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MAYOR EMANUEL, CEO BYRD-BENNETT ANNOUNCE NEW DATA SHOWS POSITIVE IMPACT OF EXPANDED AND HIGHER QUALITY PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR CPS STUDENTS

New Data Shows Nearly Twice as Many Students are Entering Kindergarten Ready to Learn

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett today released data indicating the positive impact of recent efforts to strengthen pre-kindergarten programs and expand access for early childhood students. According to recent assessment results, the percentage of students entering kindergarten in School Year 2013-2014 reading at grade level was the same as students leaving kindergarten in School Year 2012-2013.

"Our focus on early education is clearly impacting the success of kids across the city," Mayor Emanuel said. "Last year was the first that all kids were enrolled in a full day of kindergarten, and we are building on that foundation by expanding pre-k to all 4-year-olds from low-income households. It is our responsibility to ensure every child in every neighborhood has a quality education that allows them to succeed, and that begins with early learning programs."

Starting in 2012, Mayor Emanuel, CPS, and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) increased investments in early childhood education by improving the quality of early childhood programs and increasing access to programs in underserved neighborhoods. The Chicago: Ready to Learn! initiative coordinated programs across the city and brought CPS and DFSS together to manage resources under one early education system.

"We know the early years are critical to a child's future success, which is why we committed to preparing students for a 21st century education," said CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett. "When students are introduced to high-quality instruction at an earlier age, they demonstrate signs of increased proficiency, putting them on a path for success."

Through a coordinated application and review process, Chicago: Ready to Learn! allows CPS and DFSS to better distribute funds while also ensuring that all programs receiving city funding have the quality staff and resources to prepare students for kindergarten and beyond. Under Chicago: Ready to Learn!, early childhood providers agreed upon a set of assessments and screening tools and implemented a common curriculum across the city.

Chicago: Ready to Learn! is expanding early learning opportunities to 5,000 new children who were not previously being served, while raising the quality existing programs for 6,000 children already enrolled by adding wraparound services such as intensive parent engagement, nursing services or community partnerships.

This investment complements the \$36 million investment in early childhood education to increase access and raise the quality of infant, toddler, and pre-kindergarten early learning programs for children made since 2011.

A sample of approximately 13,000 kindergarten students from 269 schools across the District participated in the assessments, which were not mandatory but allow teachers to track the progress of each student at three time points: when the student first arrives in the fall, at the middle of the year, and near the end of the school year. Teachers also use these data to design appropriate instruction for early learners.

In fall of 2012, the Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) assessment results showed that only 1 of every 4 students (25 percent) entered kindergarten reading at or above grade level. In fall 2013, that number had risen to nearly half (47 percent) of all students entering with reading skills at or above grade level.

By the end of the 2013-14 school year, nearly 6 of every 10 (57 percent) of kindergarten students tested were performing at or above grade level.

Research indicates that high-quality early childhood programs boost academic skills, foster independence, and instill a lifelong love of learning. Further, children who attend high-quality early childhood programs are 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school and earn a 33 percent higher salary on average.

In addition to the academic benefits, early childhood programs connect children with wrap-around services like parent engagement and empowerment opportunities, access to social services, and medical and dental providers. Full-day kindergarten offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits in a setting that allows kindergarteners to learn and explore activities in depth and in a developmentally appropriate way.

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