



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL KICKS OFF CITYWIDE CHICAGO SUMMER OF LEARNING**

*Over 140 Organizations Have Joined Citywide Initiative to Keep Kids Learning While School Is Out; Children Can Earn Over 1,000 Digital "Badges" for Completing Different Activities Across the City*

For many families across Chicago, today marks the unofficial start of summer as tens of thousands of children headed to their first day of summer programs and summer jobs this morning. This summer, thousands of these young Chicagoans will continue learning while school is out, thanks to Mayor Rahm Emanuel's citywide *Chicago Summer of Learning* initiative, the largest coordinated summer learning effort in the country. Mayor Emanuel greeted children at a Chicago Parks District summer program this afternoon, where participants will have 30 minutes dedicated to a different learning activity each day.

"The *Chicago Summer of Learning* builds on our full school day and the full school year, and hundreds of organizations are standing up to say to our children: this summer, the city is your classroom," said Mayor Emanuel. "When we all work together, from parents to community organizations to neighbors and businesses, we can help our children stay safe, engaged and learning while school is out."

In a unique public-private partnership, the City has teamed up with the MacArthur Foundation and Mozilla to be the first city to pilot a citywide digital "badge" system that visually represents and rewards students' achievements. The badges in the *Chicago Summer of Learning* will recognize learning across all of the summer programs in the initiative, whether at a park, museum, library or online course, giving learners digital credentials that communicate the skills that they have developed. The badges the youth earn will unlock additional learning opportunities and challenges. All of the badge information can be carried back to schools and job fairs during the school year.

There are also thousands of online learning opportunities available for youth that can be accessed from any computer – at home or at conveniently located centers across the city:

- **Chicago Summer of Learning Drop-In Center:** located at DePaul's downtown campus and open from 10am-4pm Mondays through Thursdays. State-of-the-art technology and mentor support is available;
- **YOUmedia Teen Learning Spaces:** Located at four Chicago Public Libraries and open at various times throughout the day. See [www.YOUmediachicago.org](http://www.YOUmediachicago.org) for more information;
- **Poetry Foundation Library:** Located at 61 West Superior Street. Open weekdays from 11 AM to 4 PM and on select Saturdays;
- **Public Computing Centers:** Over 250 other locations can be found [weconnectchicago.org](http://weconnectchicago.org)

Additionally, 18,000 young people aged 16 to 24 started their first day of summer employment through the City's One Summer Chicago program, a record not reached outside years with extra federal stimulus money. All 18,000 youth will receive special financial literacy trainings to help them continue learning throughout the summer. But it's not too late for families to find summer programs and job opportunities that are great for their children. Over 190,000 educational and recreational activities are available for Chicagoans ages 6 to 24 through One Summer Chicago (<http://www.onesummerchicago.org/>) and parents can find summer programs that are part of the *Summer of Learning* initiative at <http://www.chicagosummeroflearning.org>.

Summer of Learning will specifically focus learning activities around science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. This builds on Mayor Emanuel's commitments to provide each student with a well-rounded education that includes the arts and ensures students develop the skills and knowledge to succeed academically and compete for the careers of the future. These initiatives include: a full school day for CPS schools and full day kindergarten for all children, the opening of five Early College STEM Schools, the implementation of the new CPS arts education plan, a \$1 million investment to support 60 new CPS school learning gardens that provide students with hands-on nutrition and science education and the launch of College to Careers to ensure City Colleges of Chicago students have an education that prepares them for in-demand jobs and careers in growing fields.

**Photo Caption:** Mayor Emanuel joins young Chicagoans on the first day of Parks programming this summer.

**Photo Credit:** Patrick Pyszka // City of Chicago

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