**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

The New Schools Project partnered with six schools during the 2010 academic year and facilitated an Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL) Early Childhood Task Force. The task force developed recommendations for integrating elements of PreK–3rd across all 14 AUSL turn-around schools.

**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 communities of practice. A facilitator serves onsite at each partner school to provide 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

---

**Participating schools and locations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Audubon Elementary School</td>
<td>3500 North Hoyne Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna R. Langford Community Academy</td>
<td>6010 South Throop Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie Elementary Charter School</td>
<td>1405 North Washtenaw Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaSalle II World Language Academy</td>
<td>1148 North Honore Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Fulton Elementary School</td>
<td>5300 South Hermitage Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Prescott Elementary School</td>
<td>1632 West Wrightwood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We are making academic gains due to the New Schools Project.”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school
**Who are New Schools Project’s students?**

In 2010–11, 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.

**Students by race**

- White: 19%
- Hispanic: 36%
- African American: 42%
- Asian: 3%

**Students by income**

- Low Income: 76%
- Other: 24%

“*Our PreK–3rd team has really come together as a unit to bring high-quality early childhood education to our school. The New Schools Project has been instrumental in guiding that process of self-evaluation and transformation.*”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

**Who are New Schools Project’s teachers?**

More than 130 teachers, teacher assistants, and content specialists received intensive professional development. Teachers had an average of 9.5 years of experience. Slightly over one half had advanced degrees.

**Teachers by race**

- White: 50%
- Hispanic: 19%
- Other: 14%
- African American: 16%
- Asian: 1%

**Teacher education**

- Bachelor’s degree or higher: 52%
- Master’s degree: 48%

“We are constantly improving and understanding more about early childhood, and I’m excited about the direction we are heading.”

“We feel that I am constantly growing as an educator due to the high-level conversations about PreK–3rd teaching and learning and the one-on-one professional support I receive.”

—Teachers, New Schools Project partner schools
What professional development did the New Schools Project provide?

School-based support to teachers

New Schools Project facilitators provided more than 2,400 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.

Formal PD sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Meetings</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal PD sessions</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content of school-based teacher support

The majority of professional development support to teachers focused on high-quality teaching.

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 19 percent of their time on-site at partner schools giving 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 consultation with principals about PreK–3rd policies and practices.

Supporting lead literacy teachers, reading coaches, and other content leaders 33%

Supporting administrator collaboration with teachers 12%

Consulting with principals and assistant principals 55%

“Our work with the New Schools Project has helped us make significant instructional reforms. Previously, there was little vertical alignment in our curriculum. Now we can build on children’s learning grade after grade, PreK–3rd grade.”

—Principal, New Schools Project partner school
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**
Sixty teachers participated in summer professional development workshops. Topics included assessment, team communication, creating inclusive classroom communities, reading comprehension, and intellectual rigor in PreK–3rd teaching and learning.

**Leadership meetings**
Administrators in partner schools participated in quarterly leadership meetings to explore topics such as benchmarks of progress in PreK–3rd and tools for early childhood classroom observations.

**Year-end conference**
Thirty-four teachers participated in “A Celebration of PreK–3rd Learning,” a culminating conference that featured instructional presentations by teachers in the New Schools Project network.

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 2010–11.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional development</th>
<th>98%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceived value of supports by principals**
Principals from partner schools rated how valuable they perceived each type of support to be for their teachers’ development.

Principals were unanimous in reporting “high value” for all school-based supports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional development</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network meetings</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Valuable or extremely valuable
- Not valuable or minimally valuable
Did students make academic gains?

Schools in the New Schools Network showed slightly accelerated gains on the ISAT. On average, third graders gained more than 9.6 percentage points in their composite reading and math scores from 2009 to 2011 as compared to the Chicago Public School district average of 6.4 percentage points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean ISAT composite scores</th>
<th>Percent meets or exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did the project contribute to the broader dialogue about PreK–3rd reforms?

Policy Forum
In March 2011, New Schools hosted *Preschool through 3rd Grade: A Dialogue on Educational Reform* in collaboration with Erikson’s Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy. At the forum, a diverse group of stakeholders explored the new educational possibilities suggested by the PreK–3rd approach. Speakers presented the national view on PreK–3rd as educational reform, analyzed research upon which it is grounded, and highlighted key dimensions of policy that impact PreK–3rd.

More than 100 individuals participated in the forum, including public school administrators, policy advocates, community-based early childhood program administrators, policy researchers, and higher education faculty. Fifty additional individuals participated via webcast. The perspectives voiced by these participants are shaping a second forum on the PreK–3rd approach to be held in early 2012.

National Conferences
Partner school principals, teachers, and facilitators advanced new ideas and shared lessons learned about PreK–3rd through an array of conference presentations.

Highlights include two presentations at the 2010 international conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children:

- PreK–3rd and Educational Equity: Constructing Intellectually-Challenging Curricula for Young Children to Help Close Learning Gaps
- High Quality PreK–3rd as Educational Reform: What Do School Administrators Really Need to Know and Do?

For further information, please contact
Chris Maxwell, Ph.D., Director
New Schools Project
Erikson Institute
(312) 893-7204
cmaxwell@erikson.edu

Funding for the New Schools Project, 2010–11, was generously provided by
Chicago Public Schools
Joyce Foundation
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Perkins Hunter Foundation Fund at The Chicago Community Trust
Polk Bros Foundation
W. Clement & Jesse V. Stone Foundation