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SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the new Robert R. McCormick Foundation newsletter. Through this newsletter we intend to share with you new learning and insights from work underway in our program areas. We also invite your feedback and your participation in the discussions that are offered on our website and our social media sites.



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Sincerely,

David Hiller
President & CEO

PROGRAM UPDATES

>>Education:

In 2010, Illinois passed legislation making significant changes to how principals are prepared throughout the state. Specifically, principal preparation programs are required to incorporate early learning into their curricula by 2014. Learn more how a recent grant to Illinois State University will help ensure successful implementation of this legislation. [Read more.](#)



>>Civics:



WHEN IT COMES TO CIVIC HEALTH, CHICAGO FALLS BEHIND



NEWS LITERACY PROJECT TEACHES STUDENTS HOW TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES



What role should museums play in fostering civic learning? Courtney Brouwer, assistant director of school programs & resources for the Civics program, explains why museums are excellent resources for civic education. Read the full article [here](#).

>>Civics:

On Sept. 19, eleven Chicagoland high schools were recognized as Illinois Democracy Schools by the Illinois Civic Coalition, in partnership with the DuPage County Regional Office of Education and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. Democracy Schools provide numerous opportunities for students to participate in the democratic process through a range of classes and clubs. Read more about the Democracy Schools Initiative [here](#).



LOW-INCOME STUDENTS ACHIEVE LONGER-TERM SUCCESS WITH SUPPORT OF PRESCHOOL TO THIRD GRADE PROGRAMS



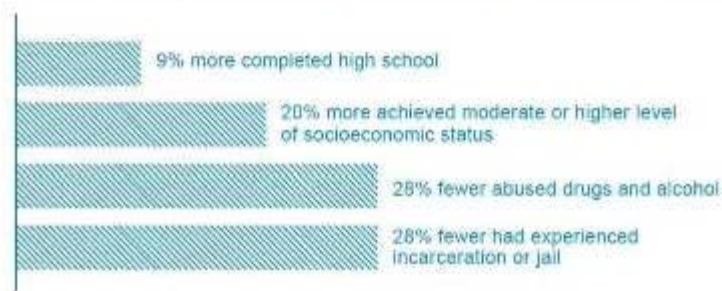
Early this summer, researchers at the University of Minnesota Human Capital Research Collaborative published the results of a study analyzing the quality of pre-kindergarten-to-third-grade models of education. Led by Arthur Reynolds, Director of the Chicago Longitudinal Study, the findings published in *Science Magazine* emphasized the positive effects of preschool for low-income children that last well into adulthood. Benefits of preschool plus school-age services also were found.

Researchers found that students who attended preschool in the publicly funded Child-Parent Center (CPC) Education Program achieved higher socioeconomic status by their late 20s, had higher rates of health insurance coverage, and had lower rates of arrest and substance abuse. The strength and breadth of benefits were initiated by early cognitive and family-support advantages that improved later school success and reduced behavioral problems.

During a 25-year span, the study authors assessed 1,400 Chicago Public School children who

participated in early childhood-education programs. They analyzed the difference between three-year-olds who started preschool in Child-Parent Centers with children who didn't attend the program but who participated in the usual early childhood program in Chicago schools (e.g., Head Start).

CHILD-PARENT CENTER PARTICIPANTS FARED BETTER THAN PEERS WITH NO PRESCHOOL OR THOSE WHO WENT TO HEAD START PROGRAMS:



The study, funded in part by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, found that children benefit when they participate in high quality early education beginning at age 3 that integrates a strong activity-based curriculum with intensive family support services. Certified teachers implement the program in small classes that are linked to kindergarten and school-age programs. As stated by Reynolds, a professor of child development, the long-term effects of the program into adulthood are initiated by the early cognitive, social, and family effects that lead to later school success and higher adult well-being.

"The research is a clear indicator of the importance of expanding the CPC program and making them a more integral part of a city's education system," noted Reynolds.

As many metropolitan areas face budget cuts, preschool programs, like any other public program, risk losing financial backing. Chicago Public Schools have tried to maintain funding for the programs so far, but early childhood education could see budget cuts at the state level. The findings from the Chicago Longitudinal Study demonstrate the effectiveness of the CPC model and the importance of strengthening the transition to elementary school for sustaining effects over time.

"Our findings provide strong evidence that sustained high-quality early childhood programs can contribute to well-being for individuals and society," Reynolds said. "The large-scale CPC program has one of the highest economic returns of any social program for young people. As public institutions are being pressed to cut costs, our findings suggest that increasing preschool access to high-quality preschool is an efficient use of public resources.

"The results also document for the first time the long-term benefits of providing comprehensive services during the transition to kindergarten and the early grades," he continued.

A cost-benefit analysis found that the program's economic benefits exceeded costs, including increased earnings and tax revenues, averted costs related to crime, and savings for child welfare, special education, and grade retention. The preschool part showed the strongest economic benefits, providing a total return to society of \$10.83 per dollar invested. This is equivalent to an 18 percent annual return on the program investment. The school-age program yielded a return of about \$4 dollars per dollar invested (annual rate of return of 10 percent) and the combined preschool and school-age program yielded returns of \$8.24 per dollar invested (annual rate of return of 18 percent) based on average benefits per child of \$38,000 above and beyond less extensive intervention.

For more information:

- >> [The Chicago Longitudinal Study: A Study of Children in the Chicago Public Schools](#)
- >> [Press Release: "Robert R. McCormick Foundation Invests Nearly \\$5 Million in Education"](#)
- >> [Education Week Blog: Aligning Early Childhood Learning with Elementary Education](#)
- >> [Read about the Human Capital Research Collaborative](#)

ERIKSON INSTITUTE HELPS EDUCATORS FIND CREATIVE WAYS TO TEACH EARLY MATH



Several years ago, the Erikson Institute surveyed 330 public preschool teachers in Chicago and learned that preschoolers were only receiving about one hour of math instruction a week—an average of 12 minutes per school day. Limited exposure to quality math experience in early years could hamper students' mathematics achievement in later years.

According to the Program for International Student Assessment's (PISA) 2009 study, the United States lags behind 23 countries when it comes to math literacy among 15-year-olds. And a recent *New York Times* article stated that about a quarter of third-through-eighth-graders attending public school in Illinois failed to meet state math standards last year.

"This is a serious problem rooted in early childhood education and the lack of early exposure to mathematics," said Dr. Jie-Qi Chen, professor and principal investigator of the project at Erikson Institute.

Dr. Chen said that this is why Erikson launched our Early Mathematics Education Project, which provides professional development to nearly 100 preschool and kindergarten teachers in Chicago Public Schools each year. In a series of all-day workshops, these teachers bolster their math knowledge and confidence in their ability to teach math in fun, engaging ways that spark foundational mathematics knowledge and understanding in younger children. Last year, the project reached 79 teachers in 37 schools, touching a total of 2,200 students.

According to Dr. Chen, the project is working. A formal evaluation of the program indicated that, for every school year children spent in the classrooms of teacher-participants, they gained an additional three months of mathematical learning. The growth of children who began the school year behind national norms was closer to five additional months of learning.

The Early Mathematics Education Project—which is supported by the federal Department of Education, Chicago Public Schools, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the CME Group Foundation, among others—was awarded a \$5 million federal Investing in Innovation grant. With the money, the project will expand to eight North Side schools and include 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade teachers. Starting in fall 2013, it will also test a new approach with teachers, called lesson study.

For more information:

- >> [The Issue of Early Math: Robert R. McCormick Education Issues Page](#)
- >> [Education Week: 'Math Anxiety' Explored in Studies](#)
- >> [Education Week Blog: Recent Brain Research Offers Insights into Math Anxiety](#)
- >> [WBEZ Highlights the Early Math Project](#)
- >> [New York Times discusses the expansion of the Early Math Project](#)

WHEN IT COMES TO CIVIC HEALTH, CHICAGO FALLS BEHIND



Chicago suffers from a severe case of civic apathy.

According to the 2010 Chicago Civic Health Index, voter turnout—even with Senator Obama’s presidential run in 2008—at 62.1 percent was less than the national average (63.6 percent) and actually declined from 2004. In addition, Chicago ranks only 38th of the 51 largest U.S. cities when it comes to volunteering.

"Chicago’s lackluster civic participation weakens our social fabric and undermines the legitimacy of our public institutions," said Shawn Healy, resident scholar and director of professional development for the Civics Program and Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) chair. "It’s not just about voter turnout; it indicates that we as a city are less likely eat dinner with our families, do favors for our neighbors, or attend a public meeting to address a community problem."

The ICMC--a broad non-partisan consortium that including educators, elected officials, financiers and representatives from private and non-profit sectors, convened by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation--is a driving force behind efforts designed to restore the civic mission of schools across Illinois.

The ICMC’s primary focus is the Democracy Schools initiative that aims to deepen schools’ commitments to civic learning through:

- Formal instruction in American government, history, law and democracy
- Structured engagement with current and controversial issues
- Service learning linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction
- Extracurricular activities that encourage greater involvement and connection to schools and communities
- Authentic student voice in school governance
- Participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures

For more information:

>> [2010 Chicago Civic Health Index](#)

>> [Illinois Civic Blueprint](#)

>> [Civic Mission of Schools report](#)

>> [Robert R. McCormick Foundation Civics Program](#)

>> [Watch what Democracy School students had to say about what civic engagement means to them](#)

>> [Read a *Huffington Post* piece by Shawn Healy, resident scholar, Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#)

NEWS LITERACY PROJECT TEACHES STUDENTS HOW TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES



You shouldn't always believe everything you read, but when it comes to discerning what is real in the news, this may be easier said than done. In the age of the 24/7 news cycle and digital advances in disseminating information, it is increasingly harder for citizens to distinguish between professional journalists, information spinners and citizen voices.

The issue of news literacy is especially important to youth as they seek to collect, analyze and produce credible information. Young people today are immersed in an online world, but overwhelmed by an onslaught of information, less informed about current events, and insufficiently engaged in high-quality news and research gathering.

The News Literacy Project (NLP), a grantee of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, is a leader in addressing the issue of News Literacy in Chicago. NLP is an innovative national educational program that mobilizes seasoned journalists to help middle and high school students sort fact from fiction in the digital age. The project teaches students critical-thinking skills that will enable them to be smarter and more frequent consumers and creators of credible information across all media and platforms.

"The need for young people to develop their own standards for truthful, reliable information is all the more important because today's students are creators as well as consumers," said Alan C. Miller, president and founder of the News Literacy Project. "Whether emailing, texting, connecting on Facebook, posting on YouTube or blogging, they are increasingly part of the local and national conversation."

Since piloting the first news literacy unit in Chicago in the fall of 2009, NLP has rapidly expanded its impact in the region. The Chicago program has more than doubled in size in each of its first three semesters and has become the largest NLP program nationally. In the 2010-11 school year, NLP reached more than 1,200 middle and high school students, working with 15 teachers and three youth instructors in 10 sites across the city, including seven Chicago Public Schools. NLP has already added two additional CPS sites for the 2011-12 school year and is continuing to explore others.

NLP's instruction and mentoring of journalism students at schools like Northside College Prep has developed into rich and valuable relationships. "Thanks to the opportunities provided by the News Literacy Project, students have received clear and tangible examples of how to improve their skills," wrote Dianne Malueg, a Northside College Prep journalism teacher.

While NLP is planning exciting events for this school year as well as in the years ahead, the impact they have on youth can already be seen. In a recent NLP student workshop held in Washington, D.C., where students learned the importance of news literacy, the biggest lesson one student learned was "that journalism can impact peoples' lives significantly."

For more information:

- >> [Federal Communications Commissioner Michael Copps praises NLP for its efforts](#)
- >> [Watch "Making a Difference," a short video documenting NLP's impact](#)
- >> [Read more about the News Literacy Project](#)
- >> [Robert R. McCormick Foundation News Literacy Issues Page](#)
- >> [NewsTrust offers interactive lesson plans for teachers to educate students about news literacy](#)

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