



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES REFORMS TO CHICAGO'S APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ACROSS THE CITY

New system will create higher standards so that all children start kindergarten ready to learn, and will provide parents with easy access to information about the best programs

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced an overhaul of the City's early childhood education programs, based on recommendations made by the Early Childhood Task Force, in an effort to serve the most at-risk children in high-quality programs and increase transparency and accountability of the City and individual programs.

"We must provide children in every neighborhood with the tools they need to excel in school and succeed in the workforce, and that includes providing excellent early childhood education," said Mayor Emanuel at Educare Early Childhood Center in the city's Grand Crossing neighborhood. "These reforms will help parents find opportunities for their children and better prepare our students for the rigors of elementary, middle and high school classrooms."

The City is implementing several programs to position Chicago at the forefront of local and national Race to the Top efforts and will implement the following reforms:

- ***Unveil a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)*** for all City-funded early childhood programs beginning July 1, 2012. The 5-star rating system will allow parents to assess all programs objectively while incentivizing quality and guidelines for improvement for early childhood educators. The rating system will be finalized by July 1, 2012, providing parents with guidelines for choosing programs for the children in the upcoming school year.
- ***Launch an Interactive Early Childhood Web Portal*** as a one-stop-shop to help parents find programs, assess program quality based on the QRIS star rating, understand their child's eligibility for programs, and provide an interactive platform for parents to provide input regarding programs. The portal will be fully operational by July 2012, in time for parents to use as a resource for the next school year.

"We are thrilled that the City of Chicago is leading the way in producing high-quality education for all its children and that the Mayor agrees that we must invest in children's learning beginning at



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birth,” said Diana Rauner, President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. “These investments represent a crucial step toward helping more children achieve their full potential and strengthening our city’s future by producing a more educated workforce and a stronger economy.”

The Early Childhood Task Force includes members from city agencies, early learning advocacy groups, and direct service providers. The task force launched in July at the direction of Mayor Emanuel; throughout the summer the task force engaged over 60 early childhood experts across the city and state with the goal of transforming early childhood education in Chicago and positioning the City at the forefront of the State’s Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Mayor Emanuel also named the Executive Council members that will be charged with the coordination of the new initiatives moving forward.

Executive Council Members

Jean-Claude Brizard

Jean-Claude Brizard was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools on May 26, 2011. Brizard comes to CPS with a distinguished career spanning 25 years in education and public service. In 2008, Brizard was appointed Superintendent of Schools for the Rochester City School District. Prior to his time in Rochester, Brizard worked for 21 years as a teacher, principal and administrator in the New York City school system. As a New York City Regional Superintendent, Brizard supervised more than 100 K-12 schools serving over 100,000 students. Prior to holding that position, Brizard served as Executive Director for Secondary Schools, Region 8 Instructional Superintendent. He began his career in education as a high school physics teacher and junior high school science teacher.

A native of Haiti, Brizard holds a Master's Degree in School Administration & Supervision from The City College of New York, a Master's Degree in Science Education from Queens College and a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from Queens College. Brizard is also a graduate of the Superintendents' Academy of the Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, a former Executive Committee member of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Fellow of the Aspen Institute New Schools Venture Fund's prestigious Entrepreneurial Leaders for Public Education Fellowship Program. He is one of 24 accomplished leaders who have joined the Aspen Institute's Global Network. He is also a member of the Aspen Institute Urban Superintendents' network. This group is led by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and the Harvard University School of Education.

Brizard credits his parents—both of whom were educators—with inspiring him to pursue a career in education. An avid pilot, he is married to K. Brooke Brizard and is the proud father of two children.



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Bechara Choucair

Dr. Bechara Choucair is Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). Prior to his appointment at CDPH, Dr. Choucair was Executive Director of Heartland International Health Center. From 2001-05, Dr. Choucair served as Medical Director of Crusader Community Health in Rockford, Illinois. He has also served as Vice-chair of Community Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Dr. Choucair earned a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Chemistry and a Medical Diploma from American University of Beirut. From 1997-2000 he did his Family Practice Residency at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. In 2009 he earned a Master's Degree in Health Care Management from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Evelyn Diaz

Evelyn Diaz is the Commissioner of The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS). Previously, Diaz served as CEO of the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC), where she worked closely with City government and the private sector to improve workforce development programs across Chicago. Before joining the CWIC, Diaz served as deputy chief of staff for Mayor Daley, where she led the creation of the Chicago LEADS initiative, chaired the City's Green Jobs Initiative, and oversaw health, human services, and employment investments. Previously, she worked for the Chicago Jobs Council Diaz earned her B.A. from the University of Notre Dame and her M.A. in social service administration from the University of Chicago.

Ricardo (Ric) Estrada

Ric Estrada was named President and CEO of Metropolitan Family Services, one of Chicago's first and largest human services agencies, in March 2011. Prior to joining Metropolitan Estrada served as First Deputy Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS). There he managed a \$460 million budget, developing strategies to strengthen program services supporting Chicago's vulnerable families, focusing on children, youth, seniors and the homeless, as well as directing the department's emergency services Division. Before that he served as Executive Director and Associate Executive Director of Erie Neighborhood House in Chicago, where his accomplishments included creating Erie Elementary Charter School, growing the organization's budget from \$5.8 million to more than \$11 million, and expanding the organization's facilities and service areas.

Janine H. Lewis

Janine Hill Lewis is Executive Director of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition (IMCHC). Her passion for improving health outcomes for mothers, children, and families, coupled with her extensive academic and practice-based knowledge, make her an important champion and leader in maternal and child health. Most recently, Janine served as the President of Lewis Health Solutions, a consulting firm that works with non-profit and governmental agencies across the United States. Janine received her MPH at Boston University in international health, and is a current PhD



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candidate in MCH programs, methods, and policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. In addition to being an author and lecturer, Janine serves in the Maternal and Child Health Section of the American Public Health Association, and on Boards of the March of Dimes Illinois Chapter and Family Focus Evanston.

Samuel J. Meisels

Dr. Meisels has served as president of Erikson Institute since 2002. He holds the Irving and Neison Harris President's Chair. He came to Erikson after 21 years at the University of Michigan, where he is now professor and research scientist emeritus. Previously, he was a faculty member in the Department of Child Study and director of the Eliot-Pearson Children's School at Tufts University. A former preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade teacher, he also served as senior advisor in early childhood development for the Developmental Evaluation Clinic of Boston's Children's Hospital. He holds a doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. One of the nation's leading authorities on the assessment of young children, Dr. Meisels has published over 200 articles, books, and monographs, and is co-author of the Work Sampling System, the Early Screening Inventory Revised, The Ounce Scale and the Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention.

Diana Rauner

Diana Mendley Rauner is President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a public-private partnership serving at-risk children and their families from before birth to age five. The Ounce advocates for programs and policies that benefit young children and families; provides training to early childhood professionals in Illinois; and engages in rigorous research and evaluation projects that contribute to best practices throughout the early childhood field. Educare, the Ounce's birth-to-five school on Chicago's South Side, has become a national model for narrowing the academic achievement gap for low-income children. In the last 10 years, another 15 Educare Schools have been established across the country, in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Fund.

Prior to joining the Ounce of Prevention, Rauner was a Senior Research Associate at Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, where she worked with public agencies and private foundations on the evaluation of programs that support early childhood development. Rauner has a background in investment banking and private equity and previously worked for private equity investment firms in Chicago and San Francisco. She holds a Ph. D. in developmental psychology from the University of Chicago, an M.B.A. from Stanford University, and a B.A. from Yale University.

Jesse Ruiz

Jesse H. Ruiz was appointed as the Vice President of the Chicago Board of Education by Mayor Rahm Emanuel in May of 2011. Mr. Ruiz was also recently appointed to the U.S. Department of Education Equity and Excellence Commission. Previously, Mr. Ruiz served as Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education. He served by appointment of the Governor of Illinois from September 2004 to May 2011.



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Mr. Ruiz is a partner at Drinker Biddle & Reath's Corporate and Securities Group and co-chair of the firm's Diversity Committee. He is legal counsel to the 14 Illinois senators and representatives who formed the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus and the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation. In August 2010, Mr. Ruiz was appointed to the ABA Presidential Advisory Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities by the President of the American Bar Association. He is past President of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois and Past Chairman of the Hispanic Lawyers Scholarship Fund of Illinois. He is also Past Chairman of the Chicago Committee on Minorities in Large Law Firms.

Elizabeth Swanson

Elizabeth Swanson is Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Deputy Chief of Staff for Education. Prior to joining the Emanuel Administration, Swanson was the Executive Director of The Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation, which invests in people and programs that enrich the life experiences of Chicago's children. Previously, Swanson led the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Management and Budget under CEO Arne Duncan. Swanson has also served as director of the CPS Office of Extended Learning Opportunities.

Swanson has devoted her career to youth development and education reform, working for both local and federal government, as well as a number of non-profit organizations. Swanson holds a Bachelor's from Amherst College and Master's in Public Policy from the University of Chicago. Swanson's three school-age children attend CPS schools.

Maria Whelen

Maria Whelan has served as Illinois Action for Children's President and CEO since 2001. She leads the organization's mission to support strong families and powerful communities where children matter most, through the advancement of innovative human services programs and responsive public policies that improve conditions for children and families in Illinois. Prior to joining Illinois Action for Children, Whelen served as the founding Executive Director of the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, a multicultural nonprofit partnership among parents, youth and communities on Chicago's West Side.

Whelen's leadership has been recognized through awards and fellowships, including the Community Service Fellowship from the Chicago Community Trust, and Leadership Greater Chicago. Whelen currently serves on several boards, including the Illinois Early Learning Council, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Early Childhood Advisory Committee (Chicago Public Schools and Illinois Child Care Advisory Council). Whelen holds a Master's degree in Social Services from The University of Chicago, and a Bachelor's degree in History from Clarke College. Whelen lives in Chicago with her husband and three daughters.

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