


 The logo for "Schools For The City" features the text in a stylized, serif font. The words "Schools" and "City" are contained within dark rectangular boxes, while "For The" is positioned between them. The entire logo is set against a background of a stylized, dark, arched shape resembling a city skyline or a series of overlapping arches.

A fund supporting innovation, improvement, and excellence in our public schools.

The points below outline the basic principals underlying "Schools for the City," the public education fund being developed by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge.

BACKGROUND

- Schools for the City was conceived as a vehicle through which the Chicago Annenberg Challenge could raise private and corporate matching funds to support school reform efforts. The new funds raised will not only qualify as matching funds enabling the Challenge to meet the matching requirements of its grant from the Annenberg Foundation and thus "earn" the full \$49.2 million approved for Chicago, but more importantly, will provide a legacy for Chicago which will outlive the terms of the Annenberg Challenge.

Chicago is one of ten major cities in the United States to receive challenge grants from the Annenberg Foundation. In 1995, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge received a grant of nearly \$50 million for school reform, and made a commitment to match those dollars two-for-one over a five year period. Approximately 230 public schools currently receive funds from the Chicago Annenberg Challenge through programs organized in 54 networks of schools.

PURPOSE

- The purpose of the proposed public education fund, Schools for the City, is to support comprehensive school improvement efforts in local public schools through financial resources and the development of programs to serve individual schools as well as the system as a whole. As a public education fund taking its place alongside 70 other funds already in existence around the nation, Schools for the City will help mobilize support for innovation, improvement and excellence in Chicago public schools.
- Schools for the City's mission differs from other organizations in the school reform movement in that its primary focus is to develop and broker resources to organize and support a wide range of programs aimed at comprehensive school change and improved student achievement. A fundamental mission of the fund is to motivate new and sustained giving to school reform, serving as a catalyst for private sector initiative and involvement.

STRUCTURE

- The public education fund will be structured along the lines indicated in the detailed work plan (available upon request), and will be launched by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge in partnership with lead donors. "Schools for the City" is modeled after similar funds elsewhere.
- Once launched, the fund will function as a separate entity, an independent, broadly supported nonprofit organization with its own board and staff responsible for ongoing fundraising, grant making, and program development. The goal for organizing the initial board is January 1999.

STRUCTURE (cont.)

- Although independent from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Schools for the City will work collaboratively with the Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees and the CPS administration on an ongoing basis to identify needs, develop programs, and promote successes.

FUNDRAISING GOALS

- Our initial fundraising goal is to secure approximately \$2 million in lead gift commitments so that we can make a public announcement in late 1998 and open the larger campaign for support. Additional contributions towards a larger \$8-10 million goal will be sought once lead gifts are secured.
- Schools for the City will be a community-supported public foundation, and gifts will be sought from a mixture of individuals, businesses, corporations and foundations.
- We also hope to secure operating support for Schools for the City for its first three-to-five years, so that the fundraising assumed by the organization's new board and staff can focus on program support. The Chicago Annenberg Challenge will support fundraising costs for School for the City's first two years, and will seek commitments from other funders for operating support for the subsequent 2-3 years.
- Donors will be asked to make gifts in support only of the broadly defined program areas indicated in the attached document: comprehensive school restructuring; principal and teacher recruitment and development; implementation of technology to expand teaching and learning; improved communication between schools and communities; parental involvement; and evaluation to measure outcomes and the success of school reform measures. Although the new fund will not necessarily be restricted to these areas, and although open to other suggestions, gifts initially will be sought for these program areas.
- Although some endowed funds or donor advised funds ultimately may be created within Schools for the City, gifts will primarily be sought for support of the fund's annual grants and operations. This will insure that program dollars go out as quickly as possible to serve the need they were raised to serve.
- A "Leadership Council" is being developed to guide fundraising efforts. Some members of the Leadership Council may go on to become members of the Schools for the City board, which should be formed by January 1999.

For further information, contact Marianne Philbin at the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, 115 S. Sangamon, Chicago, IL 60607; 312-413-5869.

February 1998

CHICAGO'S SCHOOL REFORM EXPERIENCE

"Improving a school is like losing weight," says Barbara Peck, principal of Bateman School on Chicago's northwest side. "You can try to do it quickly, but that doesn't work. It takes months to put new approaches into practice and years to see results. Real improvement has to come from inside, from teachers, from staff, and from students and families."

For ten years now, Chicago schools have been slowly improving. Not all of them, and not without setbacks. But in every part of the city, including some of the harshest urban environments, individual schools are getting better.

School reform in Chicago is about more than ending social promotion. Once declared "the worst in the nation," Chicago's public schools are now on the upswing. School reform legislation in 1988 and 1995 opened the door to innovation, and much progress has been made. Parents, business and community organizations are involved in local schools, and test scores are up.

Chicago's reform experience is increasingly looked to as a model for other urban school systems around the country. The decentralization of the Chicago public school system has made it possible for strong principals, motivated teachers, active local school councils and involved parents to significantly improve student performance at the local school level. It has also opened schools up to new resources and input from the business and philanthropic community and others concerned about quality schools.

Chicago's unique blend of reform combines a strong central administration with flexibility at the individual school level. It guarantees system-wide stability while encouraging creativity through local participation. Chicago local school councils involve more than 5,000 community residents, teachers, and principals.

The process of transformation began with two waves of reform, the first in 1987. Chicago's parents were fed up with poor schools, bureaucratic excuses and teacher strikes. The business and civic community, fearing for the city's economic health, joined with parents and reform advocates to craft legislation that would shift money and power to the local level. Local foundations provided support to reform efforts, and lawmakers responded. When the landmark reform bill was passed in 1988, amidst a full-blown civic lobbying effort, it left parents, teachers and community members in charge of the schools.

The new Local School Councils (LSC's) could vote not to retain the principal, and hire a new one. Hundreds have done so. Principals gained latitude to pick teachers and redirect some money to local needs. They took advantage of it. Teachers were encouraged to participate in professional development and work closely with education experts. By the thousands, they did so. The previously closed and isolated system was opened up; outside resources and new ideas poured in.

Reform's early years were messy, contentious, exciting. At monthly LSC meetings, parents, teachers and administrators openly discussed and argued about budgets, teaching approaches and

policies. Teachers split into camps--- some resistant, others gung-ho. Parents, reform groups and university education departments kept the pressure on, effectively dismantling much of the central bureaucracy while building expertise and leadership in local neighborhoods. Principals-- a mix of seasoned pros and eager newcomers--- did their best to manage the chaos and inevitable political maneuvering.

Reform's second wave arrived in 1995 when the legislature reorganized the Board of Education and increased the appointment powers of the Mayor of Chicago. A smaller, tougher, Reform Board of Trustees was named and the city's energetic budget chief, Paul Vallas, was tapped as superintendent. Vallas has concentrated most on those schools that made little or no progress under reform. Principals and whole staffs have been fired or put on probation. Dysfunctional LSCs have been disbanded. Students are now held back and tutored until their test scores say they're ready for promotion. Vallas is not cherry-picking or creating trophy schools; he says his "wall-to-wall" policy is for every student, every school. That is an enormous task, but even his critics acknowledge he is making headway.

When reform began, Chicago's school system was in terrible shape. The best schools were the rare "magnet" programs that could pick their own teachers and draw student applications from across the city. Another group of neighborhood schools managed to deliver a good education, but of the nearly 500 schools citywide, perhaps 100 could be called good schools. The rest were dispirited or, more often, dysfunctional.

Chicago's schools system today is still not excellent, but there has been progress. In addition to the 100 or so good schools of yesterday, there are 150 to 200 more where hard numbers show steady gains over time. Beyond those clearly improving schools are another 100 where probation, new programs and new resources are being brought to bear. High school improvement remains a serious challenge, and some neighborhood schools have shown little progress. Important questions remain, such as how to better train teachers and find new ways to reach underperforming children. But the evidence is in. Local efforts, combined with a strong central administration, are bringing positive results.

From a report by Chicago's Successful Schools Project, an initiative of thirteen philanthropic organizations