

Christine Diaz

Principal, Instituto Justice and Leadership Academy

2018 Surge Fellow

“Literacy as a weapon of change” is a strong philosophical and unwavering belief Christine Diaz holds dear. With 15 years of leadership experience serving urban youth both in Chicago Public Schools and Charter schools, Christine currently is the Principal of Instituto Justice and Leadership Academy, an alternative school serving Chicago’s most underserved youth that were unsuccessful in the traditional system. In this role she skillfully marries her passion for excellence and her commitment to developing others to increase educational and economic equity for the communities she serves.



A literacy-driven leader, Christine uses a personalized learning approach to close academic and social emotional gaps for all students. Her sense of urgency, agency and action against adversity drives her “whatever it takes” attitude to get things done. She has a proven track record in closing academic gains and has recently led her team in successfully turning around a failing school on the brink of closure to a Level 1 status in one school year. Christine exemplifies the values of excellence, integrity and scholarship in her purpose-driven approach to leading schools. Christine is a product of a military household where she discovered the “no excuses” and growth mindset needed to succeed in life. Her love for diversity drives her collaborative and servant leadership style.

Christine’s career began in Corporate America after receiving a Bachelors Degree in Electrical Engineering from the Florida Institute of Technology. Her passion for education and technology led her to marry the art of innovative solutions to complex problems resulting in a career shift to teaching and educational leadership. Her professional learning career continued with receiving her master’s degree from Northeastern Illinois University. In 2011, she was accepted into New Leaders for New Schools, a rigorous principal preparation program.

Along with being mother to four beautiful children, Christine is an avid competitive bowler in her spare time. She is passionate for the art of dance—specifically Latin ballroom—and is a loyal fan of Apple products.