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**MAYOR EMANUEL ATTENDS RIBBON CUTTING FOR METROPOLITAN FAMILY SERVICES
LEARNING AND WELLNESS CENTER**

The Early Learning Center Is Part of Mayor's \$36 Million Investment in the City Budget to Expand High Quality Early Learning Options

Mayor Emanuel attended the ribbon cutting for the Metropolitan Family Services Learning and Wellness Center, which will serve the Englewood and the Back of the Yards communities with full day early learning and pre-kindergarten. This center is the first of its kind in the Englewood and Back of the Yards communities because it also offers wraparound and health services for families.

"The Englewood Early Childhood Center will provide the children and parents of Englewood and Back of the Yards with not just a high quality education option to put their children early on the track to success, but also comprehensive services that support the entire family," Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. "We are making these investments now, because being ready for the first day of college starts with building a solid educational foundation in the essential years when a child learns their numbers, colors, and letter and when children learn about focus, persistence, and teamwork."

The new center is housed in the annex of Libby Elementary School, located at 5300 S. Loomis. This center creates an optimal learning environment by integrating early learning for children with a spectrum of family supports. At full capacity, it will include:

- High-quality full-day pre-K for 94 3-5-year-olds
- High-quality full-day early learning and care for 28 0-2-year-olds that meet the highest practice standards
- Home visiting programs to 36 new families – trained parent coaches will empower families as their child's first educator
- A Family Wellness Center for all area families to come together for health/nutrition education, access to sports and recreational activities and peer support
- Parent engagement and family-focused supports to meet the economic, legal and educational needs of families such as parent education, job readiness for young fathers, financial literacy workshops, and foreclosure prevention assistance
- Integrated health and mental health education and referrals for children and families that include emotional wellness groups that help families deal with stress and trauma and nutrition and cooking classes

- A Family Lending Library, including home-based literacy kits, books and materials for young children and parent-focused materials on career development, GED tutorials, computer training and parent development

Metropolitan Family Services will be a partner in providing wraparound services for families. Metropolitan will be providing resources from its Legal Aid Society, Center for Working Families and Midway Center to provide social, economic stability and legal aid supports for area families. Many other partnerships will assist in wrap supports around children and their families.

All instructors at the Englewood Early Childhood Center have at least a bachelor's degree. Beginning in 2014, all DFSS early childhood centers will require all instructors have a bachelor's degree in Head Start classrooms. Next year, Chicago will be exceeding the federal requirement that 50% of Head Start teachers have at least a bachelor's.

This early childhood center is part of a \$36 Million investment over three years – beginning with \$10 Million in the 2013-14 school year – from the city's budget to increase access to early learning programs and raise the quality of existing programs. This investment will reach 5,000 new children who are not currently being served with an early education center. Starting this year, over 2,300 children now have access to new, high-quality early learning program opportunities. The investment will also raise quality by adding wraparound services to support 6,000 children currently enrolled in programs.

Parents interested in enrolling their children in early learning programs at the Metropolitan Family Services Learning and Wellness Center are encouraged to call 773-371-3642 or email acainfo@metrofamily.org.

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Photo Caption: Mayor Emanuel reads to children at Metropolitan Family Services Learning and Wellness Center

Photo credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago