

New Schools Project at Erikson Institute

Data brief for 2013–14

New Schools Project: A Prekindergarten Through 3rd Grade Initiative

The New Schools Project partners with Chicago Public Schools to promote high-quality education for prekindergarten through 3rd grade classrooms.

The project targets five key elements of effective early childhood educational practice:

- Caring, inclusive classroom communities
- Intellectually challenging education
- Developmentally supportive practices
- Assessment that guides practice
- Family and cultural connections

Professional development approach

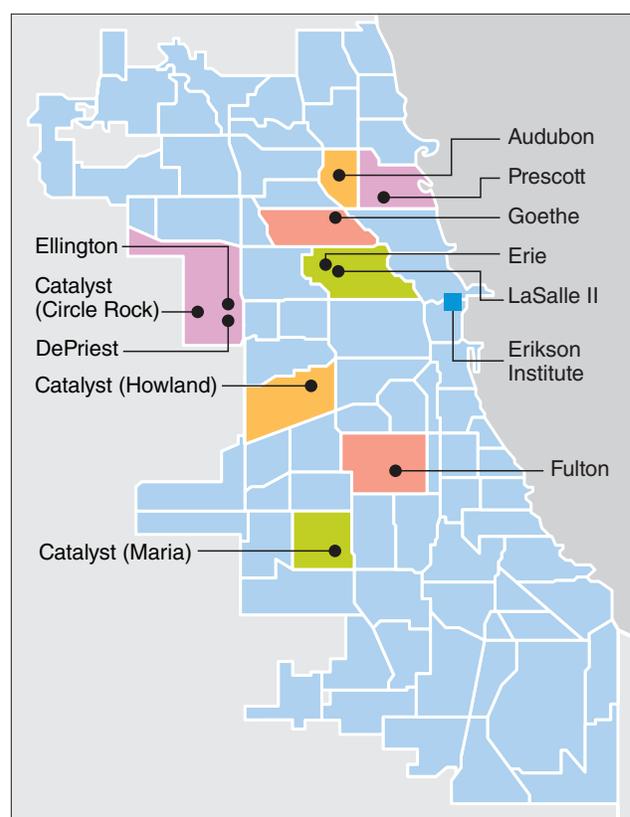
The New Schools Project provides integrated professional development to increase early educators' knowledge and teaching skills. Project facilitators at each partner school provide supports that include the following:

- School-based professional development sessions
- Classroom observations
- Co-teaching to model new practices
- Teacher coaching
- Co-facilitation of grade-level and cross-grade-level meeting
- Consultation for administrators

“My success is in part due to the partnership with Erikson, and most directly due to the engagement and invaluable services my facilitator provides. This includes her intuition, dedication, inspiration, and creativity, not only towards me but my students, too! THANK YOU!”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

Partner schools and locations



John Audubon Elementary School
3500 N. Hoyne Avenue

Catalyst Circle Rock Charter School
5608 W. Washington Boulevard

Catalyst Howland Charter School
1616 S. Spaulding Avenue

Catalyst Maria Charter School
6727 S. California Avenue

Oscar DePriest Elementary School
139 S. Parkside Avenue

Edward K. Ellington Elementary School
243 N. Parkside Avenue

Erie Elementary Charter School
1405 N. Washtenaw Avenue

Robert Fulton Elementary School
5300 S. Hermitage Avenue

Johann W. von Goethe Elementary School
2236 N. Rockwell Street

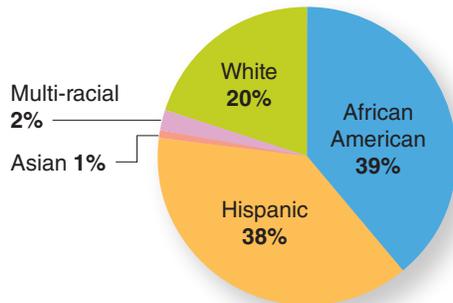
LaSalle II Magnet Elementary School
1148 N. Honore Avenue

William H. Prescott Elementary School
1632 W. Wrightwood Avenue

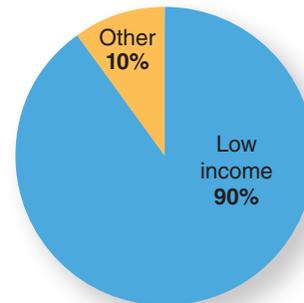
Who are the students in New Schools Project schools?

In 2013–14, the New Schools Project served more than 2,600 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



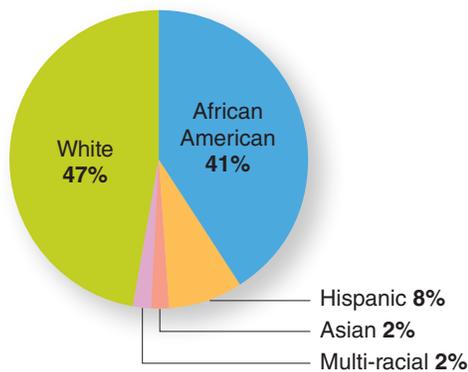
Students by income



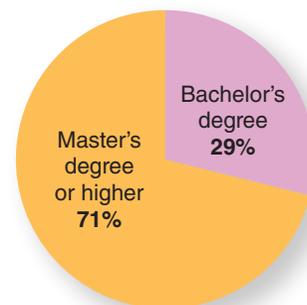
Who are the teachers in New Schools Project schools?

More than 140 teachers, teacher assistants, and content specialists received intensive professional development support. Teachers had an average of 10.4 years of experience. Almost three-fourths of teachers had advanced degrees. New teachers with less than 3 years of experience made up about 14.5% of the New Schools Project participants.

Teachers by race



Teacher education



“I think that Erikson has opened windows for me as a teacher to try new things that I am not very familiar with. I have been exposed to different ways in which my students can be more engaged and feel safe to participate in a class discussion.”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

“Thank you so much for all you’ve done—it has been exceptional and so useful!”

—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

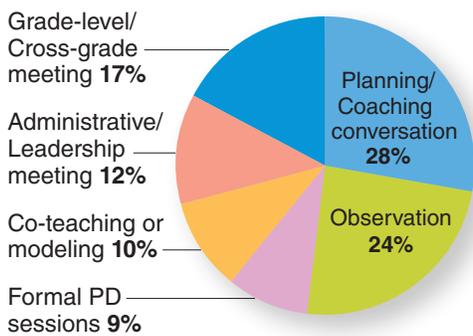
What professional development did the New Schools Project provide?

School-based support to teachers

New Schools Project facilitators provided more than 2,200 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 and planning conversations, classroom observations, and modeling.

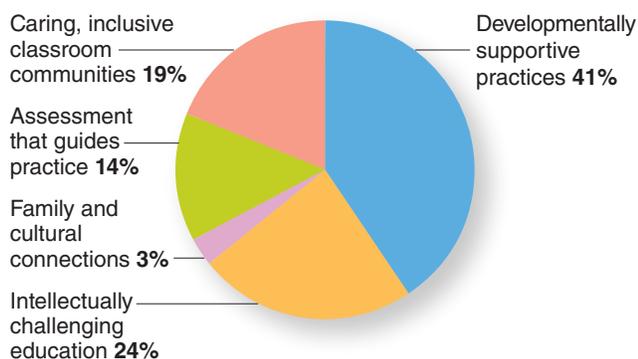
Facilitators also helped lead team meetings, promoting the alignment of learning expectations, curriculum, instruction, and assessments across PreK-3rd grades.



Content of school-based teacher support

The majority of professional development support to teachers focused on building teachers' content knowledge to foster developmentally supportive practices for their students.

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

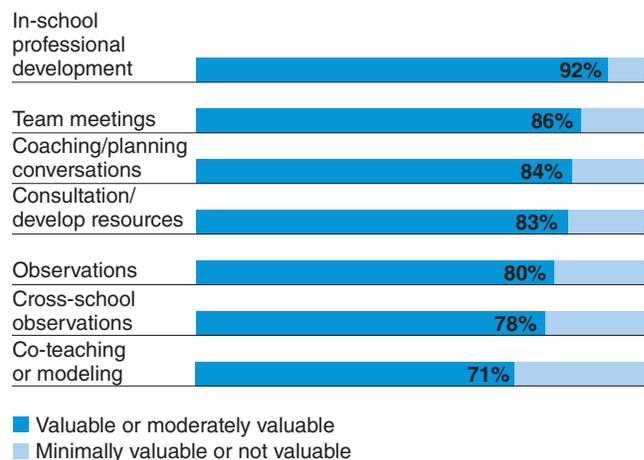


Did school-based support benefit PreK-3rd teachers' development?

Perceived value of supports by teachers

Teachers rated how valuable each type of support was for their development as a teacher during 2013-14.

A large majority of teachers rated all types of support as valuable or moderately valuable, with in-school professional development and team meetings perceived as the most important components of school-based support that the New Schools Project provides. In particular, the content of the professional development and the opportunity for collaboration with colleagues were seen as most valuable.



“Thank you for your support and invitation to the program. It has been SO helpful!”

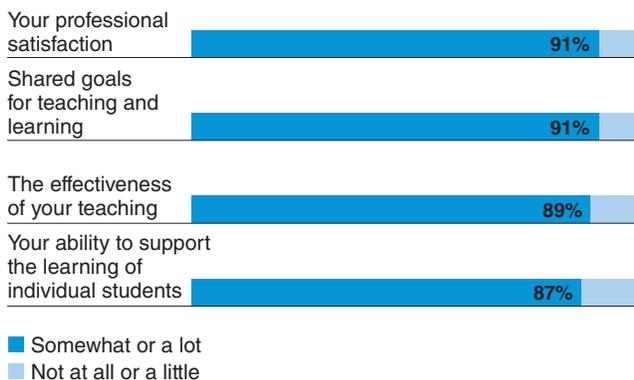
—Teacher, New Schools Project partner school

Did the professional learning communities benefit PreK–3rd teachers' development?

Perceived contribution of PLC

The New Schools Project establishes professional learning communities (PLC) for PreK-3rd educators to share their expertise and collaborate on common instructional goals.

Teachers rated how their PLC and collaborative work among colleagues contributed to their professional development. A large majority of teachers believed that the PLC contributed to their professional development somewhat or a lot. Teachers reported improvements in their professional satisfaction and their ability to share goals for teaching and learning with participation in a PLC.



How did teachers engage in teacher leadership opportunities?

The New Schools Project supports teacher leadership opportunities to build productive professional learning communities, which in turn support sustainable change within schools. Facilitators encourage teachers to become involved in leadership opportunities.

Of the partner school teachers, 60% became involved in at least one PreK-3rd leadership opportunity, including the following:

- Participated on the Erikson PreK-3rd Leadership Team at their school
- Provided ongoing mentoring or coaching for other teachers
- Applied for a new certification or degree program
- Made a presentation or served on a panel at a New Schools Project event such as Celebration of Learning and Conversations Matter
- Led a professional development session at their school or program
- Served as a cooperating teacher for a student teacher
- Led a professional development session at a different school or program
- Presented at a national or regional professional conference

How are children in New Schools Project partner schools doing academically?

New Schools Project interventions focus on teacher change in order to help Chicago Public Schools build capacity for high-quality early childhood education. While doing so, we keep a close eye on indicators of student academic achievement.

In 2013, a higher percent of students in partner schools were meeting or exceeding 3rd grade targets on the ISAT compared to students in other schools across the district. For ISAT reading scores, an average of 50.1% of students in partner schools met or exceeded the target in comparison to the CPS average of 45.3%.

What network-wide activities did the New Schools Project support?

The New Schools Project supplemented school-based support with network-wide professional development activities

Summer Institutes

In preparation for the 2013–14 academic year, 64 teachers participated in professional institutes over the summer. The institutes launched each school's professional development cycle and established a focus for the academic year. Topics included balanced literacy, intellectual rigor in writing, and PreK-3rd curricular alignment of reading and writing units of study.

Conversations Matter series

Conversations Matter are seminar sessions focused on fostering discussion across the network on topics of common interest identified by teachers. The seminars also enable teachers and student teachers to engage in teacher leadership opportunities by sharing their work and giving presentations to their colleagues.

2013–14 topics include:

- Teachers and Families: Coming Together for Our Children
- Classroom Community: The Behaviors That Challenge Us
- Thinking about our Profession: Welcoming Newcomers into the PreK-3rd Circle of Colleagues

Rigor in Reading Comprehension series

Rigor in Reading Comprehension was a three-part professional development series that focused on developing rigor in read alouds and literature discussions in PreK-3rd classrooms. Teachers were able to practice strategies learned during cross-school sessions and engage in reflection with colleagues.

Network conference

Forty teachers participated in the annual *Celebration of PreK-3rd Learning*. This academic year-end conference provided a space for teachers to reflect on their year's work, and share their classroom strategies and practices with teachers within the New Schools Project network.



Rigor in Reading Comprehension



Celebration of PreK-3rd Learning

National and regional conference presentations

New Schools Project teachers, 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 include:



CMAEYC 2014 Conference

- Barron, S. & Croom, M. (2014, January). *Making Connections Through Culturally Relevant Literature*. Presentation at the Opening Minds USA Annual Conference of the Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children, Chicago, IL.
- Ellingson, T. & Maxwell, C. (2014, April). *Integrating the Illinois Learning Standards*. Presentation at College and Career Readiness Begins at Birth: Connecting the Dots for Student Success Hosted by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood (OEC), Naperville, IL.
- Fleming, J. (2014, June). *More Mirrors in the Classroom: Using Urban Children's Literature and Informational Texts to Connect Students with Content*. Presentation at the NAEYC Professional Development Institute, Minneapolis, MN.
- Gibson, K. & Maxwell, C. (2013, October). *Unleashing the Power of Play*. Presentation at the Austin Coming Together (ACT) Early Childhood Symposium, Chicago, IL.
- Gibson, K. & Maxwell, C. (2014, May). *Relationship-Based Care and Education for Preschool Children*. Presentation at the Austin Coming Together (ACT) Early Childhood Symposium, Chicago, IL.
- Lofton, N., Popchoke, L., Watson, M., & Maxwell, C. (2014, March). *What do PreK-3rd Reforms Look Like? Erikson Institute's New Schools Project Approach*. Webinar presentation for the PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group.
- Maxwell, C., Croom, M., Perez, Y., & Fleming, J. (2014, June). *Bringing Teacher Expertise and Leadership to the Forefront*. Presentation at the NAEYC Professional Development Institute, Minneapolis, MN.
- McNamee, G. (2013, October). *Literacy in Early Childhood*. Presentation at Rice University, Houston, TX.
- McNamee, G. (2014, January). *Teaching Friends: Vygotsky and Mrs. Paley Discuss How Young Children Learn from Each Other in School*. Presentation at the Opening Minds USA Annual Conference of the Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children, Chicago, IL.
- McNamee, G. (2014, May). *Literacy Development for Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Presentation at Riverside, IL.

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