

MCCORMICK FOUNDATION INVESTS MORE THAN \$5 MILLION TO SUPPORT THE ILLINOIS EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

New Grants Strengthen Program Quality and Increase Access for At-Risk Children and Families

CHICAGO, May 28, 2014— Recognizing that early care and education initiatives are the best investments to ensure the successful outcomes of all children, the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) is investing more than \$5 million in grants to 17 nonprofit organizations to support quality as well as expanded early care and education in Illinois.

The grant portfolio, over two years, will support programs, including [principal preparation](#) and [early math](#) instruction, access to common learning standards, public policy and advocacy. In an effort to increase support around Illinois' youngest children, nearly \$1 million of the grants will go towards helping [infants and toddlers](#) and their families gain access to resources that promote healthy development.

According to the study [The Youngest Illinoisans: A Statistical Look at Infants and Toddlers in Illinois](#), nearly one (1) in four (4) Illinois children under age six are living in poverty. Research also tells us that poverty has its most detrimental effects when it occurs in the early years of life.

With a grant of \$225,000 over two years, the [University of Chicago – Thirty Million Words](#) project will support language acquisition in low- income infants and toddlers through an intense 12-week program that combines parent education, child behavioral strategies, and technology in a multimedia platform. The name of the project refers to a study showing that low-income children hear 30 million fewer words than their middle-income peers by age (4) four. By increasing their language acquisition at a young age, the intervention can help offset the negative effects of poverty on vocabulary, literacy, and school achievement. Another grant to the [University of Chicago School Of Social Service Administration](#), appropriately named “Dad’s Matter,” targets single moms with infants and seeks to increase fathers’ participation in their young children’s lives.

“We can never forget a fundamental fact: learning begins at birth,” said Sara Slaughter, Director of the Education Program at the McCormick Foundation. “That’s why we have several grants focused exclusively on the first three (3) years of life. Those grants address language acquisition and nurturing teachers, as well as parents, so the adults in a young child’s life can create good learning environments, especially for our children in low-income families.”

“We are committed to funding initiatives that help Illinois communities and families address healthy development, parental support, and access to quality early childhood programs,” said David Hiller, President and CEO of the McCormick Foundation. “This is an exciting time for the early care and education field because it is now getting well-deserved attention on both the federal and state levels. What we need now is more action.”

A full list of the McCormick Foundation’s 2014 Education Program grants include:

Infants and Toddlers

- **Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)** (\$355,000) over two years to support infant and toddler teachers who need additional education and degrees that correlate to better child outcomes.
- **University of Chicago – Thirty Million Words** (\$225,000) over two years to support a multimedia curriculum to address language deficits in toddlers.
- **University of Chicago – School of Social Service Administration** (\$300,000) over two years to support “Dads Matter,” a home visitation program designed to increase the family participation of low-income fathers.

Quality Teachers and Programs

- **Action for Illinois Children** (\$250,000) over one year to support Chicago’s “Ready to Learn” initiative, which aims to drive continuous quality improvements in Chicago-funded early childhood programs.
- **Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)** (\$250,000) over one year to help early childhood teachers and center directors gain access to professional development.
- **Illinois State University** (\$250,000) over two years to create training materials to support best practices for principals and early childhood teachers.
- **Rush Neurobehavioral Center** (\$300,000) over one year to support the implementation of a Preschool Executive Functioning Curriculum in five Chicago elementary schools.

Quality Leaders

- **National Louis University** (\$500,000) over two years to support the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership.
- **New Leaders** (\$250,000) over one year for general operating support for principal training programs, which include efforts to recruit more principal candidates with early education experience and to train all principal candidates to lead early education classrooms.
- **SIUE/IL Education Research Council and University of Chicago’s Consortium on Chicago School Research** (\$500,000) over two years to support work to evaluate Illinois’ principal preparation efforts.
- **University of Illinois at Chicago – School of Education** (\$450,000) over two years to support Common Core-aligned professional development for Pre-K through 5th grade math instruction in Chicago Public Schools.

Public Policy

- **Action for Illinois Children** (\$300,000) over one year for general operating support and a grantee-led evaluation of the Illinois early childhood system.
- **Advance Illinois** (\$150,000) over one year for general operating support.
- **BUILD Initiative – TSNE** (\$175,000) over one year for general operating support and to support Illinois in improving infant and toddler systems.
- **Ounce of Prevention Fund** (\$275,000) over one year for general operating support.
- **Voices for Illinois Children** (\$275,000) over one year for general operating support.

Family/Community Outreach

- **Chicago Children's Museum** (\$80,000) over one year for general operating support for early learning programming, particularly serving low-income and underserved families.
- **DuPage Children's Museum** (\$175,000) over one year for general operating support for early learning programming, particularly serving low-income and underserved families and for strategic transition planning.
- **Sesame Workshop** (\$250,000) over two years to support the development and implementation of an autism spectrum awareness initiative.

###

About the 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 \$1.5 billion in assets. For more information, please visit www.McCormickFoundation.org, follow us on [Twitter](#), and "Like" us on [Facebook](#).

Contact: Francisco Martinez, (312) 445-5068, FMartinez@McCormickFoundation.org