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MAYOR EMANUEL AND PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early Learning Center Part of a Three-Year \$36 Million Investment in Early Childhood Education

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined President Bill Clinton today at the Metropolitan Family Services Early Learning and Wellness Center in Englewood to highlight the importance of increased access to high-quality early childhood education. Mayor Emanuel has committed \$36 million in early childhood education over three years to add early learning programming for an additional 5,000 Chicago children. This investment is in stark contrast to the more than \$6 million the Federal Government has cut from Head Start funding for the City.

Prior to the event, Mayor Emanuel invited President Clinton to tour the new early learning center, established to serve the Englewood and New City/Back of the Yards communities. The Mayor made the request because of President Clinton's work, as president and through his Foundation, stressing the importance of early childhood education.

"Investing in high-quality early childhood education is essential to our children's future success," said Mayor Emanuel. "I have set a goal for the children of the City of Chicago to graduate 100 percent college ready and 100 percent college bound. Early learning provides a lasting foundation for our children as being ready for the first day of college starts with being ready for the first day of first grade."

To accomplish the goal of having every child in the City of Chicago ready to learn by kindergarten, the City has embarked on an ambitious effort to achieve three distinct goals:

- Increase access and serve the most at-risk children in high-quality programs.
- Raise the quality of early childhood programs in Chicago.
- Bolster transparency and accountability across the educational services spectrum.

The City of Chicago supported the development of the Metropolitan Family Services Early Learning and Wellness Center to provide high-quality full day early learning and pre-kindergarten as well as wraparound and health services for families in the Englewood and Back of the Yards. The new Early Learning and Wellness Center is the first of its kind for these neighborhoods and exemplifies the Mayor's investments in expanding access and raising quality across the city's early learning programs. Starting in 2014, all of the City's early learning centers require that all instructors have a

bachelors' degree or higher.

"When you know better, you do better and we want families to know what quality looks like and what it feels like to be empowered to do better for themselves," said Jennifer Alexander, Program Director of ECE at Metropolitan Family Services

In addition, as part of the City's ongoing commitment to ensure our youngest learners have access to high-quality education, Mayor Emanuel also recently celebrated the first year of full-day kindergarten for all 30,700 Chicago Public Schools kindergarten students.

"We are proud to showcase Englewood's new Learning and Wellness Center today because it exemplifies the innovative ways we are using the Mayor's new early learning investments to increase access and quality in under-served communities. The Center is bringing early education, healthcare, and family support together to help our youngest residents thrive."

The City developed an Early Learning Portal that serves as a one-stop-shop to help parents find programs, assess program quality, and understand their child's eligibility for programs. To access the portal, please visit www.chicagoearlylearning.org, text your zip code to 773.886.1819, or call the Chicago: Ready to Learn! hotline at 312.229.1690.

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