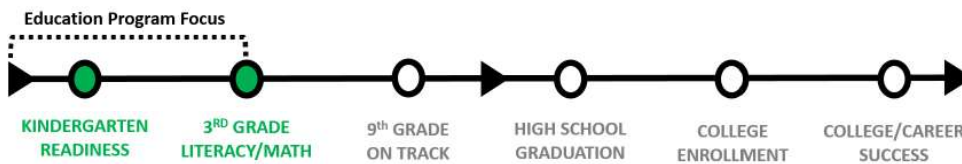


Education Program Strategy

A Deeper Commitment to Leaders, Teachers and Families

Given emerging opportunities, shifting political contexts, and new leadership, the McCormick Foundation strives to continuously adapt to maximize the impact of our giving. After a careful review, the Foundation introduces a refreshed Education Program strategy. Today we seek to catalyze statewide progress in Illinois toward two broadly shared goals: The first is to ensure all children, particularly those most at risk for school failure, receive the supports they need to arrive at kindergarten fully prepared to thrive. The second, to support all children to be on track in literacy and math by 3rd grade.



The Education Program focuses on the first two milestones that ensure that a child is prepared to succeed in college, career and life.

Longtime partners of the McCormick Foundation will notice much that remains the same. Our developmental focus remains in the first eight years of life. Our geographic focus remains primarily Illinois. Our commitment to building upon state efforts to develop a more seamless, well-functioning and effective early childhood system continues. The Foundation's strategy also extends unwavering support for one of the most robust early childhood policy and advocacy networks in the nation.

What shifts with this new strategy is a narrower but deeper focus on **Leaders, Teachers and Families**. Research and experience suggests that outstanding educational leaders, quality teachers and engaged families wield the greatest impact on child outcomes.

Part of our recalibrated approach includes an Influence Strategy to help amplify the impact of our grant partners' work, and to use our own voice to showcase innovation, progress and lessons learned. This strategy will manifest in myriad ways, ranging from a series of convenings around our strategic priorities, to creative storytelling through written, social and broadcast media, and to direct strategic communications support to better equip grant partners to maximize the impact of their work.

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OUR MISSION

Catalyze Illinois' efforts to help children most at-risk of school failure to succeed through school, college, careers and as community members by ensuring the best possible start, beginning at birth.

OUR GOALS

- Ensure that Illinois' youngest residents arrive at kindergarten fully prepared to thrive in school.
- Support all children to be on track in literacy and math by 3rd grade.

To help every Illinois child reach his or her full potential, three questions guide our Education Program strategy:

FOCUS AREA #1: OUTSTANDING LEADERS

What would it take to produce – as a rule rather than an exception – early childhood and early elementary leaders who understand and inspire higher quality care and instruction?

The impact of high quality leadership can be felt throughout every hallway of a school, especially in the classroom. McCormick's Education Program will continue to partner with organizations that raise the quality of early childhood and early elementary instructional and administrative leadership. We will also expand the pipeline of culturally competent, diverse leaders to better serve our state's increasingly multi-cultural, multi-lingual population of children.

FOCUS AREA #2: QUALITY TEACHERS

How do we create a healthy pipeline of qualified, effective and diverse early childhood educators, and also better prepare and support them?

The quality of early childhood professionals – from home visitors to center-based educators to early elementary teachers – profoundly affects the likelihood of a child's long-term success. Building on significant progress, Illinois' challenge remains in systems alignment and improvement of teacher preparation, professional development, retention and compensation.

FOCUS AREA #3: ENGAGED FAMILIES

Is it possible to equip all families with the tools, knowledge and skills necessary to unlock their child's full potential?

Supported families are engaged families, and engaged families play the most important role in ensuring a child's healthy development at home. The Education Program is interested in strategies, practices and research that help infants, toddlers and preschoolers by supporting and coaching their parents.

Our Vision

We envision a day in which Illinois will be able to share with the rest of the nation how we developed an early childhood system that delivers every child to kindergarten fully prepared. That system will coordinate and align seamlessly with K-12 and the higher education system. It will be a system that consistently, reliably prepares every child and family – and particularly those historically cut out of the American Dream – to succeed long term. The work is difficult and many challenges remain. No longer do we face the question of what to do, however; we've figured that out. The question before us today is how to do it at scale. The stakes are high for Illinois in developing vibrant and civically-engaged leaders. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation's Education Program is honored to play a small but committed role moving that dream closer to reality.