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**MAYOR EMANUEL KICKS OFF THE CHICAGO SUMMER OF LEARNING AND EARNING 2014**  
*Program Provides Students with to Learning Opportunities Throughout the Summer While Earning Digital Badges and Rewards*

As part of the Chicago City of Learning (CCOL), Mayor Rahm Emanuel kicked off the Summer of Learning and Earning 2014 today, calling together the entire city to connect young people ages 4 to 24 to the fun and engaging science, technology, engineering, arts, and math experiences that Chicago offers. This summer, more than 215,000 learning opportunities and jobs are available to Chicago's young people through One Summer Chicago, Rahm's Readers, the Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Housing Authority, and more than 120 organizations, including colleges and universities, community- and faith-based organizations, cultural institutions, and museums in neighborhoods throughout the city as well as on-line.

"The entire city has stepped up for an all-hands-on-deck effort to create diverse learning opportunities, which will keep our youth safe and engaged this summer," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago Summer of Learning and Earning will provide another year of successful summer programming, ensuring our students graduate 100 percent college ready and 100 percent college bound."

Chicago City of Learning offers students a chance to earn digital badges for their participation in learning activities across the city. The badges are a visual representation of achievements, learning, skills, interests, and competencies

"We create a single portal to a citywide network of learning opportunities, transforming the entire city into a campus of learning," said Nichole Pinkard, a DePaul University professor and founder of the Digital Youth Network, which leads Chicago City of Learning. "For parents and youth, it makes it much easier to find and plug into rich learning opportunities that they may otherwise never have known about or been able to afford. It also brings together an array of people and organizations that are invested in the city's youth in a new and significant way."

Students can track and showcase their progress of earning digital badges online through social media tools. This year, the program will offer rewards and incentives to students who earn badges and they will be entered into raffles for various prizes.

Last year, Chicago students earned approximately 100,000 badges following the launch of the world's first citywide digital badging system to recognize out-of-school student learning. Chicago was the first city to revolutionize learning in this way and many other cities have followed Chicago's lead. Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, and Columbus have joined the national Cities of Learning movement, in partnership with the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#), the [Digital Youth Network](#), and the [Badge Alliance](#).

"Learning today needs to be powerful and relevant to prepare young people for the demands and opportunities of our times," said Connie Yowell, director of education at the MacArthur Foundation, which supports CCOL and Cities of Learning as a whole. "Cities of Learning are stepping up to the challenge with programs that encourage curiosity, develop higher-order thinking skills, and help youth see how they might apply their talents in our increasingly complex and connected world. We call this approach Connected Learning, and we're excited to see it catching on nationwide."

This summer's program also includes access to five CCOL Youth Hubs across the city to provide kids of all ages a safe place to explore learning opportunities. Students can use technology and be able to meet with adult mentors while collaborating with other kids on activities. The Youth Hubs are located at DePaul Downtown Campus, Gordon Tech, Chicago Urban League, Spencer Tech Academy, and Blue1647.

"We are very excited that in a matter of days, a record-breaking 22,000 youth will be starting their summer jobs at thousands of worksites throughout the city," said Chicago Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Evelyn J. Diaz. "In addition to learning while they're earning, this year's participants will benefit from more skill building and mentoring opportunities that will help them achieve even greater success in school, work and life."

In addition to programming across the city, through Chicago City of Learning, youth can find over 100 unique self-paced activities, including music-making, gardening, and programming. Weekly Online Challenges present another chance to win rewards and incentives.

"With more than 37,000 kids in our camps, the Chicago Park District is the leading provider of summer recreation opportunities in the city," said Chicago Park District Superintendent Mike Kelly. "In addition to the traditional camp offerings like sports, art and culture, campers will continue to learn this summer with dedicated reading and educational activities as part of the camp curriculum."

Chicago Public Schools students already have CCOL accounts waiting for them. To claim them, they need only their student ID #s. Along with CPS youth, anyone 4-24 (or their parents) can register for a Chicago City of Learning account and learn more at [www.ChicagoCityofLearning.org](http://www.ChicagoCityofLearning.org).

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