New Schools Project: A PreK–3rd initiative

The New Schools Project partners with Chicago Public Schools to promote high-quality early education, PreK–3rd grade.

The project targets five key elements of PreK–3rd:
• Caring, inclusive classroom learning communities
• High-quality teaching that is intellectually challenging
• Responsive practices and comprehensive curricula that support the development of the whole child, including the social-emotional skills necessary for high levels of learning
• Continuous assessment to guide teaching and learning
• Family and cultural connections

We emphasize the alignment of all five elements from PreK through third grade.

The New Schools Project professional development approach

The New Schools Project provides coordinated professional development supports that increase early educators’ knowledge and teaching skills and build strong PreK–3rd professional learning communities. A facilitator serves onsite at each partner school to provide supports including the following:
• Formal professional development
• Classroom observations
• Co-teaching to model new practices
• Teacher coaching
• Co-facilitation of grade-level and cross-grade-level teams to build PreK–3rd communities of practice
• Consultation for administrators

“We are very fortunate to have New Schools Project support. It’s an invaluable resource for the PreK–3 team!”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school
Who are New Schools Project’s students?
In 2011–12, the New Schools Project served more
than 1,500 PreK–3rd grade students enrolled in racially
and linguistically diverse partner schools in Chicago.
A large majority of these students were from low-income
communities.

Who are New Schools Project’s teachers?
More than 130 teachers, teacher assistants, and content
specialists received intensive professional development support. Teachers had an average of 8.7 years of
experience. Almost two-thirds of teachers had advanced
degrees. New teachers with less than 3 years of experience made up about 21 percent of the New Schools
Project participants.

Students by race

Teachers by race

Students by income

Teacher education

“I learned SO much in just this year.
What a great team of educators to work
with through our New Schools Project
partnership!”
—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

“My facilitator continues to provide the
best professional development I’ve had in
14 years of teaching.”
—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school
What professional development did the New Schools Project provide?

School-based support to teachers

New Schools Project facilitators provided more than 1,300 hours of professional development support to teachers.

The majority of this support was provided through one-on-one interaction between the facilitator and teacher, including coaching, classroom observations, and co-teaching.

Facilitators also helped lead team meetings, promoting the alignment of learning expectations, curriculum, instruction, and assessments across PreK–3rd.

Content of school-based teacher support

The majority of professional development support to teachers focused on high-quality teaching and building the classroom community and social skills needed for children to learn at challenging levels.

Formal professional development sessions also addressed other elements of high quality PreK–3rd, including curricular alignment and assessment.

How did the New Schools Project support school administrators?

New Schools Project facilitators spent 13 percent of their time providing support to administrators and other school leaders.

Facilitators provided consultation regarding PreK–3rd curriculum, teaching practices, assessment, and cross-grade alignment.

Support to administrators

The majority of support to administrators focused on supporting lead literacy teachers, reading coaches, and other content leaders regarding PreK–3rd practices.

“The Erikson partnership has been extremely beneficial this year. I feel as though I have significantly grown as an educator because of the support that I have received from this program.”

“I am eternally grateful to New Schools Project. They authentically care about student academic learning.”

—Teachers, New Schools Project partner schools
What network-wide activities did the New Schools Project support?

The New Schools Project supplemented school-based support with network-wide PreK–3rd professional development activities.

**Summer workshops**
Seventy-five teachers participated in summer professional development workshops to prepare for the 2011–2012 school year. Topics included balanced literacy, intellectual rigor in reading comprehension, and PreK–3rd curriculum alignment.

**Network conferences**
Eighty teachers and administrators participated in NSP conferences. These included two events:

*An Evening of PreK–3rd Learning* focused on the use of high-quality informational text to promote young children’s comprehension and content knowledge.


Did the New Schools Project benefit teachers’ development?

**Perceived value of supports by teachers**
Teachers rated how valuable each type of support was for their development as a teacher during 2011–12.

A large majority of teachers rated all types of support as valuable or extremely valuable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Valuable or extremely valuable (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching or modeling</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>81%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Did students make academic gains?**
Partner schools that have participated in the New Schools Network for three years or more showed accelerated gains on the ISAT.

On average, third graders gained 14 percentage points in their composite reading and math scores from 2009 to 2012 as compared to the Chicago Public School district average of 6 percentage points.

**Mean ISAT composite scores**

*Percent meets or exceeds*

![Graph showing ISAT composite scores for Chicago Public Schools and New Schools Project from 2009 to 2012]
How did the project contribute to the broader dialogue about PreK–3rd reforms?

Policy Forum
In February 2012, New Schools hosted “High-Quality PreK–3rd in the Age of Common Core” in collaboration with Erikson’s Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy. At the forum, a group of more than ninety researchers, educators, and community representatives grappled with the appropriate meaning of educational rigor in PreK–3rd grade.

Speakers presented diverse views on how best to integrate support for key aspects of children’s development, such as executive functioning, interpersonal relationships, and academic success.

These speakers included Cybele Raver, New York University; Charles Payne, University of Chicago; Gillian McNamee, Jie-Qi Chen, and Sarah Dennis, Erikson Institute; and John Price, Stephen Zrike, and Jennifer Cheatham, Chicago Public Schools.

Conference presentations
New Schools Project facilitators and faculty advanced new ideas and shared lessons learned about PreK–3rd through an array of presentations. Highlights from national conferences and regional symposia:


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