

## MCCORMICK GRANTS ADVANCE 20-YEAR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

*Nearly \$6 Million in New Grants to Strengthen Program Quality & Increase Access for At-Risk Children*

**CHICAGO, June 17, 2013**— Recognizing early care and education is the best investment to ensure the healthy development of at-risk children, the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) will be awarding nearly \$6 million in grants over two years to 19 nonprofit organizations to support a quality system of early care and education in Illinois. The approved grants will support public policy and advocacy efforts focusing on access and common learning standards, and quality programs, including [principal preparation](#) and [early math](#) instruction.

Research shows a child's academic success is often shaped long before he or she steps into a kindergarten classroom. With nearly one in four Illinois children under the age of six living in poverty and the economy continuing to take a toll on the early education field, many at-risk children are losing access to quality programs that help form the foundation for their future success. The Illinois' early education system also faces the challenge of meeting the needs of the rising number of English Language Learners. In Illinois, 26 percent of children under the age of five are Latino. The lack of access to quality programs and a qualified workforce contribute to the state's growing achievement gap.

"Given that the achievement gap is complex and difficult to close, the best remedy is school readiness for all young children," said Sara Slaughter, director of the Education Program at the McCormick Foundation. "One critical component to help close the achievement gap is to align pre-k and k-12 learning standards and ensure steady academic and developmental support. These newly approved grants will help Illinois continue to address these critical issues and improve the quality of early education programs that help children enter school ready to succeed."

In a unique public/private partnership, the Foundation will be awarding [Illinois Action for Children](#) a \$250,000 grant to support improvements in Chicago's early education programs. Action will collaborate with Chicago Public Schools and the Department of Family Support Services, which together operate over 700 early-learning programs, to help align standards and advance a more unified early childhood system. The grant will help identify early education programs with high needs and will create group trainings and learning communities to support quality improvement.

"There is no better foundation we can provide for our children's success and our community's future than investments being made in quality early care and education programs," said David Hiller, president and CEO of the McCormick Foundation. "We applaud the tireless work and collaboration of our grantees and partners who, over the past 20 years, have been committed to helping every child, in every community have access to a quality education."

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2013, the McCormick Foundation has invested more than \$110 million since 1993 to help build a system of quality early care and education in Illinois for all children ages birth through eight.

A full list of the Foundation's 2013 Early Childhood Education priorities and grants include:

### **Principal & Leader Preparation**

Research confirms that early education and the quality of a principal are driving factors in student outcomes. Based on this evidence, Illinois passed legislation in 2010 requiring principal certification to begin at the preschool, not kindergarten, level. To help prepare leaders and to help principal preparation programs integrate early childhood education and other content areas, such as special education and English Language Learners by 2014, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Evanston Community Foundation** (\$160,000) over two years to develop new early childhood leaders through the Illinois Early Fellowship
- **New Leaders** (\$250,000) 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

### **Teacher Training & Quality Programs**

The need to create and support a quality early education teaching force is not only important to students' academic success, but it's also critical to moving toward a globally competitive education system. In particular, early math skills have been cited as the best predictor for school readiness and later achievement. However, to help children develop foundational math concepts, a teacher must first understand them well themselves. In support of ongoing teacher learning, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Big Shoulders Fund** (\$280,000) to strengthen the network of early childhood educators in inner-city Catholic Schools supported by the Big Shoulders Fund
- **Erikson Institute** (\$450,000) to provide training for community college faculty to improve math instruction in early childhood teacher training programs
- **Illinois Action for Children** (\$250,000) to support development of a quality enhancement team for early childhood programs across Chicago
- **Illinois State University** (\$485,000) to adapt a widely used teacher evaluation tool (Charlotte Danielson) for Pre-k to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms
- **University of Chicago NORC** (\$300,000) to develop and disseminate effective teaching strategies in early math

### **Helping At-Risk Children and Families Succeed**

Parents are children's first and most important teachers. However, it can be difficult for parents to know how to support their child's learning both in and out of school. It can be more difficult especially if the family or child is affected by poverty, English as a second language, teen or single parent

homes, developmental delays, trauma/violence, or military deployment. To help at-risk children and families succeed, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Chicago Children's Museum** (\$80,000) for general operating support for early learning programming, particularly serving low-income and underserved families
- **DuPage Children's Museum** (\$125,000) for general operating support for early learning programming, particularly serving low-income and underserved families
- **Kohl Children's Museum** (\$160,000) over two years to increase parent and/or caregiver engagement in early childhood through a new museum initiative
- **Sesame Workshop** (\$100,000) to support a multimedia outreach initiative for military families and families experiencing trauma
- **Zero to Three** (\$280,000) over two years for the development of interactive tools for military and veteran families

### **Maintaining Funding and Policy Supports**

The State of Illinois was recently awarded about \$50 million from a [Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge](#) federal grant to help support quality early childhood education in Illinois. The federal grant allows Illinois to make a big leap forward in systems building that is required to ensure *all* children enter school ready to succeed. However, there is need to ensure effective implementation of programmatic and policy proposals stemming from the Early Learning grant. To help develop and implement policies and programs to create a quality system and maintain public and legislative support for early education, the Foundation has awarded grants to:

- **Advance Illinois** (\$150,000) for general operating support
- **Council for a Strong America - Fight Crime Invest in Kids Illinois** (\$240,000) over two years for general support
- **Latino Policy Forum** (\$375,000) over two years for general operating support; the expansion of Abriendo Puertas (Spanish for Opening Doors); and a data collection and mapping project on English Language Learners (ELLs)
- **Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law** (\$230,000) over two years for general operating support
- **National Academies of Sciences** (\$150,000) to conduct a study and prepare a report on the science of children's health, learning and development from birth to age eight
- **Ounce of Prevention Fund** (\$500,000) over two years to support the Birth-to-Eight Project, a partnership between the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute, to build a comprehensive birth-to-eight model of education
- **BUILD Initiative - TSNE** (\$100,000) for general operating support and analysis of lessons Illinois can learn from other states' advances in birth through eight

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**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 billion in assets. For more information, please visit [www.McCormickFoundation.org](http://www.McCormickFoundation.org), follow us on [Twitter](#), or like us on [Facebook](#).

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