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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CITY OFFICIALS AND MORE THAN 140 LEADING COMMUNITY AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS LAUNCH FIRST-EVER CITYWIDE SUMMER LEARNING INITIATIVE**

*Children To Earn Digital "Badges" For Completing Learning Activities Across the City*

Mayor Emanuel, City officials and leaders from Chicago's community and civic organizations today stood together in support of keeping Chicago's children safe and engaged this summer through the administration's Summer of Learning initiative, the largest coordinated summer learning effort in the country. In January, Mayor Emanuel issued a "call to action" for all organizations that run summer programs to join in the Summer of Learning effort and to date 143 organizations have answered the call, representing summer program opportunities for hundreds of thousands of children.

"From cradle to career, we are working to give our children the quality education they deserve, so they can thrive. Our summer programs help children stay safe and engaged during the summer, and are a robust opportunity to continue learning year-round," said Mayor Emanuel. "I am incredibly proud to see Chicago's organizations step up and join in this effort. We stand together and say to our children: this summer, the city is your classroom."

In a unique public-private partnership, the City has teamed up with the MacArthur Foundation and Mozilla to allow youth to earn recognition for engaging in learning during the summer and help teachers track student learning next fall. Through Mozilla's free Open Badges tools, each organization in the Summer of Learning will design their own creative digital "badges" for youth to earn and collect when they complete learning activities over the summer - from field trips to experiments to team projects.

"We're proud to partner with the City of Chicago as they recognize the learning that will happen across the city this summer and connect it back to the learning done during the rest of the year. This is the first city-wide use of Open Badges, making the Summer of Learning an innovative project that we hope to soon see replicated in cities around the world."

"The MacArthur Foundation is pleased to support Chicago in its important Summer of Learning program and the first ever effort by a city to offer badges for learning in a coordinated way. Badges will support, encourage, and recognize the learning Chicago's kids do outside the classroom this summer. Research has demonstrated that badges may provide the incentives and pathways needed to promote lifelong learning," said Connie Yowell, Director of Education at the MacArthur Foundation, which has invested more than \$100 million in its own national digital media and learning initiative.

The badges in the Chicago Summer of Learning will recognize learning across all of the summer programs, whether at a park, museum, library or online course, and give 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.

Parents can find summer programs that are part of the Summer of Learning initiative at <http://www.chicagosummeroflearning.org>. In addition to all city agencies, the organizations that have joined the Summer of Learning initiative include: The Field Museum, YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, the Chicago Boys and Girls Clubs, Joffrey Ballet, Kids off the Block, Girls in the Game, Old Town School of Folk Music, the Black Star Project, and many others.

"At the heart of science is exploration and discovery, and the City's Summer of Learning initiative, with its digital badging program is an exciting opportunity to encourage teens and tweens to continue to investigate, create and innovate throughout the summer," said Beth Crownover, Director of Education at The Field Museum.

*Summer of Learning* represents the first coordinated and dedicated approach of its kind for youth in every neighborhood to access high-quality programs that will help them continue to learn even when school is out. It is also the largest youth badging opportunity, and Chicago students will be the first to pioneer this new way of being recognized for their learning milestones and skill development.

"Summer of Learning is a great initiative to help educate and enrich children, while getting adults involved as well," said Illinois State Representative Arthur L. Turner. "I look forward to working with these groups to show children learning can be fun in and out of the classroom."

"The Summer of Learning is exactly what our children need all across the City," said Alderman Joann Thompson. "Meaningful activity, continued education, and a way to track their successes along the way will give parents more support as they begin to plan summer for their children."

"Summer programming is a great way to keep our children engaged in their education and their community during the months they are out of school. This is another tool in the arsenal of combating violence in our neighborhoods and keeping our children safe while providing them with

greater opportunity," said Alderman Danny Solis. "I applaud all of the organizations that have come to the table to make this program a reality."

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.

In 2012, City-funded programs offered opportunities for over 168,000 participants.

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