as the district's school choice application and selection process, GoCPS. Such accessibility information is critical for students and their parents with mobility disabilities in their school choice and selection process. To effectively assist students and their families with mobility disabilities, CPS should also provide an accessibility rating of all CPS schools, including charter schools.
- 3. Prioritize Schools in the South and West Sides.** CPS should prioritize its South and West regions in improving both elementary and high school accessibility. Notably, in Pilsen-Little Village, Englewood-Auburn Gresham, and Chatham-South, two out of three schools are not usable (generally accessible) for students with mobility disabilities. The severe lack of usable schools, as well as the dearth of high quality programs, hurt Black and Brown students and their communities and place an inequitable burden on these students to travel a further distance to attend usable schools with higher quality ratings far from their neighborhoods.
- 4. Allocate a Separate Fund for Individual ADA Accommodations.** The ADA requires CPS to reasonably accommodate students and other individuals with disabilities so they can have equal access to CPS's buildings, programs, and services. A reasonable amount of funds, sufficient to address vertical access needs and separate from a budget for the ADA program (district-wide capital investment to improve overall school accessibility), should be devoted and spent to meet the needs of current or enrolling students who present accessibility needs at their schools.

5. **Elementary Schools:** CPS must make robust and consistent investment on improving accessibility in its 225 not usable elementary schools. To make a school fully accessible, it must have vertical accessibility features, such as an elevator, so that students with mobility disabilities can attend neighborhood schools by having access to academic programs on higher floors. Securing capital resources for a multi-year school accessibility improvement plan with benchmark goals of specific number of usable schools is needed to ensure equal opportunities to education for students with mobility disabilities.
6. **High Schools:** CPS must improve the quality of the existing usable schools with Level 2+ or lower ratings so students with mobility disabilities do not have to tradeoff between a highly rated and preferred usable high school far from their home and a lower quality usable school in their region.
7. **Devote More ADA Accessibility Improvement Investment.** Although more than half of CPS schools are not fully accessible for students, CPS's FY20 ADA improvement budget of \$20 million makes up less than 3% of CPS's capital investment for the next school year. If CPS is willing to spend \$20 million in FY21 for first-floor accessibility, the district can, and should, allocate an equivalent amount to make schools fully accessible for students.
8. **Create a Long-Term Accessibility Plan to Make Every School Fully Accessible, in Partnership with Disability Stakeholders.** CPS's sister agency, the Chicago Transit Authority, committed to a 20-year All Stations Accessibility Plan (ASAP) to make all public transit stations accessible. It recognizes the need to identify and obtain new funding sources to meet this commitment and determined project prioritization in consultation with the disability community. As of today, more than half of CPS schools are not available for students with mobility disabilities. We need a long-term strategic plan to make every school fully accessible and CPS should take a leadership role to bring equity to students and their families with mobility disabilities. Furthermore, such a plan should be developed with disability community stakeholders.

Introduction

“I had a disability, and it was the year 1970, which meant I had to be sent 15 miles away to Marindale, a segregated school . . . [When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was enacted in 1975,] I was so excited that I’d finally be able to go to the same school as my younger sister, my friends from Camp Fire Girls, and the kids from my neighborhood.”¹³

Access Living CEO Karen Tamley

Since the 1970s, a series of federal laws, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), have promoted students with disabilities’ rights to equal access to education. To be equal, students with disabilities must not be either segregated or otherwise discriminated against based on their disability. The key goals of the ADA aim to provide individuals with disabilities, including students, with equal rights and opportunities in all areas of public life, the same as everyone else. The ADA requires public schools’ services, programs, and activities, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable to students with disabilities.¹⁴

Nonetheless, in reality, students with disabilities often face unequal treatment based on their disabilities. To students with mobility disabilities in Chicago, access to education has not been truly equal because less than half of CPS schools have been available for them for a long time. Moreover, CPS has rarely provided reasonable modifications of unusable buildings to meet the accessibility needs of students with disabilities.

Although it is likely that the minimum level of compliance required by the ADA may not compel CPS to make every one of its schools accessible, the question of the exact extent is far from settled. The Supreme Court established a clear right to raise ADA claims in a primary education setting only in 2017.¹⁵ It will take significant time for the courts to explore the impact of that decision. And, while some courts have found the right of “program access” guaranteed by the ADA to require less than complete accessibility,¹⁶ CPS must also comply with the other rights provided by the statute. Those include a right to equal participation,¹⁷ a right to an equal opportunity,¹⁸ a right to refuse services that are separate or different,¹⁹ and a right to community integration.²⁰ CPS should be mindful that even if compliance with these rights does not require

¹³ Karen Tamley, *Your Leadership and Disability are Intertwined*, Disability Power and Influence, April 17, 2020, <https://medium.com/disability-power-and-influence/your-leadership-and-disability-are-intertwined-625cad49fff6>.

¹⁴ 28 C.F.R. 35.150(a).

¹⁵ *Fry v. Napoleon Community Schools*, 137 S.Ct. 743 (2017).

¹⁶ See *Daubert v. Lindsay Unified School Dist.*, 760 F.3d 982 (9th Cir. 2014).

¹⁷ 28 C.F.R. § 35.130 (b)(1)(i).

¹⁸ 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(ii).

¹⁹ 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(2).

²⁰ 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(d).

all of its facilities to be accessible, they may require it to provide full accessibility to nearly all of its educational spaces.

Just as important as the legal requirement, CPS has a moral requirement for providing accessibility. CPS's Equity Framework embraces a commitment to providing more than the mere legal minimum of rights, calling for full equity – specifically addressing resource equity.²¹ Excluding students from educational facilities solely because the facility is inaccessible violates that framework by providing resources unequally. If education choices are dictated by whether or not a student can climb the stairs or use the restroom, the institution providing those choices is acting inequitably. Integration is impossible if a group of students are categorically excluded from certain schools. A commitment to pursue equity cannot be aligned with CPS's current practice of excluding students with mobility disabilities from not usable schools and separating them in usable schools for providing education.

CPS's sister agency, the Chicago Transit Authority, has already committed to championing the right to full accessibility, embracing a plan to make all its rail stations accessible regardless of its legal obligation to do so.²² CPS must follow this example. Otherwise, the ADA's promise of community integration will not be realized, and disability status, not individual talent and effort, will define life outcomes for people in the district.

Since FY20, CPS has been allocating ADA improvement funds primarily to make schools first-floor accessible. Access Living opposes CPS's district-wide first-floor accessibility plan because equity for students with mobility disabilities cannot be achieved unless all CPS school buildings are fully accessible so they can equally enjoy the same academic programs as their peers without disabilities do. Under the ADA, CPS has to make any newly constructed (on or after January 1993) buildings or major renovations to be ADA accessible. Because of the ADA new construction requirement, from FY15 through FY19, the number of usable schools in CPS had slightly increased even though the district did not make any capital investment during those fiscal years to improve accessibility of pre-ADA built schools. To bring equity to students with mobility disabilities, CPS's ADA capital investment should be spent on making pre-ADA built schools fully accessible.

What is Accessibility?

An accessible building or service is one that may be fully entered, reached, and used by a person with a disability. Depending on the service or object, accessibility necessitates a variety of features. In schools, accessibility requires that the school building be constructed in such a

²¹ Chicago Public Schools (November, 2019). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Equity Framework: Creating and Sustaining Equity at the Individual, School and District Level, Chicago, IL, p. 26, available at <https://www.cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about/departments/office-of-equity/equity-framework.pdf>.

²² See <https://www.transitchicago.com/accessibility/asap/>.

way that it may be fully entered and utilized by students, staff, and other individuals.²³ School accessibility also encompasses program accessibility, such as accommodations. To students with mobility disabilities, complete access to school buildings is the preliminary condition to have equal access to school programs, academic instruction, and extracurricular activities.

CPS Accessibility Ratings

As the third largest school district in the country, CPS serves over 350,000 students, including 67,000 identified students with disabilities, in 642 schools.²⁴ CPS ranks school accessibility on a three-tiered scale (Usable, First-Floor Usable, and Not Accessible). Usable schools are schools which have at least one accessible area in which students can take part in all relevant school activities. First-floor usable schools are schools in which individuals with mobility disabilities can access school activities on the first-floor only. Therefore, the first-floor usable schools are not available for students with mobility disabilities to attend because the students cannot have access to programs on higher floors and CPS rarely modifies school buildings to meet the accessibility needs of an individual student with a mobility disability. Instead of providing reasonable modifications under the ADA, CPS has been transferring students with mobility disabilities from a not fully usable neighborhood school or preferred choice school to a usable school based on their disability.²⁵

Lastly, not accessible schools are schools which do not meet the criteria of the first-floor usable so individuals with mobility disabilities, including students, cannot even have access to the first-floor of the building.

CPS terminology on Accessibility	ADA terminology on Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usable• First-floor usable• Not Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible• First-floor accessible• Inaccessible/Not accessible

²³ School buildings and facilities are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design depending on the construction date and the scale of alteration. See ADA Standards for Accessible Design, https://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm.

²⁴ As of 2020, there are 477 elementary schools and 165 high schools in CPS. Students with IEPs total 51,691, CPS School Data, Demographics, School Year 2019-2020, <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/demographics/>; Students with 504 plans total 16,037, CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419.

²⁵ The ADA requires a public entity to provide reasonable modifications to individuals with disabilities in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity. 28 C.F.R. 35.130(b)(7)(i).

CPS accessibility terminology is distinct from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) terminology and definitions: Under the ADA, buildings are referred to as “accessible,” “first-floor accessible,” and “inaccessible” or “not accessible.” CPS’s term, “usable” is not equivalent to “accessible” under the ADA, however, a student with a mobility disability can still attend a usable (generally accessible) school and participate in school programs, although not every element may be perfectly accessible. Meanwhile, a small number of “usable” schools are ADA accessible schools because they were newly constructed or significantly renovated (on or after January 1993) after the passage of the ADA so the buildings are subject to the ADA accessibility requirements. These schools have much better accessibility features compared to pre-ADA built “usable” schools. Still, most of the “usable” schools in CPS are not meeting the ADA accessibility standard so this report uses CPS’s terminology, “usable,” to refer to both generally accessible and ADA accessible schools. CPS should rate ADA compliant schools separately and make the information easily available on its website for students and parents with mobility disabilities because the difference between “usable” and “ADA accessible” is important for them to make school choices.

This report also does not distinguish between first-floor usable schools and not accessible schools. They are referred together as “not usable” schools because students with mobility disabilities cannot attend either type of schools due to lack of full accessibility, as well as lack of reasonable modifications CPS is supposed to provide to meet the students’ accessibility needs.

In light of this context, this report seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How many schools are usable to CPS students with mobility disabilities?
2. What is the level of school accessibility in each CPS region for students with mobility disabilities?
3. Are usable schools in CPS evenly distributed across each region and across the city?
4. Do students with mobility disabilities have equal and equitable access to highly rated schools in CPS, compared to their peers without disabilities?

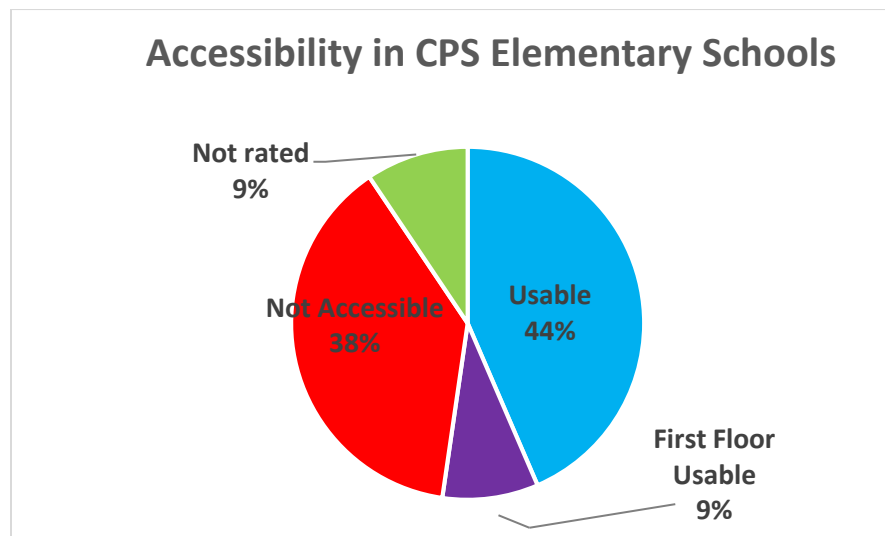
In the following pages, we will analyze accessibility in CPS elementary and high schools and provide recommendations for future actions.

Accessibility in CPS Elementary Schools

CPS has a total of 477 elementary schools. Among those, 54 schools (11%) are charter schools. Most elementary schools belong to regional elementary school networks, Networks 1 through 13. CPS offers nearby schools (neighborhood schools) to elementary school students based on geographical boundaries. In addition, elementary students can apply for the district's elementary school choice program for magnet schools, magnet cluster schools, and elementary open enrollment schools.²⁶ Families of elementary school students generally prefer schools not far from their home due to the student's young age.

1. Less Than Half of Elementary Schools are Usable to Students with Mobility Disabilities.

Out of 477 elementary schools in CPS, less than half, only 208 schools, are usable, therefore available for students with mobility disabilities.²⁷ Around 10% of schools are rated as first-floor usable and almost 40% of schools are rated as not accessible.²⁸ For a student with a mobility disability, there is an insufficient difference between completely not-accessible schools and schools that are first-floor usable because these students cannot attend first-floor usable only schools due to a lack of program access on high floors.²⁹ Not usable elementary schools (not accessible or first-floor usable only schools) outnumber usable schools in CPS. As a result, students with mobility disabilities have less than half of the school access than their peers without mobility disabilities because their options are limited to usable schools only.



²⁶ Magnet and cluster elementary schools offer a variety of focused programs, such as math/science, humanities, Montessori, art, and world language. Through the selection process, students can attend their choice of these elementary schools, other than their neighborhood schools.

²⁷ CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ To make a school fully accessible, it must have vertical accessibility features, such as an elevator.

Table 1: Accessibility of CPS Elementary Schools by School Count³⁰

Accessibility	School Count
Usable	208
First-floor Usable	42
Not Accessible	183
Not Rated	44
Total	477

To have equitable access to education, school quality also matters to students with mobility disabilities. CPS ranks school quality on a five-tiered scale (Levels 1+, 1, 2+, 2, 3). Level 1+ schools are considered the highest quality schools while Level 3 schools are the lowest quality schools.³¹ In each school quality rating category, not usable elementary schools outnumber usable schools, except in the Level 1+ category. Even for Level 1+ schools, only 65 schools, approximately 60%, are available for students with mobility disabilities, compared to the total 107 schools with the same rating that are available for students without mobility disabilities. Table 2 below details the number of CPS schools in each school quality rating that are usable, not usable, and not rated for accessibility. In this table, first-floor usable schools are considered as “not usable.”

Table 2: Accessibility of Elementary Schools by School Quality Rating³²

School Quality Rating	Usable	Not Usable	Not Rated for Accessibility
Level 1+	65	42	9
Level 1	66	81	11
Level 2+	41	57	15
Level 2	31	36	7
Level 3	2	5	0
Not Rated for Quality	3	4	2
Total	208	225	44

Approximately 10% of CPS elementary schools are not rated for accessibility. The lack of an accessibility rating is another barrier for students with mobility disabilities to have quality

³⁰ CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites.

³¹ For detailed information on CPS’s school quality rating categories, see Appendix 3, p. 37.

³² CPS SQR Rating and Accountability Status 2019-2020, <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/metrics/accountability-reports/>.

education services because it requires students to individually figure out a school's accessibility level.

Recommendation: CPS needs to make robust and consistent investment on improving accessibility in its elementary schools. To make a school fully accessible, it must have vertical accessibility features, such as an elevator, so that students with mobility disabilities can have access to academic programs on higher floors. Securing capital resources for a multi-year school accessibility improvement plan with benchmark goals of specific number of usable schools is needed to increase the overall number of usable schools.

2. Black and Brown Communities in South and West Chicago Significantly Lack Usable Elementary Schools

In general, the existing usable elementary schools are moderately distributed throughout Chicago, except the South and West Sides of Chicago. CPS's South and West school network regions, where the majority of residents are Black or Brown, significantly lack high quality elementary schools that are also usable for students with mobility disabilities. Notably, in Pilsen-Little Village, Englewood-Auburn Gresham, and Chatham-South, two out of three schools are not usable for students with mobility disabilities. Education inequality is severe for Black and Brown students with mobility disabilities living in these regions.

CPS divides the city of Chicago into regional networks. There are thirteen elementary school networks (Networks 1 through 13) and four high school networks (Networks 14 through 17). Table 3 below describes the number of usable and not usable schools in each elementary school network.³³ In eight networks (Network 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, and 13), not usable schools outnumber usable schools within the region. That is, to students with mobility disabilities in these networks, only a smaller number of usable schools are available, regardless of distance from home or a choice of school with a preferred program. A total of five networks (Networks 2, 6, 8, 9, and 10) have more usable schools than not usable schools, but only Network 8 and 10 offer a significantly higher number of usable schools compared to not usable schools.

³³ Not usable school count includes not accessible schools and first-floor usable schools.

Table 3: CPS School Accessibility by Network: Elementary Schools

Network	Usable	Not Usable
Network 1 (Saug-Reed Dunning-Albany Park)	18	19
Network 2 (Ravenswood)	14	13
Network 3 (Belmont-Austin)	10	12
Network 4 (Logan-Lincoln Park)	14	19
Network 5 (Humboldt Park-Garfield W-N Lawndale)	13	18
Network 6 (Near N-Near W-Loop-Bridgeport-Chinatown)	15	13
Network 7 (Pilsen-Little Village)	7	16
Network 8 (McKinley Park)	17	11
Network 9 (Bronzeville-Hyde Park-Woodlawn)	12	11
Network 10 (Midway-Chicago Lawn-Ashbury-Beverly)	20	12
Network 11 (Englewood-Auburn Gresham)	12	22
Network 12 (Chatham-South Shore)	9	23
Network 13 (Far South Side-Far East Side)	15	18
Total	176	207

Note: The above table does not include Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), Charter, and Contract schools because these types of schools are not commonly offered to elementary students. Based on location, Independent School Principals (ISP) schools are counted under each network because they are district-run schools commonly offered to students in their neighborhoods. It also does not include two schools with no accessibility rating in Networks 8 and 9. The percentage of the usable schools in this table is 46%, which is 2% higher than the percentage of usable schools with all 477 elementary schools.

Recommendation: CPS should prioritize the above West and South regions in improving school accessibility. The dearth of usable schools in these Black and Brown communities indicates sharp racial inequality in CPS schools.

3. Degrees of School Accessibility and School Quality in CPS

In this section, CPS's regional elementary school networks are rated in four categories, *Good*, *Fair*, *Poor*, and *Very Poor* based on school accessibility and quality factors. School accessibility was categorized as usable and not usable. First-floor usable schools are counted as not usable schools because students with mobility disabilities cannot attend without vertical accessibility features.

School accessibility and quality rating factors:

- The number of usable schools compared to the number of not usable schools in the region
- Proportion of usable schools among the highly rated (Level 1 and 1+) schools in the region
- Proportion of highly rated (Level 1 and 1+) usable schools among the usable schools in the region
- Distribution level of usable schools across the region
- Locations of highly rated (Level 1 and 1+) usable schools in comparison to the locations of highly rated not usable schools in the region
- Location of usable schools with lower ratings (Level 2+ or lower) in the region

Table 4: CPS Elementary School Networks by Accessibility Ratings

Ratings	Number of Networks	Network/Neighborhoods
Good	0	N/A
Fair	5	Network 2 (Ravenswood)
		Network 6 (Near North-Near West Loop-Bridgeport-Chinatown)
		Network 8 (McKinley Park)
		Network 9 (Bronzeville-Hyde Park-Woodlawn)
		Network 10 (Midway-Chicago Lawn-Ashbury-Beverly)
Poor	4	Network 1 (Saug-Reed Dunning-Albany Park)
		Network 3 (Belmont-Austin)
		Network 4 (Logan-Lincoln Park)
		Network 13 (Far South Side-Far East Side)
Very Poor	4	Network 5 (Humboldt Park-Garfield West-North Lawndale)
		Network 7 (Pilsen-Little Village)
		Network 11 (Englewood-Auburn Gresham)
		Network 12 (Chatham-South Shore)

Good: No elementary school network in CPS meets a Good level of accessibility

No elementary school network in CPS offers a *Good* level of accessibility. To have a *Good* level of accessibility, the vast majority of schools in a region must be usable to students with mobility disabilities. In addition, these students should be able to have equal access to programs both in quantity and quality. Unfortunately, no elementary school network in CPS meets this criteria. Network 10 (Midway-Chicago Lawn-Ashbury-Beverly) has the highest

percentage (62%) of usable elementary schools in CPS but the proportion is far less than a vast majority.

Fair: Network 2, 6, 8, 9, and 10

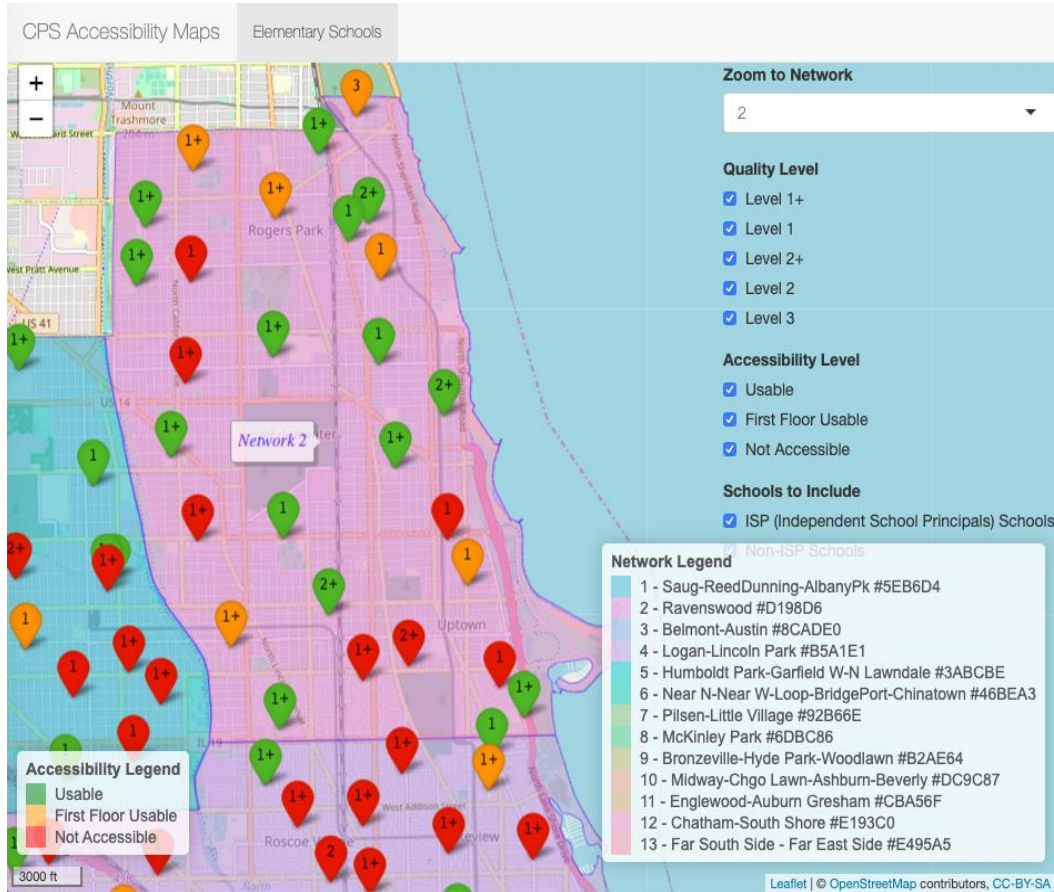
A total of five networks' school accessibility level is *Fair*. They are Network 2 (Ravenswood), Network 6 (Near North - Near West Loop - Bridgeport – Chinatown), Network 8 (McKinley Park), Network 9 (Bronzeville-Hyde Park-Woodlawn), and Network 10 (Midway-Chicago Lawn-Ashbury-Beverly). In these regions, the majority of elementary schools are usable to students with mobility disabilities. The number of usable schools with higher ratings (Level 1 or 1+) is equal to or more than the number of not usable schools with the same ratings. In general, high quality usable schools are evenly located across the region so a student with a mobility disability does not have to travel a longer distance to attend a usable school. The following maps and findings will offer more detailed analyses of school accessibility of each network rated as *Fair*.³⁴

³⁴ In each map, a colored balloon indicates the location of an elementary school. The school quality rating (1+, 1, 2+, 2, or 3) of the school is indicated in the balloon. The color of the balloon refers to the accessibility rating of the school. Green indicates a "Usable" school, orange indicates a "First-Floor Usable" school, and red indicates a "Not Accessible" school. The maps include district-run schools and do not include charter schools and contract and safe schools. All maps are available at https://csheils9.shinyapps.io/HCA_CPS_Elementary_Schools_Accessibility_Map/.

Network 2: Ravenswood (Accessibility Level: Fair)

Network 2 offers high quality schools to its resident students. The vast majority of schools are Level 1 or 1+ schools but only half of the highly rated schools are usable to students with mobility disabilities.

Figure 1: Map of Network 2 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



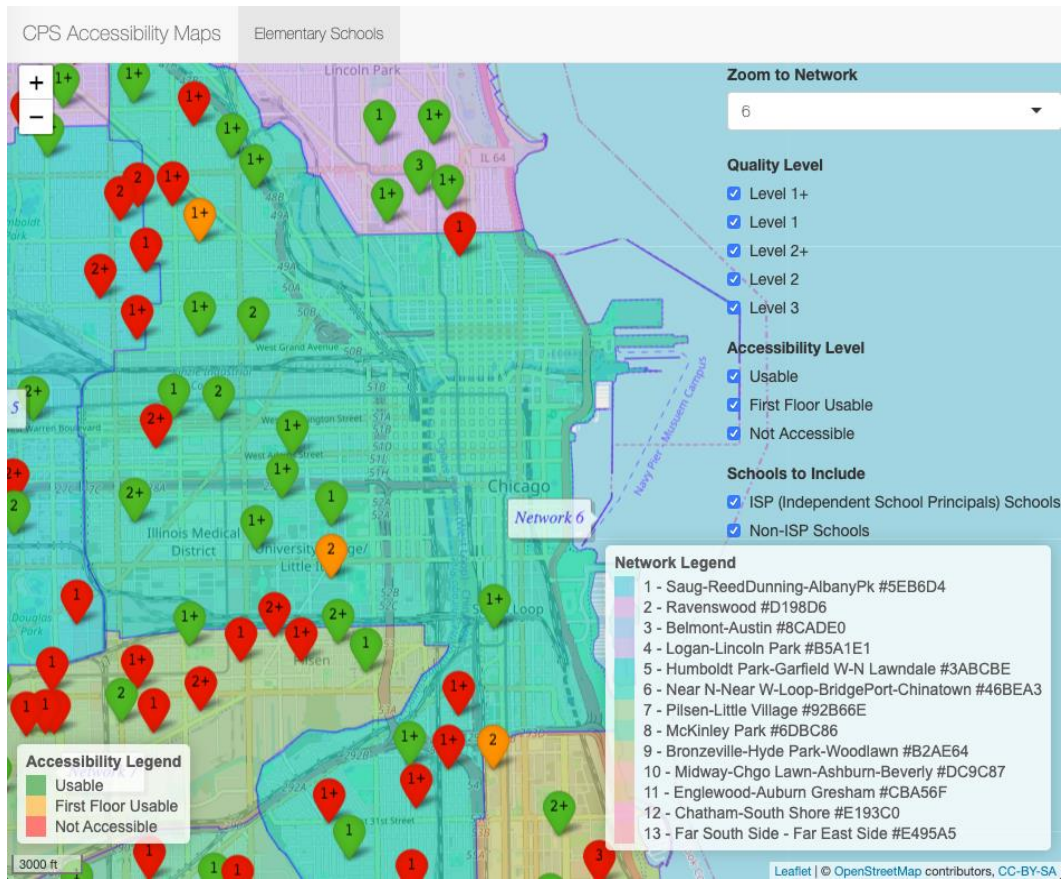
In Network 2, there are 14 usable and 13 not usable elementary schools. Over 80% of schools received Level 1 or higher ratings. The number of usable schools with Level 1+ or Level 1 is equal to the number of not usable schools with comparable ratings. The distribution of usable schools and Level 1 or higher usable schools is relatively consistent across the Network. However, there is a higher concentration of not usable schools in the southern part of the region than in the northern part of the region.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	8	3	3	0	0	14
Not usable	6	5	1	0	1	13

Network 6: Near North - Near West Loop - Bridgeport – Chinatown (Accessibility Level: Fair)

Network 6 offers high quality schools to its resident students but more schools in the southwest part of the region (Chinatown, Bridgeport, and Canaryville) should be usable to provide equal access to students with mobility disabilities in these neighborhoods.

Figure 2: Map of Network 6 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



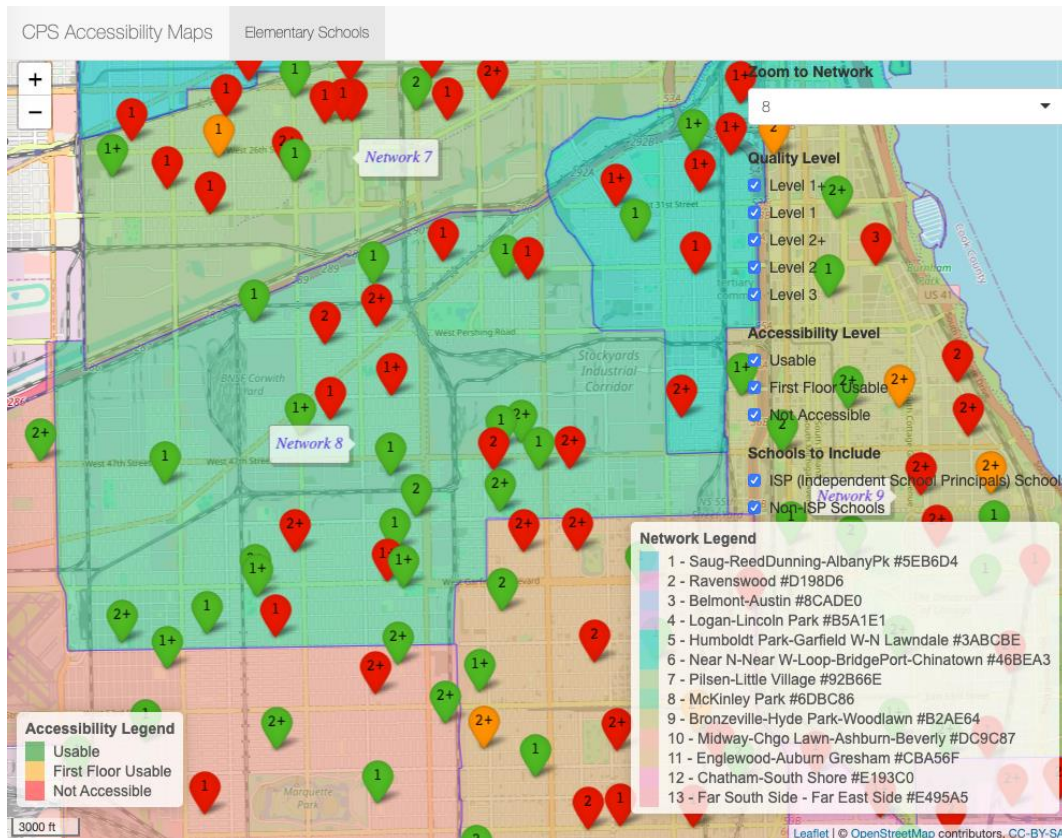
In Network 6, there are 15 usable schools and 13 not usable schools. Of the 21 schools with Level 1 or 1+ rating, nine are not usable. South of the Loop (Chinatown, Bridgeport, and Canaryville), eight schools are Level 1 or higher but five of them are not usable to students with mobility disabilities. If these schools are made usable, students with mobility disabilities will have greater choice and need to travel less distance to attend school. To the west of the Chicago River, most schools are usable and relatively evenly distributed throughout the region.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	9	3	1	2	0	15
Not usable	7	2	2	2	0	13

Network 8: McKinley Park (Accessibility Level: Fair)

In Network 8, the majority of highly rated schools are usable and available to students with mobility disabilities from Brown communities in the region.

Figure 3: Map of Network 8 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



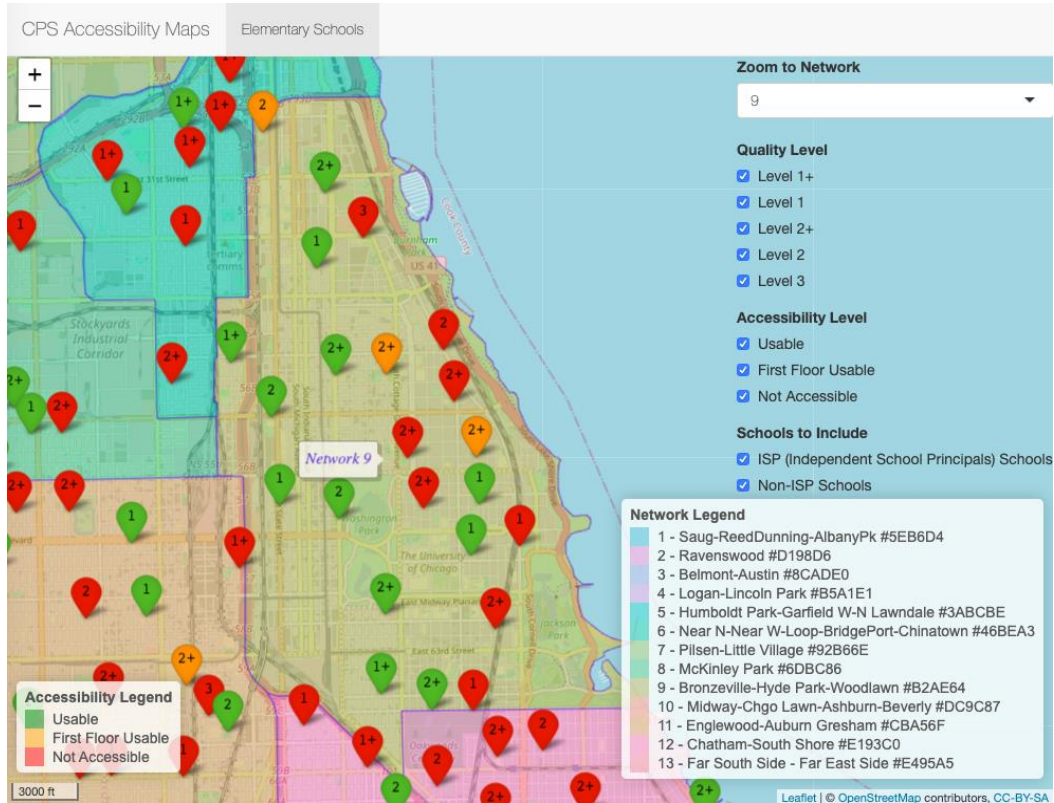
Network 8 has 17 usable schools and 11 not usable schools across the McKinley Park, Brighton Park, Gage Park, and Back of the Yards neighborhoods. Latinx consists of the vast majority of the population in this region. Usable schools with Level 1 or higher ratings significantly outnumber not usable schools with the same ratings. Still, one out of three Level 1 or higher school is not usable. Usable and not usable schools are relatively evenly distributed across the region. A student with a mobility disability would not have to travel too great of a distance to find a high-quality usable school.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	3	9	4	1	0	17
Not usable	2	4	3	2	0	11

Network 9: Bronzeville - Hyde Park – Woodlawn (Accessibility Level: Fair)

In Network 9, most of highly rated schools are usable but the region needs more usable schools with quality programs.

Figure 4: Map of Network 9 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



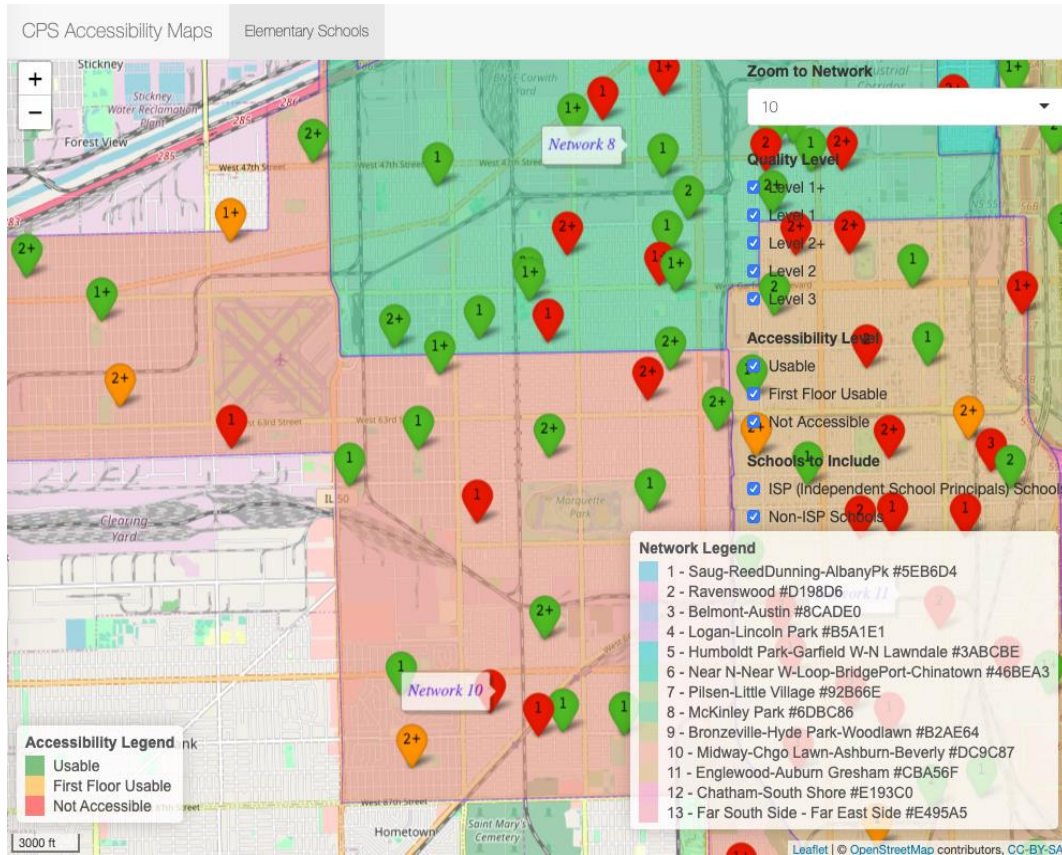
In Network 9, there are 12 usable schools and 11 not usable schools. The network encompasses several Black neighborhoods, such as Bronzeville, Woodlawn, and Washington Park, and racially diverse Hyde Park. In this region, although six out of the total eight (75%) Level 1 or higher schools are usable to students with mobility disabilities, the level of quality program is relatively low because over 60% of schools are rated as Level 2+ or lower. Usable and not usable schools are relatively evenly distributed across the region. If the quality and the accessibility of these schools improve, all students, including students with mobility disabilities, will have greater educational opportunities.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	2	4	4	2	0	12
Not usable	0	2	6	2	1	11

Network 10: Midway – Chicago Lawn – Ashbury – Beverly (Accessibility Level: Fair)

Network 10 offers significantly more usable schools than not usable schools so students with mobility disabilities can have meaningful access to quality programs.

Figure 5: Map of Network 10 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



Network 10 offers the highest level of elementary school accessibility in CPS. It has 20 usable schools and 12 not usable schools. Of schools rated as Level 1 or higher, two out of three schools are usable. In general, usable and not usable schools are relatively evenly distributed across the region, except the west part of the network covering Clearing and Garfield Ridge neighborhoods. Improving accessibility and quality of schools in these neighborhoods would help students with mobility disabilities have better access to high quality schools in their neighborhoods.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	6	8	6	0	0	20
Not usable	3	4	4	1	0	12

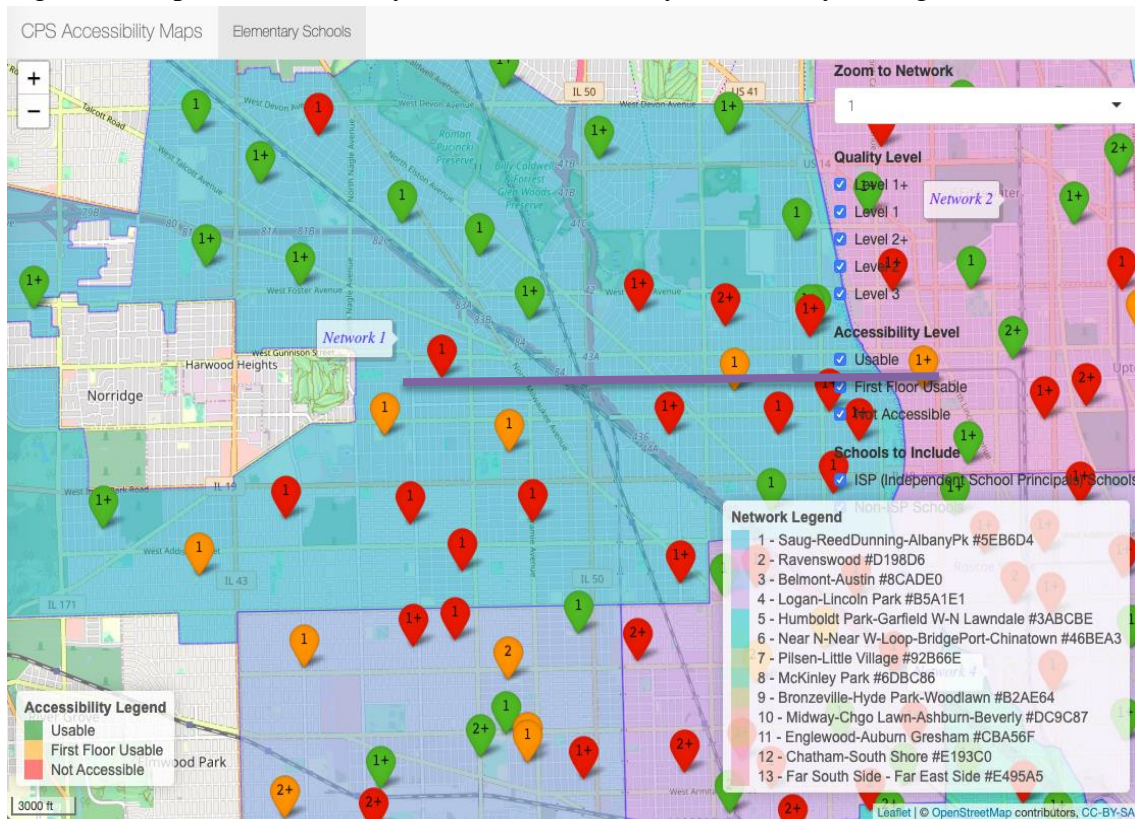
Poor: Network 1, 3, 4, and 13

A total of four networks' school accessibility level is *Poor*. They are Network 1 (Sauganash-Reed Dunning-Albany Park), Network 3 (Belmont-Austin), Network 4 (Logan-Lincoln Park), and Network 13 (Far South Side-Far East Side). In these regions, the number of not usable schools outnumber usable schools and the proportion of usable schools with Level 1 or higher ratings is relatively low compared to the total number of schools in each network. In addition, usable schools in these networks are not evenly located across the regions so a student with a mobility disability would likely have to travel longer distance to attend a usable school. The following maps and findings will offer more detailed analyses of school accessibility of each network rated as *Poor*.

Network 1: Sauganash - Reed Dunning-Albany Park (Accessibility Level: Poor)

Network 1 offers high quality schools to its resident students but is still short of usable schools. To students living south of West Lawrence Avenue, access to usable school is significantly unequal because, except for two schools, all usable schools in the region are located north of West Lawrence Avenue.

Figure 6: Map of Network 1 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



Note: In the above map, West Lawrence Avenue is lined in purple to provide geographical reference.

In Network 1, there are 18 usable schools and 19 not usable schools. All of the schools in this region, except one, are Level 1+ or Level 1 schools.³⁵ However, access to usable schools is not equal for students with mobility disabilities living in the south part of the region. Most of the usable schools in Network 1 are clustered in the northern half of the region encompassing Sauganash, Jefferson Park, North Park, Forest Glen, Edison Park, and Norwood Park. South of Lawrence Avenue, such as Irving Park and Portage Park, only two schools are usable for students with mobility disabilities, whereas the remaining 15 schools are not usable at all. Therefore, a student with a mobility disability living in Irving Park or Portage Park would need to travel a further distance to attend a usable school with accessibility features, whereas her peers without mobility disabilities would attend nearby schools. A systemic plan to improve school accessibility south of Lawrence Avenue is needed.

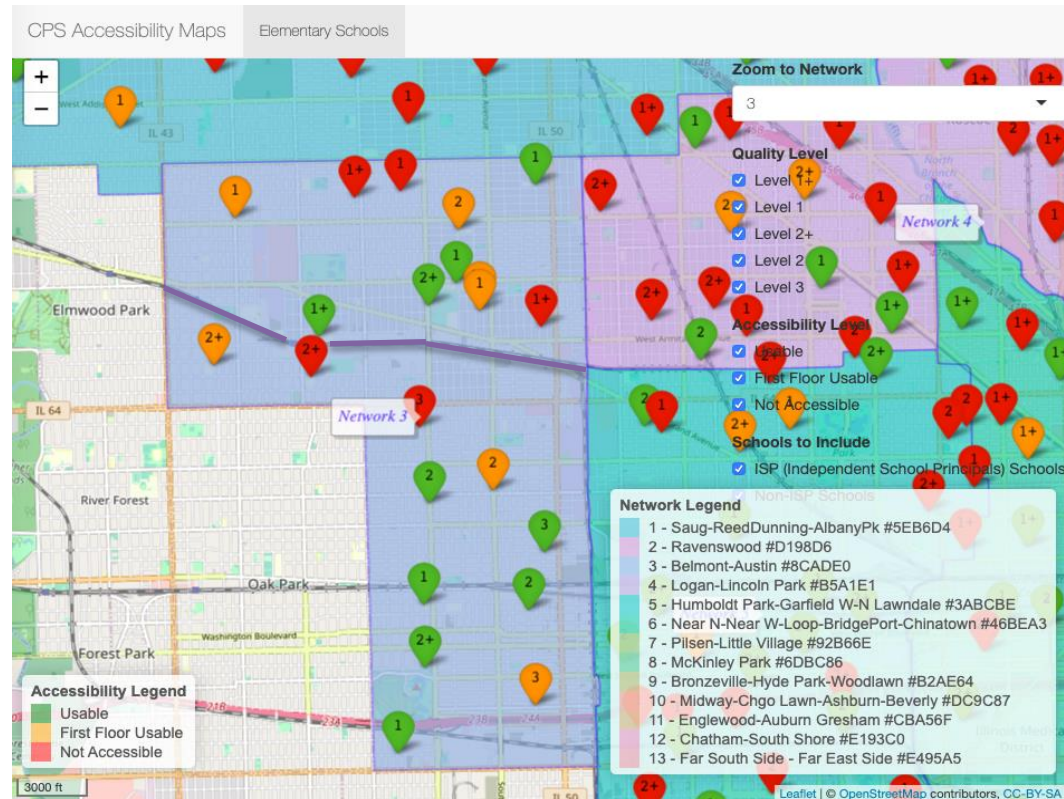
	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	13	5	0	0	0	18
Not usable	6	12	1	0	0	19

³⁵ Volta is the only school rated as Level 2+ in Network 1.

Network 3: Belmont-Austin (Accessibility Level: Poor)

The location of usable schools and high quality schools are not evenly distributed in Network 3. Both Belmont Cragin and Austin need more usable schools with higher ratings.

Figure 7: Map of Network 3 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



Note: In the above map, the boundary between Belmont Cragin and Austin is lined in purple to provide geographical reference.

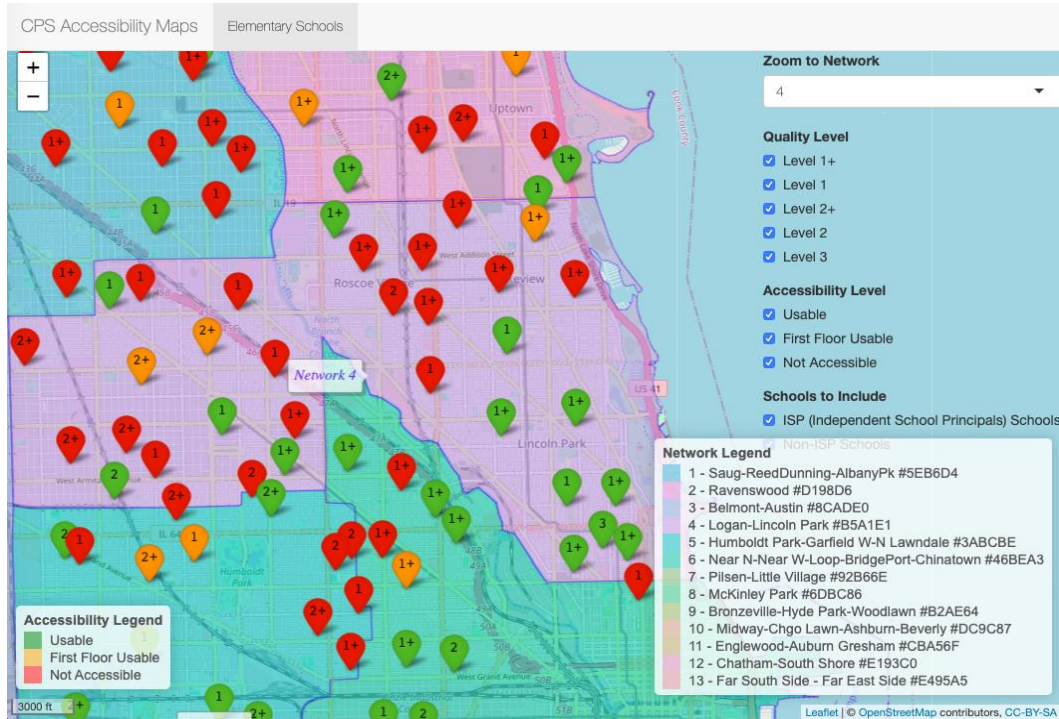
In Network 3, there are 10 usable schools and 12 not usable schools. Usable schools are less than half and only half of those usable schools are highly rated schools. Due to the uneven distribution of usable schools, a student with a mobility disability may face a tradeoff between good education quality and accessibility. The north part of the region covering Belmont Cragin lacks usable schools. Making not usable Level 1 or 1+ schools usable is a priority to improve school accessibility in this area. In contrast, in the south part covering Austin, most of the schools are usable but school quality ratings are low. Improving these usable schools' quality is another priority for Network 3.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	1	4	2	2	1	10
Not usable	3	3	2	2	2	12

Network 4: Logan-Lincoln Park (Accessibility Level: Poor)

Although Network 4 offers high quality schools with Level 1 or higher ratings across the region, it lacks usable schools. Moreover, the existing usable schools are mostly clustered in the wealthier Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Figure 8: Map of Network 4 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



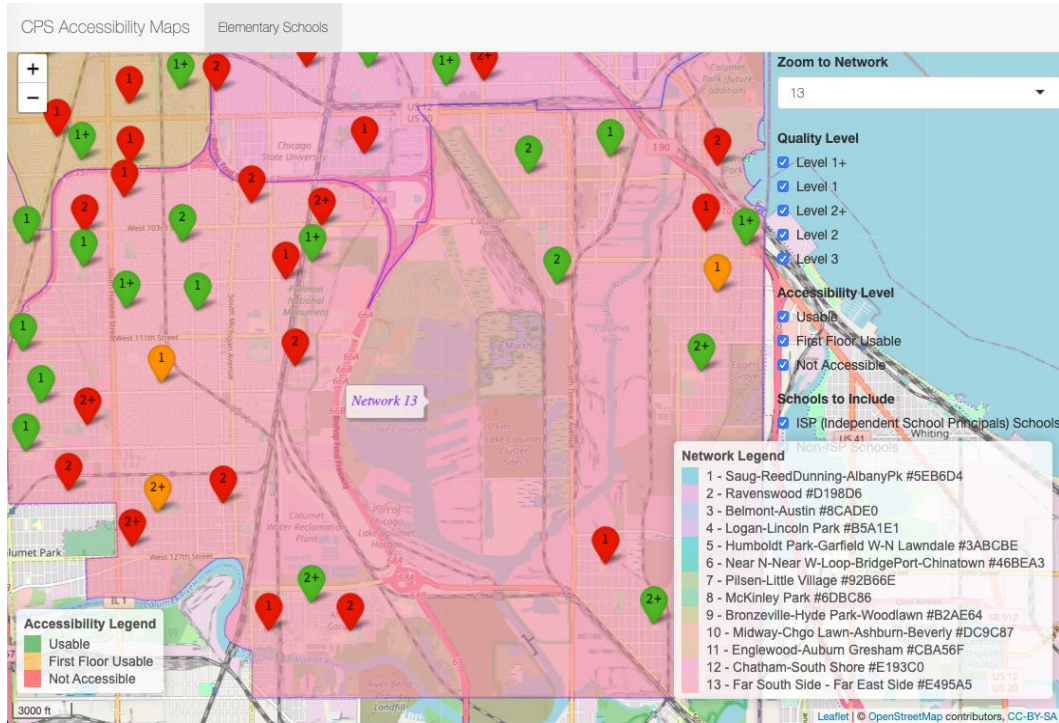
In Network 4, there are 14 usable schools and 19 not usable schools. Not usable schools sharply outnumber usable schools even though about half of the Level 1 or higher rated schools are usable. However, the usable schools are mostly clustered in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, while Logan Square and Roscoe Village significantly lack usable schools. A student with a mobility disability in Logan Square and Roscoe Village would need to travel a further distance south because there are not enough accessible schools in their neighborhoods. To provide students with equal access to usable schools in these areas, not usable schools in the north and west part of the network need to be usable.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	7	5	0	1	1	14
Not usable	8	5	5	1	0	19

Network 13: Far South Side - Far East Side (Accessibility Level: Poor)

Network 13 lacks high quality schools, as well as usable schools. In particular, more usable schools with higher quality ratings are needed to improve school accessibility in the southeast and southwest parts of the region.

Figure 9: Map of Network 13 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



In Network 13, there are 15 usable schools and 18 not usable schools. Overall, Network 13 lacks high quality schools, as well as usable schools. Moreover, most of the usable schools are clustered in the north and northeast parts of the region so students living in West Pullman, Eden Green or Altgeld Gardens (west and southwest of Lake Calumet) or Hegewisch (southeast of Lake Calumet) would likely need to travel further distance to attend usable schools. In order to provide students with equal access to usable schools across the region, Network 13 should have more usable schools with higher quality ratings in the southern part of the network.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of Schools
Usable	3	6	3	3	0	15
Not usable	0	7	4	7	0	18

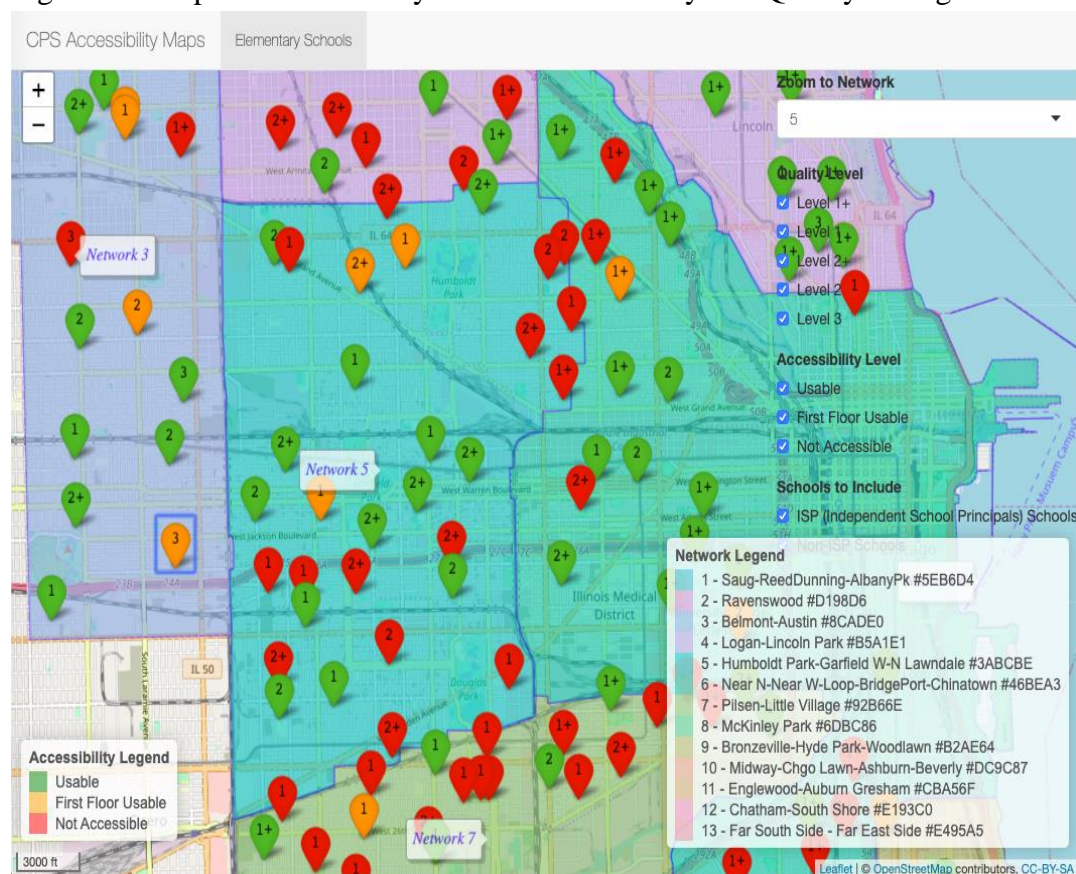
Very Poor: Network 5, 7, 11, and 12

A total of four networks' school accessibility level is *Very Poor*. They are Network 5 (Humboldt Park-Garfield West-North Lawndale), Network 7 (Pilsen-Little Village), Network 11 (Englewood-Auburn Gresham), and Network 12 (Chatham-South Shore). All of these networks encompass several marginalized Black and Brown communities in the West and South Sides of Chicago. In these neighborhoods, the number of usable schools is significantly lower than the number of not usable schools. Among those, Network 12 (Chatham – South Shore) has the lowest level of elementary school accessibility in CPS with only nine usable schools out of the 32 schools in total. CPS must prioritize improving school accessibility in these networks by making intensive multiyear capital investments. The following maps and findings will offer more detailed analyses of school accessibility of each network rated as *Very Poor*.

Network 5: Humboldt Park - Garfield West - North Lawndale (Accessibility Level: Very Poor)

Network 5 is significantly short of usable schools with higher quality ratings. In particular, the dearth of usable schools is severe in the northern part of the network (Humboldt Park).

Figure 10: Map of Network 5 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



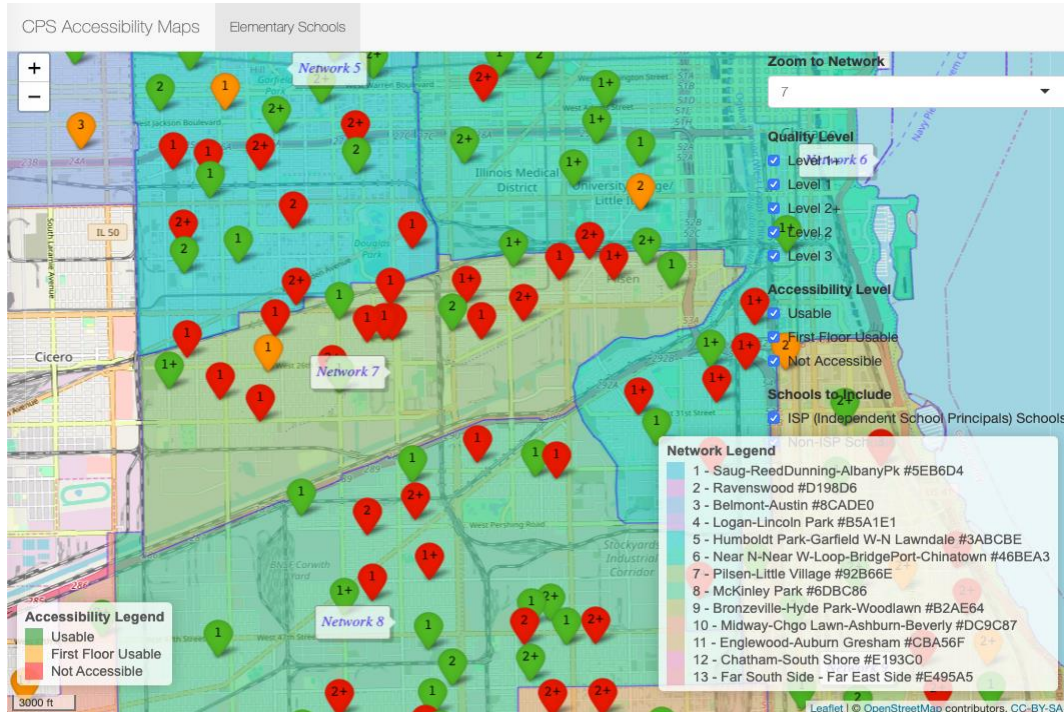
In Network 5, there are 13 usable schools and 18 not usable schools. Network 5 is the only elementary school region in CPS not having any Level 1+ usable schools for students with mobility disabilities. The accompanying neighborhoods are Humboldt Park, Garfield Park, and North Lawndale where the West side Black and Brown communities are. In these communities, most of the usable schools are Level 2+ or lower level schools. Meanwhile, the number of not usable schools with Level 1 or higher ratings is two times more than the number of usable schools with the same ratings. Therefore, students with mobility disabilities in this region would suffer accessibility hardship due to the severe lack of high quality usable schools. To provide equal access to students with mobility disabilities with quality education programs, CPS should make more regional schools usable and improve the quality of the existing usable schools with Level 2+ and 2 ratings.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of schools
Usable	0	4	5	4	0	13
Not usable	1	7	7	3	0	18

Network 7: Pilsen - Little Village (Accessibility Level: Very Poor)

In Network 7, the majority of the regional schools are Level 1+ or 1 schools. However, students with disabilities cannot have equal access to the high quality schools because the network offers significantly fewer usable schools with the same ratings.

Figure 11: Map of Network 7 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



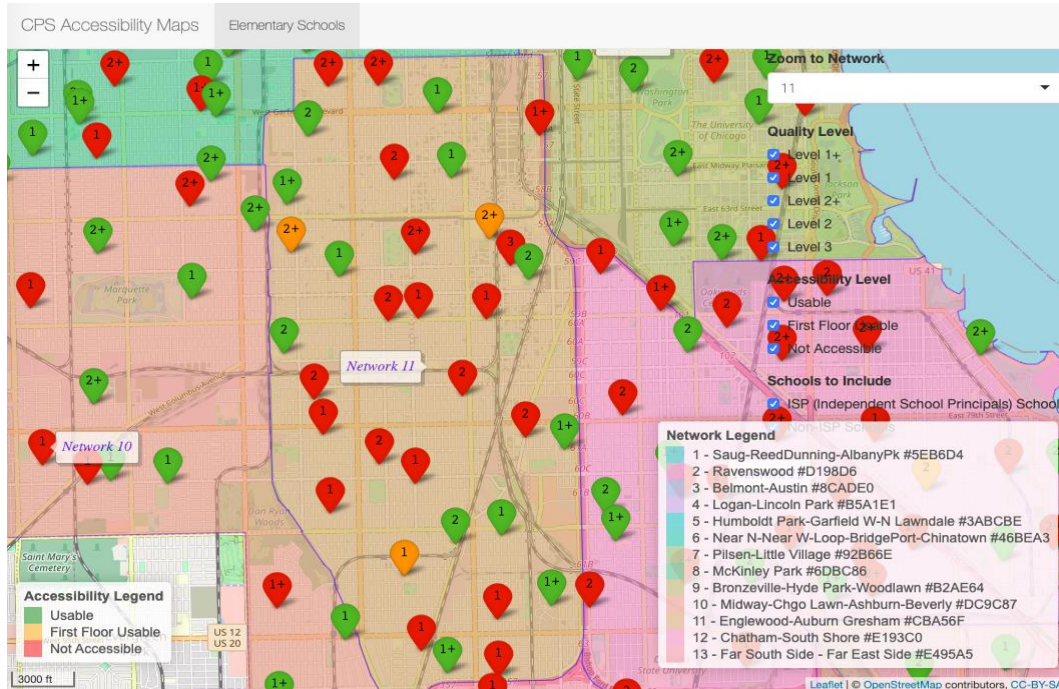
In Network 7, there are seven usable schools and 16 not usable schools. This network mainly serves Brown students in Pilsen and Little Village. These neighborhoods are severely short of usable schools for students with mobility disabilities. In terms of school quality, although 18 out of 23 schools are Level 1 or 1+, less than 30% of them are usable. Because not usable schools significantly outnumber usable schools, students with mobility disabilities would need to travel a longer distance to a usable school, while their peers without mobility disabilities would receive high quality education in nearby schools that are not usable. To provide equal access to students with mobility disabilities with quality education programs, CPS must prioritize making not usable schools with level 1 or higher ratings usable in this region.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of schools
Usable	2	3	1	1	0	7
Not usable	2	11	3	0	0	16

Network 11: Englewood - Auburn Gresham (Accessibility Level: Very Poor)

In Network 11, the regional schools serving Black students have a significantly low level of accessibility: Only 35% of schools in the network are usable to students with mobility disabilities.

Figure 12: Map of Network 11 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



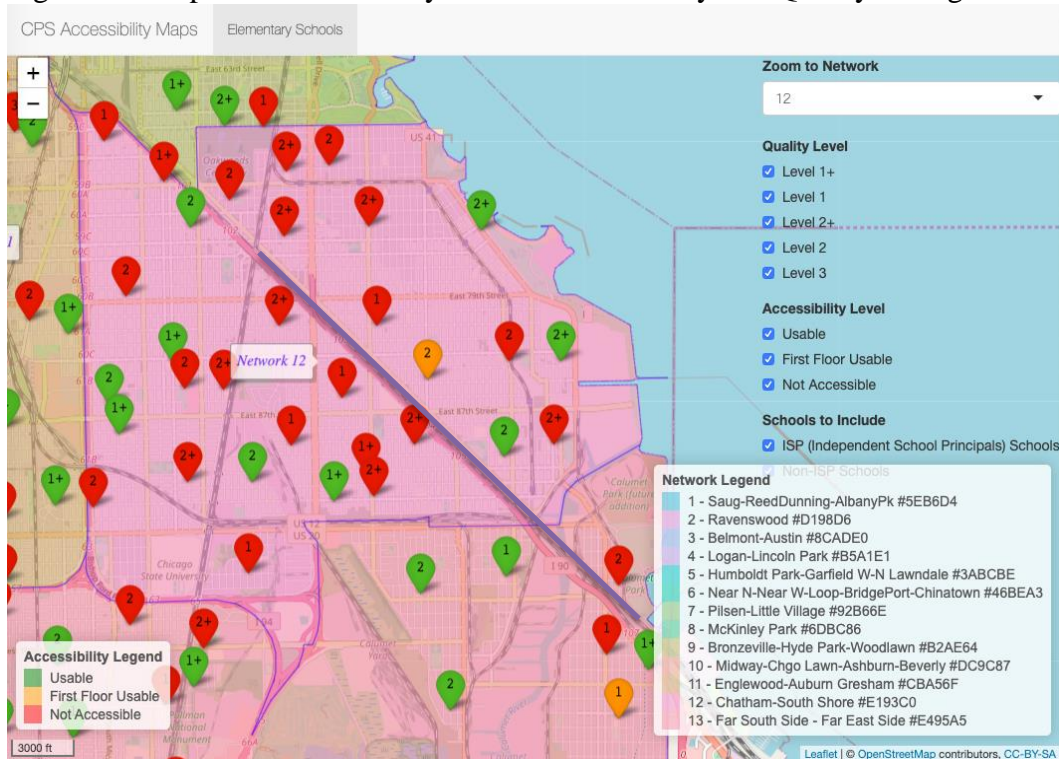
In Network 11, there are 12 usable schools and 22 not usable schools. The accompanying neighborhoods are Englewood, West Englewood, and Auburn Gresham, where over 90% of residents are Black. This region is severely lacking usable schools for students with mobility disabilities: only 35% of the regional schools are available for them. Due to the lack of usable schools, the existing usable schools are not evenly located across the region. Most notably, in the center area (south part of Englewood and north part of Auburn Gresham), the vast majority of schools are not usable. A student with a mobility disability living in the center area would need to travel a further distance to attend a usable school, while her peers without mobility disabilities would not have to. Making not usable schools with Level 1 rating in the center area to be usable must be a priority for CPS.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of schools
Usable	4	4	0	4	0	12
Not usable	1	9	5	6	1	22

Network 12: Chatham - South Shore (Accessibility Level: Very Poor)

Network 12 has the lowest level of elementary school accessibility in CPS with only nine usable schools out of the 32 schools in total.

Figure 13: Map of Network 12 by School Accessibility and Quality Ratings



Note: In the above map, I-90 is lined in purple to provide geographical reference.

Network 12 encompasses Chatham, Avalon Park, and South Shore neighborhoods where the vast majority of the residents are Black. The proportion of usable schools in Network 12 is the lowest in CPS with nine usable schools out of 32 schools in total. In addition, the quality of education is relatively low with the majority of schools having lower quality ratings and of the 10 schools with Level 1 or higher ratings, only three schools are usable. Notably, in South Shore (east of I-90), all three usable schools are Level 2+ or 2 schools. Chatham and Avalon Park have more usable schools with higher ratings but due to the scarcity of usable schools in general, students with mobility disabilities cannot have equal access to quality programs. CPS should make substantial investments to improve the quality and quantity of usable schools in the region.

	School Quality Rating					
Accessibility	1+	1	2+	2	3	Total No. of schools
Usable	3	0	2	4	0	9
Not usable	2	5	9	7	0	23

Accessibility in CPS High Schools

CPS has a total of 165 high schools. Among those, 93 high schools (56%) are directly run by the district and 64 schools (39%) are charter schools.³⁶ Unlike elementary school students who prefer or are more likely to attend a school closer to their homes, high school students are a lot less bound to their neighborhood schools. Although CPS offers a guaranteed seat for neighborhood high schools, students can choose a preferred school far from their home through the district's competitive high school selection process. For that reason, this section will focus on the overall level of high school accessibility and school choice for students with mobility disabilities rather than the analyses of school accessibility in each regional network.

1. To Students with Mobility Disabilities, Only Half of CPS High Schools are Available for School Choice.

Out of 165 high schools in CPS, a little more than half, 87 schools, are usable for students with mobility disabilities.³⁷ Although the number of not usable schools is relatively small with 16 high schools rated as not accessible and 10 schools rated as first-floor usable, over 50 CPS high schools, mostly charter and option schools, have no accessibility ratings.³⁸ Thus, incoming high school students with mobility disabilities have half of the high school choice because only half of the high schools are usable, therefore available to them.

Table 5: Accessibility of CPS High Schools by School Count³⁹

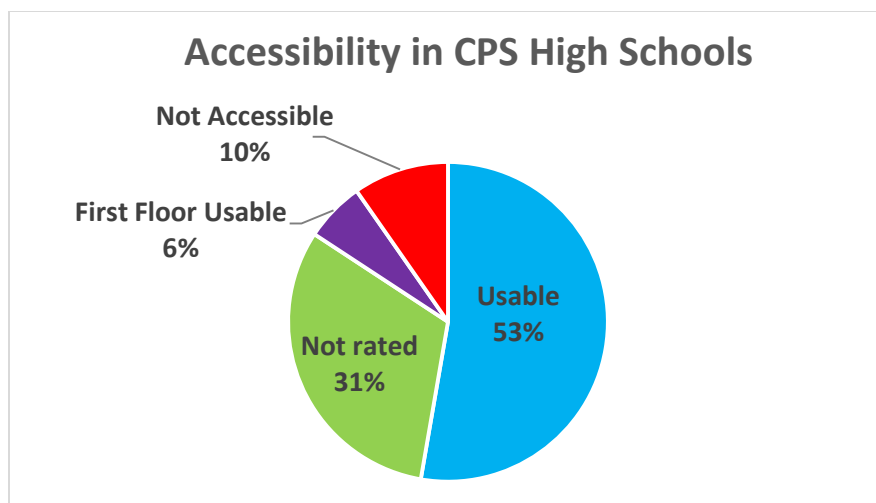
Accessibility	School Count
Usable	87
First-floor Usable	10
Not Accessible	16
Not Rated	52
Total	165

³⁶ In addition to the district-run and charter schools, as of SY2019-20, there are 7 contract schools, and one safe school, https://cps.edu/about_cps/at-a-glance/pages/stats_and_facts.aspx.

³⁷ CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites.

³⁸ *Id.* In addition, out of the total 52 unrated schools, 26 are traditional charter schools and another 22 are option and safe schools.

³⁹ CPS FOIA Request N007006-062419 and school accessibility information from individual school websites.



Of the district-run high schools, in all of the four district-run high school networks (Network 14 through 17), usable schools significantly outnumber not usable schools. These usable schools are also relatively fairly distributed across each network region. Even when the first-floor usable high schools are counted as not usable schools with fully inaccessible schools, the majority of the district-run high schools in every network are usable (see Table 6). Still, this result is limited because over 30% of CPS high schools do not have any accessibility ratings. In addition, Ray Graham High School, one of the district's four specialty high schools exclusively serving students with disabilities, is not accessible.

Table 6: CPS High School Accessibility by Network and Type of Schools

Network	Usable	Not Usable	Not Rated
Network 14 (North – Northwest)	11	4	1
Network 15 (Center - West)	15	4	0
Network 16 (Southwest)	10	6	3
Network 17 (South)	16	3	0
AUSL	4	1	0
ISP	14	1	0
Specialty	3	1	0
Charter	11	5	26
Contract, Option and Safe	3	1	22
Total	87	26	52

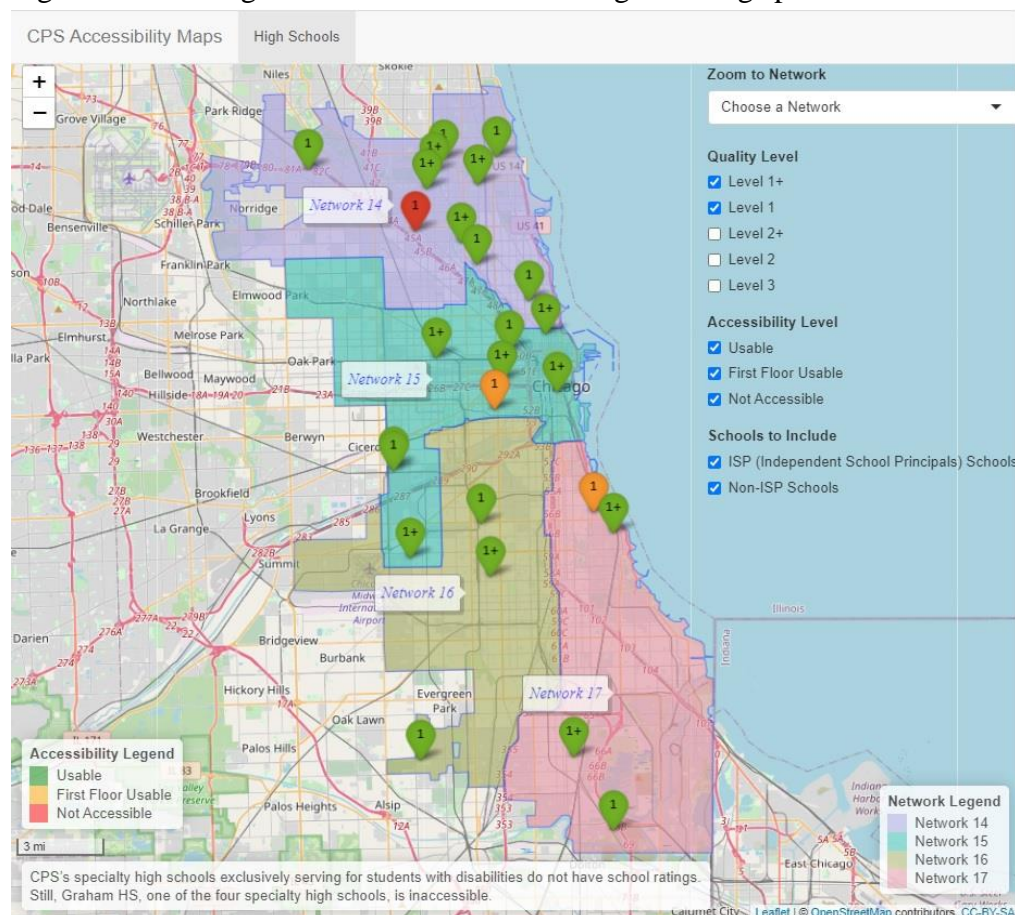
Note: AUSL (Academy for Urban School Leadership) schools are CPS high schools run by the AUSL, nonprofit organization which has autonomy of school operation, similar to charter schools. ISPs (Independent School Principals) are district-run high schools that principals have a higher level of autonomy, compared to other district-run schools under networks. Specialty schools exclusively support students with disabilities with extensive transition programs. Contract, Option, and Safe schools are run by private entities and offer alternative schooling to students.

Recommendation: CPS must immediately assess the accessibility level of the 52 not rated schools so the district can prioritize specific schools and regions for further improvement for accessibility. In addition, the districtwide school accessibility information should be available on the CPS website, as well as the district’s high school application and selection process, GoCPS.

2. Minority Students in the South and Southwest Regions Suffer a Lack of High Quality High Schools

The disparity in school quality hurts students in the South and Southwest regions, who are mostly Black or Brown. As the below map shows, the Center and Northern regions have almost three times more high schools with Level 1 or higher ratings than the South and the Southwest regions.⁴⁰ Due to the scarcity of highly rated schools in these areas, the residing Black and Brown students’ level of high school choice is significantly lower than the level of school choice their peers living in the Northern regions have, unless they travel a further distance, which their peers living in the Northern regions would not have to do.

Figure 14: CPS high schools with Level 1 or higher ratings per network



⁴⁰ Each colored balloon indicates the location of a high school. The school quality rating (1+, 1, 2+, 2, or 3) of the school is indicated in the balloon. The color of the balloon refers to the accessibility rating of the school. Green indicates a “Usable” school, orange indicates a “First-Floor Accessible” school, and red indicates a “Not Accessible” school. This map does not include charter, contract, option, and safe schools.

Furthermore, a student with a mobility disability may face tradeoffs among choosing a highly rated and preferred school far from their home and a nearby usable school with lower quality ratings. In the South and Southwest regions (Network 16 and 17), there are only six usable high schools with Level 1 or higher ratings, whereas in the central and northern regions (Network 14 and 15), there are 18 usable schools with comparable ratings.

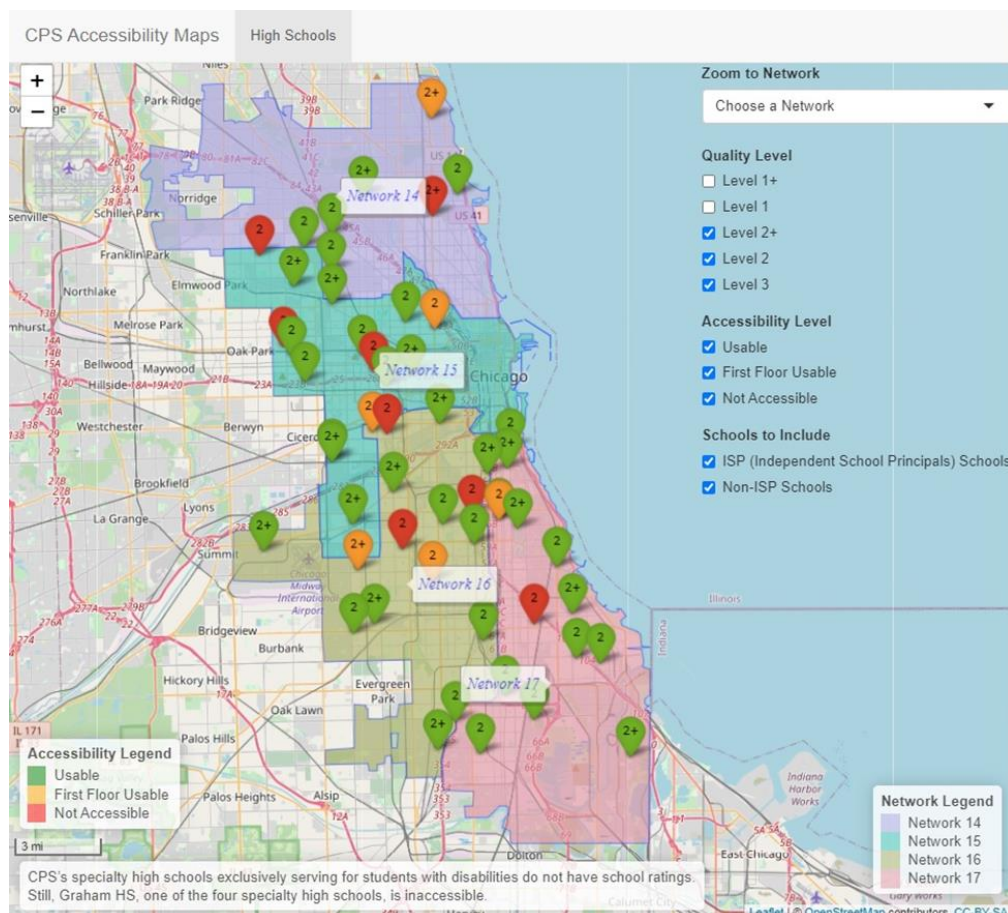
Table 7: Quality Ratings of Usable High Schools by Network

<i>Network</i>	Level 1+	Level 1	Level 2+	Level 2	Level 3
Network 14	5	4	1	4	0
Network 15	5	4	6	5	0
Network 16	1	2	6	4	0
Network 17	2	1	4	9	0

Note: This table does not include AUSL, Charter, Contract, or Options schools. ISP schools are counted with other network high schools based on the location.

In contrast, as the map below shows, most of the CPS high schools with lower quality ratings (Level 2+ or lower) are located in the South and Southwest regions.

Figure 15: CPS high schools with Level 2+ or lower ratings per network



The unequal level of high school choice for CPS students is deeply problematic because students from marginalized communities, including students with disabilities, are forced to pay more time and resources to receive education services equivalent to what is offered to their peers living in relatively wealthier communities.

Recommendation: CPS must improve the quality of high schools in the Southwest and South regions so local students, including students with mobility disabilities, do not have to carry the burden of further travel in order to have access to appropriate high quality programs in the northern areas.

About the Authors

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interactive School Accessibility maps online

These maps provides accessibility and quality rating information of the district-run schools with traditional programs, including Independent School Principals (ISP) schools. In the elementary school analysis, ISP schools were counted under each regional network based on its location. The maps do not include charter, AUSL, or contract schools. The maps used in this report were created in RStudio, primarily using the leaflet and shiny packages. They can be found at the following links:

- Elementary Schools:
https://csheils9.shinyapps.io/HCA_CPS_Elementary_Schools_Accessibility_Map/
- High Schools:
https://csheils9.shinyapps.io/HCA_CPS_High_Schools_Accessibility_Map/

Appendix 2: CPS Schools and School Networks

CPS has 477 elementary schools and 165 high schools. CPS schools include district-run schools, charter schools, Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) schools, options schools, and contract schools. Charter schools are schools which are approved by CPS but operate separately from the CPS Board. AUSL is a non-profit which manages 31 CPS elementary and high schools. Options schools are schools which provide graduation assistance for non-traditional students. Finally, contract schools are CPS schools which are operated by private companies under contract with CPS. For ease of operation and management, CPS divides the city of Chicago into Networks. There are thirteen elementary school networks (Networks 1 through 13) and four high school networks (Networks 14 through 17) for the district-run schools. Independent School Principals (ISP) schools are district-run schools but they belong to a separate ISP network.

Appendix 3: CPS School Quality Rating Categories

CPS ranks school quality on a five-tiered scale (Levels 1+, 1, 2+, 2, 3). Level 1+ schools are considered the highest quality schools while Level 3 schools are the lowest quality schools. CPS determines school quality using a multitude of factors including student attendance, student test score improvement, and student academic improvement, among other factors. High school ratings are also determined by graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and college persistence rates, among other factors.⁴¹

This report is based on the CPS SQRP Rating and Accountability Status 2019-2020 data, available at <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/metrics/accountability-reports/>.

⁴¹ See Chicago Public Schools, *School Quality Rating Policy Handbook* (2019), https://cps.edu/Performance/Documents/SQRPHandbook_SY19-20.pdf