



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 6, 2015

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CITY OF CHICAGO IS AWARDED \$600 MILLION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Emanuel Administration Will Triple Full-Day Pre-K Classrooms by 2019

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today that the City of Chicago has been awarded \$600 million for early childhood education programming over the next five years. While peer cities such as New York and Los Angeles were asked to re-compete for their share of funding, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) renewed Chicago's Head Start Funding due to the strength of the city's programs. After taking office in 2011, Mayor Emanuel established the Early Childhood Education Task Force to overhaul the City's programs; serve the most at-risk children in high-quality programs; and increase transparency and accountability of the City and individual programs.

"The single most important investment we can make in the future of Chicago is in the children of Chicago and their education," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Every child in every neighborhood deserves access to a quality education that begins in their earliest years. By starting early, we will open up more doors of opportunity for more children to succeed at every level from cradle to a great career."

Following the implementation of full-day kindergarten last school year and leveraging the federal government's guaranteed funding over the next five years, Mayor Emanuel and the City will triple the number of full-day pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs – from 100 today to 300 – by 2019. This expansion will bring full-day programs to 4,000 additional children at CPS.

"If we want young people to succeed, we need to continue to invest in proven strategies like quality early learning," said Ric Estrada, CEO of Metropolitan Family Services, which opened the Learning and Wellness Center in February 2014 in collaboration with the Mayor's office, CPS and local leaders.

Under regulations announced by the Obama Administration in 2011, HHS reviews the quality of Head Start grantee programs to determine whether they must compete with other potential early childhood education providers to receive future Head Start funds. Since issuing these regulations, HHS has required nearly 450 grantees to re-compete for funding. This competition is designed to ensure that children have access to the highest quality program possible.

Today's announcement is based on the evolving quality of Chicago's pre-K programs, HHS has determined that Emanuel Administration has implemented reforms and investments to expand access, improve quality, and increase transparency that makes Chicago a national model in early education. The City will remain a grantee this year and in the four upcoming years as long as it successfully completes the HHS triennial review process.

To expand access, the Emanuel Administration will provide pre-K education to all of the roughly 25,000 4-year old children who qualify for the federal free or reduced school lunch program, starting in School Year 2015-2016. The City is meeting this commitment by leveraging Head Start funds, investing more than \$15 million in the Mayor's 2015 budget, and nearly \$17 million raised from private investors through a Social Impact Bond. To ensure that adequate classroom space is provided for the additional children, CPS and the State of Illinois are making a capital investment of nearly \$14 million.

In addition to increasing access to programs, the Administration has improved the quality of its early education programs. In August 2012, the City conducted a "Race to the Top" for any and all providers of early childhood education. For the first time, all schools and community-based organizations — public, nonprofit, for-profit, faith-based and charter — were invited to apply.

To ensure high-quality programming through this local re-competition of early education funds, top early learning programs were given additional dollars to expand their services while 28 substandard early learning programs were eliminated. For the first time, the City also required that all early education instructors across the system have a bachelor's degree.

To improve accessibility for parents, the City developed an Early Learning Portal that serves as a one-stop-shop to help parents find programs, assess program quality, and understand their child's eligibility for programs. The online portal is also accessible to families without Internet access through a text messaging service and phone hotline.

The expansion of quality pre-school programs joins the long list of education improvements under Mayor Emanuel's leadership, including universal full-day kindergarten, longer school day and expanded educational programs at the high school level. Collectively, these efforts have resulted in an all-time high school graduation rate of 69.4 percent in 2014, up from 58 percent just 3 years ago.

Parents interested in enrolling their children in early learning programs should visit www.chicagoearlylearning.org for more information.

###