



STEANS FAMILY FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2009-2010

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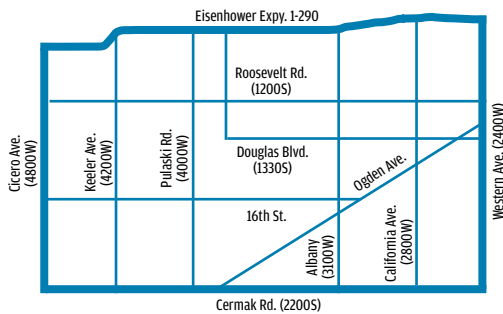
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worth the wait.”

Steans Family Commitment

The Steans Family Foundation began its long-term commitment to North Lawndale on Chicago's West Side in 1995 with the idea that targeted grantmaking in one neighborhood is a powerful way to support local efforts for transformative change. Partnerships with community stakeholders yielded a number of improvements in areas advancing children, families and community development. We were pleased with those results.

More recently, we focused our philanthropic efforts on education, the area we believe is most essential in building a strong foundation for individual growth and community development. We also believe that highly effective educational programs are essential to unlocking the promise and potential of North Lawndale, a community long burdened with persistent unemployment and poverty.



Fifteen years + One community + Strong partners = Progress

Today, our efforts are aimed at supporting a continuum of high-quality educational programs for children of all ages and grade levels, as well as initiatives for strengthening families. Opportunities for early learning are at one end of the continuum, and in North Lawndale, ensuring that families have access to these programs is a top priority. The Carole Robertson Center for Learning increased the number of slots in its high-quality infant, toddler and preschool programs with expanded facilities and training supports for staff. Two charter schools—Legacy and LEARN's flagship Romano Butler campus—also add to the area's quality preschool options.

Further along the educational continuum are area elementary schools and high schools the Foundation invests in that offer engaging and rigorous instruction and achieve authentic academic results from students. These schools—many of them are charters—have supports in place to bridge successful transitions for students as they enter kindergarten, then high school and, after graduation, college or careers. Keeping tabs on its earliest 8th-grade graduates, LEARN Charter boasts that 99 percent of them went on to finish high school; 83 percent enrolled in a four-year college or university.

At North Lawndale College Prep, rising sophomores can go to summer college programs on scholarships provided by Phoenix Rising, a program that nurtures early interests and experiences in pursuing higher education. Ninety percent of North Lawndale College Prep graduates go to college, and even more impressive, 70 percent of them finish.

We are encouraged by an innovative career residency program launched by YMEN that encourages young men from North Lawndale to return after they graduate college and give back by nurturing and inspiring the next generation. These home-grown leaders stem the brain drain by committing to live and work in the community for up to five years. They also get a personal leg up because the program pays off as much as \$25,000 in college debts and reserves most of their rent payments in savings accounts that can be used later to purchase a home in North Lawndale.

Of course, much work remains to be done. Our investments in working with parents in a variety of areas—school engagement, advocacy and leadership, parenting—are just beginning as we look for ways to connect



students' work in classrooms with what's going on in their lives outside of school and at home. We are also seeding the efforts of other groups to organize and educate parents about education policy, both local and statewide, and issues related to school safety and violence.

Looking ahead, we see limitless capacity in North Lawndale. Many thanks to our strong and committed partner organizations whose ongoing work continues to make meaningful and positive changes in the community. The journey may be long, but the destination is worth the wait.





“Preschool has long
proven its value as a
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BRIGHT FROM THE START

Laying the Groundwork for Learning

Four-year-olds sit in a circle on the classroom floor and take turns identifying letters of the alphabet. When a child correctly identifies the letter “B,” he gets free choice, a chance to select which play activity corner he wishes to visit. Two boys who have already opted for the science corner don green lab coats and then examine shells and rocks with magnifying glasses. One lifts a shell to his ear to hear the ocean.

Learning through play, a hallmark of quality early childhood programs, is integral to the curriculum at the **CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER FOR LEARNING**. Themed activity centers facilitate instructional play. So do weekly music classes taught by teachers from the noted Old Town School of Folk Music. Toddlers happily sing along with the rhythms they are pounding out on tiny bongo drums. “It’s learning through critical thinking, investigation and art,” says Jennifer Leigh, a staff manager who has worked at the center for the past 14 years and who has enrolled two daughters in programs there.

The Carole Robertson Center, launched in the mid-1970s as an after-school program for 6- to 12-year-olds, today has expanded offerings for preschoolers, toddlers and infants. The center’s two facilities in North Lawndale serve 388 children up to five years old on site, and another 150 in home-based outreach programs. The Steans Family Foundation has invested in early education efforts in four Chicago public schools, augmenting Preschool for All programs at Dvorak, Penn, Herzl and Lawndale Community Academy. Two relative newcomers, Legacy and LEARN Charter schools, add another 80 pre-K slots to the community’s supply of quality early childhood education.

Early ed supply by type, 2010

Licensed centers	1,427
Early Head Start	105
Head Start	899
Preschool for All	668
Child Parent Ctrs	120
Total	3,219

[Source: Illinois Action for Children]

Over the last 10 years, the steady increase on the supply side of early education has coincided with a sharp drop in the target population. While North Lawndale lost 14 percent of its population overall between 2000 and 2010, the cohort of children five years old and younger experienced a much steeper 25 percent decline. Even so, the total number of young children still exceeds available quality preschool slots, and some of those go unfilled when families have trouble accessing transportation or covering expenses.

Too few pre-K slots

Despite a shrinking population of young children and an increase in preschool slots, there is a 13% service gap.

3,693

0 to 5 population

3,219

Early ed slots

[Source: Illinois Action for Children]

To serve hard-to-reach families, Carole Robertson Center runs a Parent-Child Home program, a national effort that dispatches child development specialists to visit children at home, read to them and then model play-based learning activities that parents can continue on their own. Families

get to keep the books and toys the teachers bring to each visit. “We are dedicated to serving children wherever they are,” says CEO Gail Nelson. “If they can’t come to us, then we’ll go to them.” At the center’s 19th Street facility, children’s art hangs in hallways serving a dual purpose as festive decorations and teaching tools for parents. Captions displayed alongside the pictures explain—in English and Spanish—the learning objectives behind the lessons and introduce instructional terminology that helps parents better understand children’s cognitive and social development.

Drawing parents in as equal partners on a shared educational mission lays the foundation for high expectations, and empowers parents to advocate effectively on their child’s behalf. They learn how to engage with an institution and how to demand services their children may need, Nelson notes. “Our staff is well-educated about parents’ rights.”

Bottom line

PRESCHOOL HAS LONG PROVEN its value as a key lever for improving a child's life prospects. Paying for it today, however, is where roadblocks appear, making it tremendously difficult to offer enough high-quality programs to meet demand.

Operators of LEARN and Legacy charter schools, for instance, are true believers in early education. Both schools offer preschool and have done so from their inception. Leaders from both schools can cite a litany of tangible outcomes that benefit children in their programs. CEO Greg White says children in LEARN's preschool finish ready for kindergarten. Legacy Principal Lisa Kenner sees children enter kindergarten who are confident and able to talk to adults after spending just one year in the school's pre-K. They understand math concepts, like grouping, and can count to 100, she explains. They conduct age-appropriate science experiments, like the one that uses gloves coated in vegetable shortening to help 4-year-olds understand how fat insulates polar bears from the cold.

In recent years, it has gotten tougher for these schools to hold on to their pre-K programs, particularly since the district redefined them as K-8 schools, a move that effectively designated their pre-K programs optional. Leaders of Legacy and LEARN decided to keep their preschools going, but the change complicated matters in ways far too tedious to describe. In short, there's a lot more red tape.

Families have to deal with some of the fallout, too. Getting into one of these preschools no longer guarantees a spot in kindergarten, and they must enter the lottery a second time to secure one. Skillful budgeting can only go so far, and Legacy and LEARN face some tough decisions. Both schools already charge modest monthly fees for preschool to help offset expenses a bit, but preschools—with smaller class sizes, higher student-teacher ratios and larger space requirements—are more expensive to operate. And charging full tuition is not an option given the poor and low-wage working families being served.

Given everything we know about the long term benefits of high-quality preschool programs and the track records of schools like Legacy and LEARN, it's shameful that barriers like this threaten their viability. One day soon, these committed new school operators may find out they can no longer afford to carry preschool programs that disproportionately drain finances. Preschool is the biggest source of Legacy's deficit, says Kenner. But given preschool's "breathtaking" positive impact on 4-year-olds, the expense should not determine whether they're worth the trouble.



“Learning is
an unpredictable trajectory, and
every child travels a
unique path.”

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Unlocking Potential, One Child at a Time

Children enrolled at LEARN and Legacy, two charter elementary schools in North Lawndale, have teams of educators looking out for their academic future. Teachers assess what they're capable of doing. They have high expectations. They track students' work and measure progress. They get results.

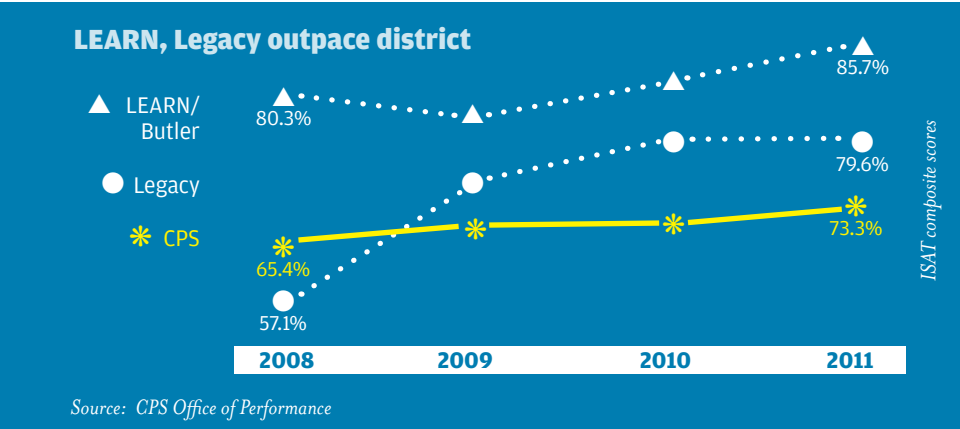
At **LEARN CHARTER**, a culture of peace, safety and respect is the foundation for solid student performance in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade and beyond. "We're crystal clear: It's all about getting kids prepared for college," says CEO Greg White. In fact, LEARN's earliest graduates have posted an impressive 99 percent high school graduation rate, and 83 percent have enrolled in four-year colleges. "Typically, low income means low achievement," White adds. "Not at LEARN." To meet the challenge, LEARN requires students at both of its North Lawndale campuses (Romano Butler and Excel) to spend more time in school, nearly two hours more per day and 25 days more per year compared to most other district schools. Classrooms are staffed by two teachers. Instruction is highly customized to address students' individual needs.

Likewise at **LEGACY CHARTER**, where students are referred to as scholars. "Teachers spend so much time getting to know each student's individual needs," says Principal Lisa Kenner. "Every child deserves to be known, loved and protected." Students have taken note. Three Legacy 7th graders describe one of their teachers as a second mother, and another teacher as "the queen of books [who] has high hopes for them."

Instruction is rigorous and engaging. One science and geography lesson for 6th graders about American mountain ranges, for example, relates to the current schoolwide book club selection, which is set in Appalachia. Students have the opportunity to share poems, songs or other forms of self expression every week at Legacy Circle assembly. Even instruction on how to play musi-

cal instruments has an academic component. “It’s like a music class and a social studies class,” explains Dasija, a 7th grader.

In the last few years, Legacy’s reputation has picked up steam. It was dubbed “the best kept secret in Chicago” by reviewers from a national charter accreditation agency, and in 2009, Legacy was one of only 30 schools statewide to receive two awards on the Illinois Honor Roll. In 2010, Principal Lisa Kenner was recognized for “outstanding leadership” at an awards gala for New Leaders for New Schools.



The payoff shows up on state achievement tests, with both Legacy (79.6 percent) and LEARN (85.7 percent) topping the district-wide average rate (73.3 percent) of students who meet or exceed state standards.

Aiming for similar impact at neighborhood schools, more resources are going into teacher training, support and mentoring for teachers at other North Lawndale schools. The New Teachers Center coached and supported about 60 first- and second-year teachers at Area 8 elementary schools. Leaders in Area 9 launched an ongoing professional development program for all faculty and administrators that included on-site coaching and intensive supports for schools that were struggling. A majority of the North Lawndale schools that participated—Herzl, King, Chalmers, Lawndale and Henson—had significant gains in reading and math.

Bottom line

LEARNING IS AN UNPREDICTABLE trajectory, and every child travels a unique path. Ideally, parents or other family are there from the start, nurturing growth and tailoring lessons for each child's individual needs. When they're old enough for formal schooling, teachers take on a good chunk of this work, with their primary focus on cognitive skills and academics. Sometimes children arrive ready to learn, primed by high-quality early educational experiences. Others hit the classroom academically raw and need extra attention. And, being different, many children fall somewhere in between.

Experienced teachers take such varied starting points in stride, with full understanding of the challenge they face: Making sure that every child achieves at least a measurable year's worth of progress before they move on to the next grade. A daunting assignment for any teacher as more than a couple dozen fresh faces are there to greet them when school reopens after summer break, but overwhelming when nearly every one of them needs more time than the teacher has to give.

Time is less an issue at LEARN and Legacy, where teachers have nearly nine hours more per week of in-school face time with students than their counterparts at most other Chicago public schools. In fact, given the abbreviated CPS school day, it's no surprise that effective instructional techniques can get lost as pressing matters of the day—a child who becomes ill, for instance—arise and must be addressed. That's why efforts to offer teachers relevant, ongoing professional development, like the initiative undertaken by administrators in Area 8, matter. Teachers were invited to attend sessions on how to tailor supports for individual students as they learned a new skill or subject. They developed a rubric to assess their efforts in using this particular teaching technique. Schools where progress had stagnated were targeted for more intensive supports.

In the first year, the training had positive impact. Most participating schools saw their test scores go up. Those that did not improve continue to adjust instructional supports. A better system to evaluate teachers will go a long way here.

At a glance, efforts like this one that reinforce basic teaching skills may seem rudimentary. Yet consider that teacher caliber is the bedrock of educational quality, and investments in teachers have multiple payoffs as students ride faster and higher along their trajectories for years and years to come.



“Measuring performance is necessary, but what’s the *best way* to measure student performance?”

PATH TO THE FUTURE *Turning College Dreams Into Reality*

Standing tall before his classmates at **NORTH LAWDALE COLLEGE PREP**, Rogherick admits that when he was a child, he accidentally started a fire that burned the carpet at his grandmother's house. Instead of confessing, however, he covered it up to avoid the consequences. Yet when a cousin whom he loved and admired was blamed, Rogherick decided to come clean. "I learned that to be a real man, you have to be an honest man."

His conclusion brings enthusiastic applause from his peers, who then launch into a rapid fire critique. Did he make eye contact and speak clearly? Did he paint a picture with words and reveal something about himself in the speech?

Students like Rogherick who are in teacher Barry McRaith's English class deliver such reflections twice a week, an exercise that allows them to explore an open-ended topic that may well be fodder for a compelling college application essay. At the same time, they hone skills in creative non-fiction writing, public speaking and a bit of self-analysis.

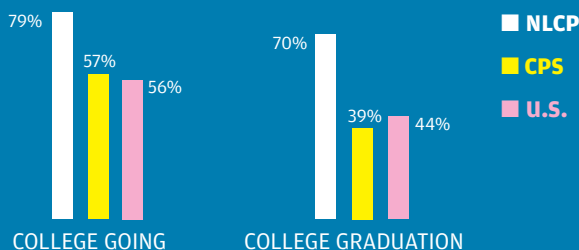
North Lawndale College Prep's holistic educational approach draws on a variety of strategies that nurture the academic, emotional and presentational skills students need to successfully make the transition to college and later, into the workforce.

From the start, most students spend summers in Phoenix Rising, an all-expenses-paid college readiness program. After freshman year, groups of participants go to college campuses or an outdoor adventure program. During the summers after sophomore and junior years, they are placed individually at colleges that are either on their admissions wish lists or that align with their academic interests or both. Crystal, for instance, spent three summers in the University of Chicago's College Scholars program and Quartell enrolled in a business session at Illinois Wesleyan.

Back at North Lawndale College Prep, corridors are decorated with college banners from every school that alumni have attended. Among them: Dartmouth College, Howard University, Indiana University and University of Chicago. When students balk at tough classroom and homework assignments, teachers remind them that the work will prepare them for future educational challenges. And students who belong to a group called Peace Warriors help maintain the school's safe, calm atmosphere by tracking the number of days with no fighting—162 days out of 176 in 2009-10—and determining how to deal with students who are involved in fights on the rare occasions when they occur.

NLCP tops CPS college-going, graduation rates

Percentage of African-American students



Sources: NLCP; CPS website; NCES report, "Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups," July 2010.

North Lawndale College Prep requires students to apply to a minimum of five colleges by October of their senior year. Counselors, working with cohorts of students they've been tracking from freshman through senior year, help them secure scholarships and financial aid. Citywide, the high school ranks in the top 10 in college admissions with close to 80 percent going to college. And even there, graduates continue to receive support from North Lawndale College Prep's alumni counselor who helps them adjust to college life and keeps up with their progress. The payoff is an impressive 70 percent college graduation rate over six years.

Tyrone Steverson, who sent all four of his daughters to North Lawndale College Prep, can attest to the school's positive impact on their lives. The eldest is now a phlebotomy student and one

Umoja ‘was like a family within the school’

REGINA JOHNSON is the first person in her family to graduate college. That was a highly unlikely prospect for her when she enrolled at Manley High School over a decade ago. At the time, only 10 percent of Manley graduates went to college, and Regina was living with her grandmother and working at a beauty supply store to help support her 15 siblings. But that changed when **UMOJA STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CORP.** entered her life.

The brainchild of educator Lila Leff, Umoja centers on four core principles to create a web of support and a culture of high expectations: (1) college and career; (2) personal development; (3) academic innovation; and (4) leadership and service. Launched in 1997 at Manley, Umoja now operates in eight Chicago public high schools. Leff and her staff encourage students to dream about a future in college and then they provide assistance with test preparation, college admissions and financial aid applications.

In Umoja, Regina found mentors who encouraged her to speak up and make her voice heard; mentors who pushed her to go the extra mile. “It was like a family within the school,” she recalls. The coaching helped when she participated in a mock trial—taking on the role of prosecutor—and was inspired to pursue law as a career. Tours of colleges in the Midwest and the South helped Regina believe going to college was a real possibility. Once she landed at Northern Illinois University, Umoja educators sent care packages and stayed in touch by phone, talking her through difficulties with calculus classes and financial aid when she was a freshman.

When she graduated college, Regina recalls how proud her family was. “It was such a big milestone.” The next milestone in Regina’s sights? Law school. She’s now preparing for the LSAT exams. ■

works for the city of Chicago. Another daughter went to Howard University and works as a nurse in North Lawndale, and the youngest is at Western Illinois University. “This is a true community school,” says Steverson.



Preventing brain drain

HARD SCRABBLE neighborhoods like North Lawndale are generally a tough sell to young people who are determined to work hard and have a bright future. “You used to earn your way out and never turn around,” says Xavier Ramey, 26, who grew up in the community. “It was not in your best interest to return.”

But **YMEN**, a leadership development program for young men, seeks to stem the brain drain and incent college graduates to return to the community to nurture and inspire the next generation of talent. Their pitch: After college, come back to North Lawndale and we’ll make it worth your while. “In five years, you can be debt free, owning your own home and giving back to your community,” says YMEN founder and executive director Michael Trout.

One innovative YMEN program offers young men a spot in a college and career residence for a below-market rental rate of \$350 a month, the lion’s share of which is placed into a personal savings account that they can later use to buy a house of their own in North Lawndale. Those who make a five-year commitment can earn up to \$25,000 to pay down college debts. So far, 11 young men have taken the bait.

Ramey, a graduate of DePaul University is one of them. While he was in college, he worked for the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, imagining for himself a career in brokerage. Moving back to his old neighborhood was the last thing on his mind. Then a few years ago, Trout called and offered him a job. As development director for YMEN, Ramey believes his role as an indigenous leader is crucial to rebuilding a sense of community in North Lawndale.

“I don’t think I could ever untangle my life from this place now,” Ramey says. “I plan on digging some roots.” ■



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Bottom line

MEASURING PERFORMANCE IS NECESSARY, but doing it well can be a tricky endeavor. Efforts to change how teachers are evaluated and rewarded involve a variety of approaches and strategies.

But what about the students themselves? What's the best way to measure their performance? Is there a method that would predict prospects for their future success? And if so, how should these metrics be put to use?

Unfortunately, when it comes to high schools, standardized tests still rule; and in Chicago, it's the ACT, embedded as it is in the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), which involves additional math, science and reading assessments and is mandated for all CPS juniors. More than any other indicator, the two-digit scores count. District officials use them to determine whether schools and principals are making progress. School leaders factor these scores into teacher evaluations. And, once they've taken the test, students are labeled by their personal scores—for life.

It is widely known that students' race, ethnicity, gender and economic status can have a negative impact on standardized test scores, regardless of preparation or skill. In 2010, the average ACT score for African American students was just below 17. At North Lawndale College Prep, the average was 16.1.

The most immediate impact, of course, is on college admissions. Those who score below the national average of 21 are at a distinct disadvantage for consideration at selective schools. Low scores also impact eligibility for financial aid, as merit scholarships are based, at least in part, on test scores.

Yet more colleges—recognizing the limitations of standardized tests as predictors of success for black and low-income students—are dropping them as a requirement for admission. In Illinois, 24 colleges have done so, including selective schools such as DePaul University and Lake Forest College.

These schools rely instead on high school grades, recommendations, subject matter test results such as Advanced Placement exams and other factors that shed light on prospective students' skills and talents. Such policies were reinforced in recent years, when the National Association of College Admissions Counselors convened a special commission to study the use of standardized tests. After a year of review, the commission, chaired by



Harvard University's dean of admissions, issued a report calling for American colleges to stop using such tests in admissions criteria. The report was reinforced a year later when a book written by the president emeritus of Princeton along with two other influential academic leaders underscored the biased admissions outcomes that result from using standardized tests.

Fortunately, counselors at North Lawndale College Prep see more than ACT scores when they help students apply and gain admission to college. The school's high college matriculation rate and high college completion rate are proof that there's more to success than ACT scores. A holistic view spans students' academic life and how it's integrated with life experience so that once they become adults, they are productive and engaged citizens who give back and even return to their North Lawndale communities.

That's when we chalk up a win.



Statement of Financial Position

	December 31, 2010	December 31, 2009
Assets		
Cash	\$46,210	\$11,378
Investments	\$19,530,547	\$17,586,670
Fixed assets	\$3,215,860	\$3,355,860
Other	\$44,378	\$100,691
Total	\$22,836,995	\$21,054,599
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities	\$5,787,702	\$3,906,483
Unrestricted net assets	\$17,049,293	\$17,148,116
Total	\$22,836,995	\$21,054,599
Program Grants		
Steans Family Foundation	\$2,018,700	\$1,959,773
Program related and other	\$545,547	\$541,833
Distribution of funds from other foundations	-	\$15,316
Total	\$2,564,247	\$2,516,922
Grants by program area		
Early childhood	\$125,000	\$170,000
Other grants	\$61,828	\$32,418
Parent / caregiver advocacy	\$55,000	\$13,500
School-based education	\$1,050,000	\$767,429
Special ops / discretionary	\$636,872	\$616,187
Trustee match grant	\$90,000	\$92,500
Family Support (discontinued)	-	\$250,000
Evaluation (discontinued)	-	\$25,000
Contributions - Lead / capital bldg	-	(\$7,260)
Total	\$2,018,700	\$1,959,773

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