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MCCORMICK FOUNDATION GRANTS SUPPORT QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Nearly \$5 Million in New Grants Supporting Teachers, Principals and At-Risk Children

CHICAGO, June 18, 2012— The [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) will be providing nearly \$5 million in grants over two years to support a system of quality early care and education initiatives, including public policy and advocacy focusing on adequate funding and quality standards, and support for quality infrastructure, including [principal preparation](#) and [early math](#).

Research shows that access to quality early child care and education heavily influences academic outcomes, as well as health and social/emotional outcomes over a lifetime. For nearly two decades, Illinois has been a national leader in early care and education. Yet the economy has taken a toll. In Illinois alone, 4,668 children lost Preschool for All services in 2011 due to funding cuts. This year is no different: the new state budget contains a \$25 million cut from Preschool for All.

“We are pleased that McCormick’s board has approved almost \$5 million of grants over two years at a time when the continued economic crisis and state budget cuts threaten the early education system,” said Sara Slaughter, the Foundation’s education program director. “These grants will help Illinois address critical areas, such as principal preparation and the achievement gaps for Latino and African American children.”

The McCormick Foundation has invested more than \$96 million, over the past 20 years, to help build a system of quality early care and education in Illinois for all children ages birth through eight.

Priorities in this grant cycle included:

Principal Preparation

Many principals lack early education experience. As part of recent Illinois legislation requiring principal certification to begin at the preschool, not kindergarten, level, all principal preparation programs will be required to integrate early childhood education and other content areas such as special education and English Language Learners by 2014. To support implementation of this new legislation, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Illinois State University** (\$390,000) to evaluate the implementation of principal preparation programs and to adapt a teacher evaluation model for pre-k to third grade teachers
- **National Governor’s Association** (\$100,000) supporting the convening of Illinois and other state leaders to discuss and analyze the Illinois model of principal preparation reform
- **National-Louis University** (\$500,000) for two years of general operating support for the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership
- **New Leaders** (\$250,000) supporting the integration of a strong early care and education curriculum into their principal preparation program and the recruitment of principal candidates with early childhood backgrounds

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Teacher Training

Just as teacher competence, as well as strong, ongoing support for teacher learning, is important to students' academic success in K-12, it is also key to quality early education. In support of this goal, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Illinois Network for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)** (\$500,000) to support further development of statewide professional development systems
- **Rush Neurobehavioral Center** (\$345,000) to implement its Executive Functioning Program in Big Shoulders Fund schools

Helping At-Risk Children and Families Succeed

There are several factors that may cause children to be deemed at risk of academic failure. According to a September 2011 report by the Chicago Consortium on School Research, *Trends in Chicago's Schools Across Three Eras of Reform*, the elementary and high school test scores of African American and Latino students lagged far behind their white peers, and African American students' scores improved the least over 20 years. Four grants support early learning for at-risk children:

- **DuPage Children's Museum** (\$125,000) for general operating support for early childhood programming
- **Erikson Institute** (\$360,000) to increase the understanding of the disparities in African American student success and to begin to build strategies to address the achievement gap in the early years
- **UC Berkeley** (\$165,000) to conduct and communicate research that helps improve the understanding of and services to Latino children and families in early education
- **Zero to Three** (\$125,000) to support training for providers who work with veterans as well as National Guard and Reserve families in Illinois

Maintaining Funding and Policy Supports

To maintain and further improve the Illinois' leadership in early education, there is a need to ensure effective implementation of programmatic and policy proposals stemming from the Early Learning Challenge Fund. Key statewide organizations will also work to maintain public and legislative support for early education, and avoid cuts that negatively affect and cause long-term harm to large percentages of children and families.

- **Advance Illinois** (\$150,000) for general operating support
- **Illinois Action for Children** (\$550,000) for two years of general operating support
- **Ounce of Prevention Fund** (\$550,000) for two years of general operating support
- **Voices for Illinois Children** (\$550,000) for two years of general operating support

Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1 billion in assets. For more information, please visit www.McCormickFoundation.org.

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