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**MAYOR EMANUEL UNVEILS ONLINE EARLY LEARNING PORTAL TO HELP PARENTS AND FAMILIES FIND QUALITY PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS**

*Portal Includes Interactive Map, Text-For-Information Feature And Comprehensive Information on Hundreds of Early Learning Programs for Children Located Across the City*

As part of the his administration's focus on increasing access to quality early learning programs for children across the city and emphasis on helping parents get and stay involved in their children's education, Mayor Rahm Emanuel today launched a new online Early Learning Portal, [www.chicagoearlylearning.org](http://www.chicagoearlylearning.org). The portal is an easy-to-use, interactive website that puts information about hundreds of quality early learning programs across the city all in one place.

"Early learning programs are essential to the development and future success of a child. We are not only investing in these programs with an unprecedented level of support from this year's City budget, but we are ensuring parents have the information they need to access these critical programs," said Mayor Emanuel. "An engaged parent is key to a child's success, and this interactive, easy-to-use website will help parents and families get involved and stay involved in their children's learning, starting at an early age."

Parents can input their address to automatically see options available to them in their neighborhood, use a map to find program options nearby, gather comprehensive information about the programs, do a side-by-side comparison of programs, and use a texting feature to get information right on their phones.

The Early Learning Portal also allows parents to access information about programs by text message, without requiring an Internet connection. Parents and families can text their zip codes to 773-886-1819 to receive information about nearby early learning sites.

"There are few choices more important than who parents entrust to provide their young children with care and education," said Roseanna Ander, Executive Director of the Urban Education Lab. "The goal of the Chicago Early Learning Portal is to help provide Chicago's parents with information to assist them in that choice."

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Information available about the early learning programs include: site name, address, phone number, email and website, number of classrooms, range of ages that are served by the program and programming schedule. The site also notes which programs are nationally accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children and will eventually include information about each program's statewide rating, once the Illinois Quality Rating Improvement System is launched.

The Early Learning Portal was developed by the Mayor's Office in collaboration with Smart Chicago Collaborative and the University of Chicago Education Lab, and development was supported by funding through the Pritzker Children's Initiative, a project of the J.B. & M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. Funding for the initiative was first announced at the Clinton Global Initiative's CGI America conference this past June. With the formal launch of the portal today, developers will work with Illinois Action for Children to test the portal and gather feedback from users, in an additional effort to increase parental engagement and ensure the portal is as useful as possible.

"We were happy to collaborate with the City on this interactive map, which will allow parents and families to find information about these programs easily and quickly. We're interested in hearing from parents and caregivers on what would make the site more useful to them," said Dan O'Neil, Executive Director of the Smart Chicago Collaborative. "We're also releasing the code for the site as open source, so that it can be used to make similar map-based sites showing resources across the city."

"Our focus is on making sure children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. M.K. and I share Mayor Emanuel's strong commitment to providing high-quality early learning for infants, toddlers and their families," said J.B. Pritzker, president of the J.B. & M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. "Helping Chicago parents and caregivers identify the best early childhood educational opportunities in their neighborhoods is critically important. This online interactive, one-stop shop will help parents and caregivers access and better manage the challenging process of selecting a high-quality early learning program for their infants and toddlers."

The Early Learning Portal is one recommendation developed by Mayor Emanuel's Early Learning Task Force, which launched in July 2011 and engaged over 60 early childhood experts across the city and state with the goal of transforming early childhood education in Chicago. The Task Force included members from city agencies, early learning advocacy groups, and direct service providers.

"This web portal will help parents make critical early care and education decisions for their young children. It will help parents find and compare programs that best support their children's early learning and development, and contribute to later school success," said Maria Whelan, President of Illinois Action for Children.

This past August, Mayor Emanuel announced a major investment that will expand access to early learning programming for over 5,000 children over three-years and announced an overhaul the City's process for reviewing and allocating funding for these programs in order to ensure high-quality seats that give children in every neighborhood the best chance at success later in life.

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### **About Pritzker Children's Initiative**

The Pritzker Children's Initiative, a national project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, seeks to enhance the early learning capabilities of infants and toddlers, with a special focus on at-risk children and their families. The Foundation is a private family foundation deeply committed to the pursuit of social justice and to shaping innovative and effective strategies for solving society's most challenging problems. Among the initiatives supported by the Pritzker Children's Initiative are the Pritzker Consortium on Early Childhood Development, a research collaborative led by Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman of the University of Chicago; the First Five Years Fund, a national early childhood advocacy project; and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, one of the nation's leading providers of programs, research and policy focused on helping at-risk infants and toddlers and their families.

### **About the University of Chicago Urban Education Lab**

The University of Chicago Urban Education Lab (UEL), affiliate of the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute (UEI), is dedicated to working in partnership with local, state and federal government agencies to carry out randomized education-policy experiments and other rigorous research studies aimed at improving education policy and outcomes for youth in urban schools. The UEL, led by Roseanna Ander, Jonathan Guryan, Timothy Knowles, Jens Ludwig, and Stephen Raudenbush, is a network of 43 leading education policy experts in their respective fields from top research universities across the nation. The UEL also provides pro bono technical assistance for the structuring of new and existing policies and programs so that they can be rigorously evaluated. More information about the Urban Education Lab can be found at <https://uel.uchicago.edu>.

### **About Smart Chicago Collaborative**

The [Smart Chicago Collaborative](#) is a civic organization devoted to using technology to make lives better in Chicago. Their founding partners are the City of Chicago, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Chicago Community Trust. As a funding collaborative, they help bring together municipal, philanthropic, and corporate investments in civic innovation.