

Erica Bauer

Director of Student Engagement,
Walter Payton College Preparatory Academy

2018 Surge Fellow

Analyst. Artist. Activist. Erica bridges data translation and implementation to build holistic education systems that are equitable, efficient, and evidence-based. Currently, she designs systems of support as the Director of Student Engagement of a multicultural high school in the heart of Chicago - Walter Payton College Preparatory Academy - ranked the 2nd best high school in Illinois, according to US News and World Report.

A trained researcher, Erica is committed to data-driven decision-making, often relying on internal data collection and analysis to determine next steps in designing student supports. She uses these data to humanize the student experience in order to design student-centered practices, for all students.

Erica is passionate about helping organizations embrace the diversity they wish to see in the people they serve and employ, and using data to implement differentiated change, a process that requires transformation in one's mind, heart and practices.

After receiving her undergraduate and graduate degrees in communication from the University of Dayton, Erica earned a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Specializing in health communication, her work has focused on creating access to support for people with stigmatized identities. Her postgraduate life began as a postdoctoral fellow in Health Services Research in a Veterans Affairs Hospital exploring how to improve the lives of Veterans living with multiple comorbid conditions. Yet, her experiences as the only African-American woman in her master's and doctoral programs led her back to education as an administrator to ensure that no student receives the whitewashed education she received throughout her 32 years as a student.

Erica's work in education has brought her research full-circle, as she works to create access to resources for students whose identities have been marginalized through systemic oppression. She pursues educational equity by any means necessary.

A dynamic presenter, Erica has conducted workshops on race, LGBTQ inclusion, and equity for nonprofit organizations including Rush University, Willow Creek Church, and Athletes in Action. She also is an artist who writes, speaks and performs pieces about justice and equity for organizations. Her current passion project is writing multicultural children's songs.

