

Chicago Tribune
Voice of the People
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School partners

The Tribune's special report "The toughest assignment" underscored some important truths about the Chicago Public Schools: Exceptional educators are teaching in our city, but they are facing an array of non-academic challenges.

Particularly striking was this comment from teacher Montie Apostolos: "I am mentally exhausted and psychologically drained. I need some rest. It's not only the academic piece but the social piece that is draining me."

The series clearly illustrated the impact that outside factors have on teachers and on children's ability and opportunities to learn.

We know how important it is that the community organizations take an active role in removing these barriers. The series has particular relevance for Chicago Communities In Schools, which connects students with free social, emotional, health and enrichment services. We have recently selected Sherman School of Excellence to join our program.

Teachers must be supported by social service agencies, universities, government departments and corporate partners, which can bring essential programs into their classrooms, allowing teachers to focus on teaching. The series powerfully demonstrated why we all need to step up the pace of making essential connections between schools and outside partners.

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