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**MAYOR EMANUEL VISITS STUDENTS RECEIVING FREE VISION EXAMS AT SUMNER
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*City of Chicago's 2013 and 2014 Budgets Provided \$3 Million in Funding for School-Based Eye
Examinations to Help Students Focus and Excel in the Classroom.*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel visited Sumner Elementary School today to meet with students receiving eye examinations. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Department of Public Health (CDPH) vision exam program is projected to provide 45,000 students with eye exams by the end of the year.

"A City's budget is a reflection of a City's values, and Chicago's budget clearly reflects that we value the health and well-being of all students in our city," said Mayor Emanuel. "By allocating resources in our budget to expand the Chicago Public Schools vision program, we are ensuring students throughout the City will be able to see their computer screens and blackboards as well as also look forward to a career and a bright future."

The 2014 city budget invested additional funds to expand its school-based vision program to serve 45,000 CPS students, a fifty percent increase over 2013. With the additional funding, the total City sponsorship behind the program totals 3 million dollars. In 2013, the City first invested one million dollars in the program to provide eye exams and eyeglasses, at no cost to the families, for 30,000 CPS students.

Parents of more than 30,000 Kindergarteners are required by state law to obtain a vision exam for their children by October 15th, and to report this screening to their schools. However during fiscal year 2012 (FY12), only 11 percent of parents reported getting their child's eyes exam. The City recognized a need and prioritized funding to ensure students are completing eye exams.

This vision program will also increase access for students who have failed their vision screening in the past, as well as those required to have a vision exam, and those referred by a teacher or parent. Students who have failed their vision screenings in the past, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students will be the target populations for the new vision program that will provide proper eye exams and then when needed glasses.

Vision is a critical factor in a child's education as more than 80 percent of a child's learning occurs visually, according to the United States Department of Labor. The school-based vision program delivers on-site comprehensive vision exams and eye glasses to students in need of vision correction. The eye glasses are ordered using the Medicaid system and are made of the same materials as those made available to insured students. If a student needs glasses, immediately

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following the exam, the child can make a selection from a minimum of 15 different frames and the glasses are delivered within 10-12 weeks of the exam date. The vision program works with parents to provide written and oral eye care information and education, making referrals if necessary.

CDPH is committed to increasing access to health services for students through working in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. During the 2012-2013 school year, 174,860 students were provided one or more vision screenings by CPS Audiometric and Vision Screening Technicians. A total of 37,535 students were referred to an optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam, but most students do not follow-through due to lack of information, limited access, or limited resources. With the City of Chicago's sponsorship behind the school based vision program thousands of students will receive the proper vision care.

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Photo Credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago

Photo Caption: Mayor Emanuel visits with students receiving free vision exams at Sumner Elementary school