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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2013

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MATCH PROGRAM CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR CPS STUDENTS

After Six Months, the Combination of Programs Boosted Math Scores by Nearly Two Thirds of the NAEP Black-White Test Gap and Student Misconduct Dropped by 67%.

The City and University of Chicago's Urban Education Lab Announce Expansion of Tutoring and Mentoring Effort

The University of Chicago Urban Education Lab today released a study showing that high school students who were at risk of dropping out greatly improved their math test scores and school attendance with the help of Match, the intensive tutoring and mentoring program. The program's benefits were equivalent to closing more than half of the average achievement gap in math test scores between white and black students.

As a result of this positive growth, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the University of Chicago will expand the program to reach 1,000 students next year.

"This study is welcome news to students, teachers and families who have been working to tackle the achievement gap facing too many of our students," Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. "To build off the program's proven track record of success, our goal is to expand access to the Match and BAM programs to reach 1,000 students by next school year. This partnership with the University of Chicago is part of a larger City-wide strategy to invest in expanding youth access to learning, mentoring and employment opportunities that will better ensure all of our students graduate 100% college ready and 100% college bound."

The Match pilot program began at Harper High School during the 2012-2013 school year when 106 ninth- and tenth-grade students were tracked selected to be tracked. The students selected had missed an average of about 5 weeks of school and were in the 22nd percentile in math test scores the previous school year.

After just six months, the program boosted math scores by nearly two-thirds of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) black-white test gap; student misconducts dropped by 67 percent; and the program is predicted to reduce violent arrests among students by 50 percent and reduce course failures by 37 percent.

Building upon this success, Mayor Emanuel and the UChicago Urban Education Lab will further increase the number of Chicago Public Schools students participating in the Match math tutoring program to reach 1,000 students.

“By broadening access to the Match Education program, led by the University of Chicago Urban Education Lab, we are strengthening the District’s commitment to ensuring all students, particularly our most vulnerable, are prepared for success in the classroom and in life,” said CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett. “This innovative model for driving academic achievement is a welcomed addition to the District’s rigorous plan to foster growth and success in and outside of the classroom.”

In addition to a significant jump in math test scores, students receiving tutoring and mentoring, on average increased their likelihood of being “on track” for graduation by nearly one-half.

“These results come from a randomized experiment of the sort that generates gold-standard evidence in medicine, but remains far too rare in the area of social policy,” noted Roseanna Ander, Executive Director of the UChicago Urban Education Lab.

One benefit of the Match tutoring approach is that it takes on the “mismatch” between a student’s grade level and the actual skills he or she has developed, which can be four to seven years behind grade level, said Jens Ludwig, Co-Director of the Urban Education Lab and McCormick Foundation Professor of Social Service Administration, Law, and Public Policy.

“So much of the energy in education policy is in improving the quality with which grade-level material is taught in classrooms,” Ludwig said. “But that’s not going to help a ninth-grader from a disadvantaged background who is struggling with third- or fourth-grade math problems.”

Perhaps because students in the study got the targeted help they needed to catch up, Ludwig said, “These effects on schooling outcomes are larger — much larger — than what we see from so many other educational strategies.”

To help students catch up to grade level and re-engage with regular classroom instruction, the Match program administered an intensive tutoring regimen to all participants who were African American males from low-income families. The tutoring regimen was varied to see which had the greatest impact.

One group of forty-eight young men were randomly selected to receive, in addition to Match tutoring, individualized, two-on-one math tutoring for one hour per day, every day. They also participated in Becoming a Man (BAM), a non-academic intervention program that uses elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy and non-traditional sports activities to strengthen social-cognitive skills, including self-regulation and impulse control.

Another 24 young men were randomly selected to participate in BAM alone; the remaining 34 students in the control group did not participate in the additional programs but were eligible for the school's existing academic support programs.

Based on the results of the pilot study, the combination of BAM and Match brought large gains.

"It was encouraging to see improvements in engagement with school, such as an increase in attendance of about 2.5 weeks per year, alongside the remarkable increases in math test scores and grades," said Jonathan Guryan, Associate Professor of Human Development and Social Policy in the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University and Co-director of the University of Chicago Urban Education Lab. "One of the reasons the results are exciting is that they indicate this combination of programs may potentially be a promising strategy for narrowing the black-white test score gap."

The expansion of the BAM mentoring and Match tutoring approach to serve more CPS students will allow more students to reach grade level and excel at math and put them on track to graduate on time. It will also give researchers an opportunity to better understand the mechanisms of how these programs work and how they can produce the same results on a larger scale.

This is all part of Mayor Emanuel's holistic effort to prevent youth violence. To address the complex factors that drive youth violence, the city has significantly increased investments in evidence-based prevention programs and school-based programs, including:

- Expanding mentoring, jobs and skill building opportunities for youth
- Adopting school-based programs to reconnected youth to school, implement a restorative approach to student misconduct, and create safer, calmer school environments.

As a result of this strategy, the City has invested in opportunities for young people including:

- Access for over 2,300 additional children to high-quality, pre-K programs across the city.

- One Summer Chicago, which gives more than 22,000 students a City-funded summer job that helps them build character, have a taste of the working world and a paycheck.
- The Summer of Learning, which keeps over 200,000 Chicago students engaged in learning when school is out, helping battle the “summer slide” in which children regress academically.
- CPS’ new code of conduct, which focuses on restorative, instructive, and corrective approaches to misconduct and has led to a 16.5% decrease in out-of-school suspensions in high schools.

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