



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 8, 2016

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL STREAMLINES CHICAGO'S EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM TO EXPAND ACCESS TO FULL DAY PROGRAMS AND SIMPLIFY ENROLLMENT

Savings from structural reforms will be reinvested to expand full-day programming to roughly 1,000 additional children; launch universal online application to improve ease of enrollment

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced reforms that will streamline the administration of early learning programs and invest the savings in extending full-day prekindergarten to approximately 1,000 additional children by the 2017-18 school year, ensuring that over 17,000 children – a 60 percent increase from 2011 – will now have access to full-day preschool programs demonstrated to improve child outcomes. Additionally, the Emanuel administration will develop a new and improved universal enrollment system to improve access to early childhood programming available under the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) for parents citywide.

“The single most important investment we can make in the future of Chicago is in the children of Chicago and their education,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Every child in every neighborhood deserves a quality education and that must begin in their earliest years. These changes to our system will ensure that our early learners can enroll in a quality program in their neighborhood that meets the needs of their family—making pre-Kindergarten programming an option for every child.”

Following the recommendations of the Mayor's Second Term Priorities Committee, the Emanuel administration will streamline the oversight of early learning programs by consolidating the oversight of community-based programs into DFSS. This reform – along with other administrative cuts and restructuring at CPS – will allow more dollars to be invested into the classrooms, offering full-day prekindergarten to approximately 1,000 additional children by the 2017-18 school year.

Since 2011, the Emanuel administration has increased the number of full-day prekindergarten slots by more than 50 percent - from 10,600 to more than 16,000. In the last year alone, the administration has added over 2,400 full-day slots. The savings from these structural changes will bring the total number of full-day prekindergarten slots to roughly 17,000 by the 2017-18 school year.

The structural reforms and program expansion will take place in two phases. First, CPS will invest roughly \$1 million in savings from central office cuts to its early childhood division to convert nearly 100 half-day prekindergarten slots into full-day slots in the 2016-17 academic year. Next, the city will fully transition administration of community-based program management from CPS to

DFSS. This transition is expected to save more than \$6 million by eliminating redundancies that exist because the two agencies are administering similar programs. These savings will support extending full-day pre-kindergarten to a total of approximately 1,000 additional children by the 2017-18 school year.

“We know that the early years are critical to a child’s future success,” said CPS Chief Education Officer Janice K. Jackson. “This is why we stand committed to expanding critical opportunities for pre-kindergarten to ensure that all of our learners are equipped with the foundation for a 21st-Century education when they enter kindergarten.”

Work will also commence immediately on establishing a universal, online enrollment system for CPS and DFSS early learning programs. This system will improve access for parents seeking a program for their child by helping them identify opportunities open in their neighborhood.

Through the new online system, parents will be able to choose between school and community-based programs and receive real-time information about program availability. By moving the application process online, the administration will reduce paperwork and allow parents to complete the application remotely.

“This renewed collaboration between DFSS and CPS will allow us as a city to better understand and meet the needs of our families and the communities in which our most at-risk children reside in,” said DFSS commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “Our new systems are the foundation for how we will better engage families moving forward to navigate our large network of quality programs to determine what works best for their child.”

The Mayor’s reforms are focused on expanding access to full day prekindergarten because these programs are proven to be significantly more effective than half-day offerings. Based on an analysis of kindergarten readiness scores from the 2014-15 school year, children who had a full-day preschool experience arrived at CPS kindergarten classrooms twice as likely to have a kindergarten ready reading level as those who either had a half-day or no preschool at all.

Since taking office in 2011, Mayor Emanuel has been worked to ensure that the City’s youngest learners have the highest quality educational opportunities. In 2012, the City implemented a full review of quality programming by launching a city-wide re-competition for funding. Over the last five years, the City has continued to expand full-day opportunities, improved quality initiatives through over \$45 million invested in early childhood, and launched the country’s second early childhood Social Impact Bond to scale effective preschool programs.

#