

SARITA M. SMITH



I am a dedicated educational leader with a proven track record of effectively managing and optimizing school district enrollment to promote equitable access to educational resources and influence positive change in educational systems that disrupt school injustices. My collaboration, data analysis, and compliance skills have consistently delivered positive outcomes for students and communities that directly meet the district's strategic goals. I am a social worker by trade, a visionary by choice, and impactful by design.

EDUCATION

Chicago State University

Masters of Arts - Educational Leadership and Administration
Anticipated graduation December 2023

Chicago, IL

University of Illinois at Chicago

Masters of Social Work (MSW)
Professional Educator License (PEL) with School Social Worker Endorsement

Chicago, IL

Northeastern Illinois University

BA in Communication & Theatre
Magna Cum Laude

Chicago, IL

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Academic and social-emotional advocacy for K-12 students
- Creating sustainable school policy practices
- Data-informed decision processes to solve complex administrative issues
- Elevating youth voice to influence system change
- Micro and Mezzo social work organization and implementation practices
- Operational and fiscal management
- Out-of-school programming and curriculum development
- Project management, redesign, and execution
- Redistricting and student assignment management
- Implementing and facilitating school-based and community restorative practices
- Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum development and Implementation
- Staff development, accountability, evaluation, and recognition
- Strategic planning and implementation
- Supporting adjudicated youth into general education settings and school reentry

RELATED EXPERIENCES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Student Assignment and Redistricting

Completed a needs assessment, which included historical district data, community surveys, board meeting minutes and artifacts, current and past staff interviews, transportation, and school-level data.

Collected enrollment data for all schools in the district, including the number of students, current and former attendance boundaries, and current and projected demographic information.

Established clear objectives and timelines for the redistricting plan. In this case, the primary goals were to modernize the boundary lines for walkability, reduce transportation costs, balance student populations, and promote equitable access to educational resources.

Formed a comprehensive committee of various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and community leaders, to ensure transparency and fairness in redistricting.

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Implemented several research-based decision-making tools to create a process that centered data and paralleled qualitative data from school leaders and families.

Ensured the redistricting plan met all relevant laws, regulations, and district policies.

Clearly communicated the final redistricting plan to all stakeholders, including parents, students, and staff. Provided information on the phases of the project and implementation timeline.

Created an annual and five-year student assignment plan, which included a process for using the enrollment projections and a more extensive student assignment planning process for five years.

Created multiple redistricting scenarios to balance enrollment across schools while minimizing disruption to students and communities.

Data and Policy-Informed Decisions

Triangulated data from a master facility plan, current and projected enrollments, school strategic plan, and community feedback during student assessment committee meetings. This data was used to share with the community to provide transparency in our recommendation process.

Calculated enrollment by using a 3-year enrollment average methodology while identifying typical one-year error rates of more than 2% and five-year error rates of more than 5%.

90% of Achievers joined the program testing in the lowest 40% quartile of their incoming freshman class, and 80% increased GPAs from 1st to 2nd semester.

Led the MetaMedia team in a deductive evaluation and created a theory of action to determine how demographic variables affect engagement, participation, and experience.

Community Efficacy and Collaboration

Created a circular data review process, developed committee preliminary recommendations, and decision-making, informing the communities impacted by the initial recommendations, returning to the committee to revise recommendations, and then sharing with the board.

Developed a process to include the most marginalized voices even if they could not attend community meetings or participate in surveys. The committee employed additional efforts to capture all voices representing the school population.

Meeting materials were translated, and interpretation services were provided for those who needed them.

In conjunction with Northwestern University, to develop a new STEAM space we conducted community focus groups, researched program models, and opened a second STEAM education space, serving over 800 unique students in four years.

Structures and Systems Supporting Students

Partnered with the superintendent's youth advisory committee to gather data about redistricting and opening a school in a historic part of their city.

A lead member of the Y's first STEAM centered digital media youth space, designed and taught middle and high school curriculum in STEM and STEAM education and was solely responsible for creating and administering the 1.2-million-dollar three-year budget for the program.

Created and fully implemented the college and career readiness program called YMCA Achievers. Conducted the initial research, needs assessment, and collaborative agreement with the local high school.

Developed an alternative to the suspension process with ETHS high school deans for students in the Achievers program by qualifying our weekend study groups and post-secondary planning as better spent time. We also supported the restorative justice process with all of our students.

Strategic in allowing participants to lead sessions suggests careers they were interested in learning about and becoming stewards of their post-secondary careers. This buy-in resulted in 80% of students earning higher GPAs and 100% attaining post-secondary success. Cultivated relationships with other youth serving agencies to maximize community resources and donor pools.

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Evanston Skokie School District 65

Director of Student Assignments

Evanston, IL
2020 - Current

- Responsible for the annual student assignment process and implementing the board-mandated policy to review our boundary lines.
- Supports the development and implementation of school district policies related to school boundaries, enrollment procedures, and school assignments.
- Managing the student enrollment and withdrawal processes, implementing the Limited School Choice application and selection process, and assuring the student records and student data are accurate and that records retention policies are followed.
- Oversees magnet school and magnet program selection and permissive transfer requests to ensure completion within established guidelines. Helps to provide information to families about magnet school options and promote programs in D65.
- Maintains attendance and student enrollment records, including projection of future enrollments, transfer of students, and implementation and enforcement of school district boundaries to provide up-to-date information and/or historical reference by established administrative guidelines and legal requirements.
- Supervises registration department staff to hire and conduct performance evaluations. Collaborates effectively with other departments to facilitate student enrollment and registration processes.
- Provide leadership and support for the district's student information system (SIS) and triage to resolve systems issues, connections, and add-ons.
- Oversees records retention system operations to ensure the efficiency of paper and/or electronic imaging system and record retrieval, providing training and support, and developing appropriate backup student records functions.
- Creation of registration forms, registration systems, and district-wide registration training.
- Responsible for SIS records and record management based on state mandates.

McGaw YMCA

Associate Executive Director of Programs and Operations

Evanston, IL
2018 - 2020

- Active role on the McGaw YMCA executive team and Board as a staff liaison and thought partner
- Build and maintain relationships with all youth, including those who have had disciplinary issues or have gone through a restorative practice at McGaw
- Coordinate and implement programs geared toward underserved populations of youth and young adults with a focus on closing the achievement and opportunity gap
- Empower mentors and staff to connect youth with community support services
- Ensure that youth voice guides and directs all executive-level decisions in regard to policies and programming
- Evaluate and continually improve all youth programming at McGaw YMCA based on assessment and data
- Manage multiple teams of over 30 staff members, including youth specialists, membership staff, teachers, mentors, and security
- Oversee community partnerships, including complex partners such as local school districts, Northwestern University, and local government entities
- Point person for all crisis and emergencies involving all youth and members
- Responsible for the management of half of McGaw's operating budget of \$14 million

McGaw YMCA

Senior Director of Youth Engagement

Evanston, IL
2014 - 2018

- Annually assessed all programs to measure success/determine gaps in program delivery
- Budget development and responsibilities of \$1.5 million annually
- Connected District 65's common core curriculum and common core standards with summer learning gap and after-school programming
- Developed and implemented post-secondary curriculum for high school students and case management services
- Led the development, implementation, and execution of McGaw's two flagship youth programs;
- MetaMedia and Achievers (post-secondary program at local high school)
- Oversaw all education and youth-oriented community partnerships, including the development of an institutional partnership with Northwestern University
- Supported the Y's national work in closing the achievement gap for youth
- Tracked student progress and used data to inform program decisions and iteration
- Wrote and oversaw the implementation of an organizational-wide youth discipline and restorative justice policy