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Amplifying Student Voices at the Network 16 Youth Leadership Summit

This event allowed students to build relationships with peers from other schools and learn about mental health and student advocacy.

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across Chicago's South and Southwest Sides ascended to the 33rd floor of the Willis Tower to take part in the District's first-ever N16 Youth Leadership Summit. Held in partnership with organizations such as After School Matters and Embarc Chicago, this event allowed students to build relationships with peers from other schools and learn about topics such as mental health and student advocacy.

The entire event was student-led. Two students, Kaitlyn from Englewood STEM High School and Jada from Goode STEM Academy, acted as the masters of ceremonies. In this role, they introduced speakers like CPS CEO Pedro Martinez, moderated a panel discussion on mental health, and kept the event flowing smoothly.



"I think this was an opportunity for me to speak up for kids who are scared to speak up or don't want to speak up," said Kaitlyn. "Being able to come to this event and connect

fellow students at Goode shared their work to improve relations between security staff and students. Kaitlyn and her peers at Englewood STEM outlined the steps they took to advocate for students to be able to use microwaves in the lunchroom.

Students from **Kelly College Prep** shared their ideas for improving students' mental health, specifically in relation to high-stakes tests like the SAT. And students from **Hubbard High School** walked the crowd through a mental health survey they designed, and received hundreds of responses to, to gauge if students knew about the mental health resources that were available to them.

While this was the first event of its kind, student attendees are already asking for it to become annual because of the love and support they felt throughout the day. In the meantime, they'll be able to take what they learned and spread it to improve their schools' environments for all students.

"Students need to know that they're not alone. Sometimes you have your darkest days, and sometimes you have your brightest days, but you always get through them," said Jada. "I feel like we need to introduce what we learned to both the students and adults inside our schools so everyone can feel supported."

*Check out photo highlights of the event below, and make sure to follow **Network 16 on Twitter @CPSNetwork16.***



CPS CEO Martinez kicked off the event by sharing his vision for increasing opportunities for high school students

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The event drew a diverse group of students who were eager to get to know their peers from other schools.



Students bonded through a “tallest hat” competition led by Embarc Chicago.



Kaitlyn and Jada, the two student emcees, led a panel discussion about mental health. The panelists were a mix of CPS staff and experts from external partners.



Students were encouraged to spend time meeting someone new!



Students presented on their efforts to improve their school communities. Here, students from Kelly College Prep share their idea for a Teen Mental Health Week.



We can't wait for more events like this one in the future!

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