



# THE FUTURE IS EPIC CAMPAIGN



No matter what level you are at academically, when you come to EPIC, you can always find a way to progress. The staff and leaders don't look at us as just kids. They look at us as people trying to better ourselves. They want to help, give us advice, and push us in the best way they can. They won't give up. They challenge us.”

—KAMARION,  
CLASS OF 2022



Education and entrepreneurial skills can help liberate young people from generations of marginalization. Founded by experienced educators, EPIC recognizes it's not a lack of ability holding students back but a lack of confidence and a sense of belonging. Teenagers from the 18 south and southwest side neighborhoods served by EPIC often cannot envision themselves as achievers in a 21st century economy.

EPIC is a charter school that scrupulously prepares students for college via challenging curriculum, college tours, and social-emotional support to build confidence and relationship-building skills. A focus on experiential learning helps bridge what often can be a disconnect between curriculum and career.

EPIC is heralded for its stellar career preparation, a comprehensive program that surpasses career prep offered by many selective enrollment, and elite private schools, combining thoughtful corporate partnerships and career intensives to reveal possibilities beyond what students may ever have imagined for themselves.

**Every EPIC Academy high school senior is accepted to college, a statistic particularly noteworthy in a neighborhood where the median family income is \$28,000. EPIC offers 15 AP and elective courses and 13% of EPIC students receive college credit before even stepping foot in a college classroom (27% pre-COVID).**

## An EPIC Challenge

EPIC's current building is outdated, with insufficient space and equipment to provide the education EPIC scholars, faculty, staff, and community deserve. Even for the elementary school students for which it was designed; the space lacks basic resources such as an auditorium, library, gymnasium, and adequate science labs. Many EPIC students may depend on school to meet an array of needs: nutrition, fitness, internet and multimedia access; arts and recreation, to name just a few.



**The Goal:** To raise \$22 million to create a space that students and staff deserve; and one that warmly welcomes neighbors.

**The Plan:** To purchase a 56,000 sq. ft. building in South Chicago, a now-closed Archdiocesan school, along with adjacent properties, and to revitalize it with state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and resources. With the new building, EPIC Academy aims to grow its student body to 600 students, a 20% increase in the near, short-term, with the ultimate goal of 800 students, a 60% increase over today's student body.

# Space to Soar

## Science

STEM occupations are significantly outgrowing other occupations and a solid STEM foundation can begin to bridge gaps resulting from generations of marginalization. The current EPIC building lacks resources for even rudimentary STEM instruction. The new facility will include four science labs and resources for hands-on study. And a 7,500 sq. ft. greenhouse, community garden, and green roof will provide living laboratories for plant biology and urban agriculture studies that can address food justice issues common to EPIC student neighborhoods.

## Arts

Students who engage in the arts perform better in math, reading, and writing, and have improved well-being. The arts can make a distinctive difference for students with a low socioeconomic status: better academic, occupational, and social outcomes. EPIC Academy currently lacks the space, equipment, and materials to robustly support the arts. The new EPIC building includes a fully-equipped art studio with a versatile auditorium space for performing arts and other activities.

## College/Career Preparation

Two-week career intensives are guided by EPIC staff who collaborate with corporate partners. Students solve real-world business problems and explore career options they may not have considered. They obtain hands-on professional skills to prepare them for the workforce, along with the opportunity for paid internships. Over the last decade, 80+ companies have participated. EPIC's goal is to expand and enrich career intensives to a semester-long training. The new EPIC Academy will include a Career Center where students can engage with visiting business professionals and a fully-equipped Media Center with a career counseling space.

## Athletic Facilities

Poor health correlates with academic and economic struggles. Ensuring students, particularly those without access to extracurricular facilities and programs, have equitable fitness access and health outcomes is vital. EPIC's current fitness facility is a 12' x 12' room housing a solitary stationary bike and a handful of free weights. There's no gym. This, and a lack of on-site outdoor space, is dramatically insufficient to meet the needs of high school students. The new EPIC Academy will have a fully-equipped indoor gymnasium

and outdoor athletic field. Moreover, the new versatile gymnasium will be able to seamlessly switch from two concurrent basketball games to performing arts.

## Cafeteria And Nutrition

Approximately 97% of EPIC Academy's students are eligible for CPS free or reduced fee lunch, but EPIC Academy's current kitchen lacks space and equipment to prepare fresh food. The cafeteria was designed to accommodate 200 elementary school children, not 500 high school students. EPIC strives to build a fully-equipped kitchen where produce grown in the greenhouse and community garden can be stored and prepared. A new, roomy cafeteria designed with high school students in mind; and offering healthy foods will nourish the body and spirit.

## Community Engagement

Providing a building welcoming to families and the greater community is a way to give back and serve to revitalize the neighborhood. The new auditorium space, a bright, airy cafeteria that can double as a community café, and community gardens will provide a friendly and inclusive space where neighbors, friends and family can gather. The cafeteria and gardens will also provide new jobs for neighbors.



# A Project. A Promise.

EPIC Academy is a charter school that functions like a neighborhood school. The cornerstone of the South Chicago community; 60% of EPIC students come from the 60617 zip code that encompasses South Chicago. It is also a community resource: run by the community for the communities it serves. EPIC's leadership understands and embraces the communities' brilliant assets and challenges.

Equity-focused, EPIC's new building project will be led almost entirely by women and racial and ethnic minorities. EPIC has retained nationally recognized firms for this project with outstanding reputations and a commitment to serving community-based nonprofits in Chicago's diverse neighborhoods.

EPIC expects the new school may serve as a model to be cloned nationally. It will not only bring a beautiful state-of-the-art facility to South Chicago, it will set the tone for the community, engender pride, and provide support to all residents and neighbors. It will create jobs and provide community service opportunities, both of which will help revitalize its neighborhood.

We dare our students to imagine and prepare them to succeed. We invite you to join us in this important work.

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