



## Report to the Civic Committee December 10, 2020

Kids First Chicago’s mission is to improve education for Chicago’s children by ensuring high-quality public school options are accessible to all families in all neighborhoods. We work to ensure that our education system is fair and accessible for all families.

To achieve this goal, we focus on three strategic priorities:

1. We support communities and families in understanding and navigating to high-quality school options, as well as advocating for policy change.
2. We partner with district and city leadership to design and implement policies that prioritize families’ needs.
3. We provide unbiased data expertise to community and school district stakeholders alike.

### PRIORITY AREAS

We take a human-centered approach to implementing our strategies. Importantly, in addition to our focus on data and metrics, we listen and get a better appreciation for how key issues are understood by and affect families by engaging with and directly supporting them. We use comprehensive data, along with parent input, to identify and analyze barriers to school quality. We bring parents and district leaders to the table to address solutions—together. Our strategic integration of policy/system change work with community engagement has differentiated our efforts nationally.

1. K1C staff provides direct support to families navigating Chicago’s PK-12 public education system and to communities working to improve their schools.
  - We held our first Parent Advisory Board retreat in late October, where our PAB went through visioning and team-building sessions, and made personal advocacy commitments for the coming year.
  - **We have begun our fifth year of supporting parents with the GoCPS application process.** Our staff help parents research schools and submit applications prior to the CPS deadline on December 11<sup>th</sup>. We have already been delivering presentations to groups of parents at partner schools on their choices and CPS’s application process since September. Supporting families in this manner is important to our recruitment of more advocates and champions.
  - In continuation of the Education Recovery work that began over the summer, **our field team held the third installment of the new Living Room Series in November** with events in both English and Spanish. The Living Room series brings Chicago



Public Schools parents together each month in a virtual “living room” where they can build community, grow in their understanding of how the education system is working for their kids, and learn from each other as we all navigate this new normal for education during the pandemic.

2. K1C promotes policies that are rooted in authentic community needs and supported by data. Through a strong partnership with key agencies like CPS, we help families engage in the policy and system redesign process.
  - Following the release of K1C’s policy brief, *“Digital Equity in Education in the Coronavirus Era”* in late April, K1C worked with the City of Chicago, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), philanthropic partners, and internet service providers (ISPs) to launch Chicago Connected to provide free, high-speed internet to over 100,000 students over the next four years. Launched on June 25, this is the largest (in terms of families supported) and longest (program duration) effort of any U.S. city to date. K1C continues to serve on the project management team during the implementation phase and is developing a data dashboard for all stakeholders to utilize in measuring project success.
  - As of **November 30**, Chicago Connected has provided **more than 50,000 CPS students and 33,000 households with free high-speed internet service. Chicago Connected now serves more students than the entire enrollment of cities like Cleveland, DC, and New Orleans.** Chicago Connected has become a national exemplar, with more than 20 cities reaching out thus far to replicate their own comparable public-private partnership program. The city of Philadelphia recently launched PHLConnectED, a carbon copy of Chicago Connected in terms of its design and structure. **The Big Shoulders Fund (BSF) recently launched an extension of Chicago Connected, which will provide approximately 3,000 eligible students (and 1,500 households) enrolled in the city’s Catholic schools with free in-home internet service for the next four years. The BSF-Chicago Connected extension will be funded through a \$1 million additional commitment from Ken Griffin and Gerald Beeson, CEO and COO of Citadel, respectively.**
  - K1C is managing the 35 Chicago Connected community partners responsible for providing personalized outreach to eligible families and digital literacy training to newly-connected households. These community-based organizations (CBOs) have been critical to bridging the trust gap and driving additional sign ups.
  - **CPS will be announcing another expansion of the program to all free-and-reduced lunch (FRL) eligible CPS students in early December; we anticipate the release to generate additional media coverage.** Media coverage has been abundant, with features in the Wall Street Journal, Axios, and other national outlets, as well as substantial ongoing coverage by local newspapers, TV, and radio. K1C parents have



been featured in every major promotion and have served as spokespeople for the program.

- Since May, K1C has partnered closely with West Side United (WSU) to develop a rigorous and equitable selection process for WSU's community-hub school grant. Three finalists have been named: Herzl School of Excellence, Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy, and Robert Nathaniel Dett Elementary School. **Later this month, K1C and WSU will announce one of these schools as the Cluster of Care grantee. This school will receive a \$135,000 grant and two years of primary and mental health services to offer its students. The remaining finalists will continue to partner with WSU and K1C to receive additional support. In the new year, K1C and WSU will begin to work closely with the grantee to plan for the launch of the community hub. The hub is scheduled to be in full operation, offering wrap-around services to students, families, and community members by Spring of 2021.**
- K1C is preparing to launch a parent survey to understand their experiences with remote learning. Topics include communication, technology, teaching and learning, satisfaction with the current remote learning model and preferred model for the upcoming semester. Working with NORC at the University of Chicago (a research institution), the survey will be launched to a representative sample of public school parents citywide in December.
- **In early December, CPS will publicly announce its intent to revise the School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP), which the district uses to measure annual school performance and hold leaders accountable. CPS has selected K1C to serve as the stakeholder engagement lead partner to meet the objective of significant stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of a new set of performance metrics for all public schools in Chicago by April 2022. CPS and K1C will jointly fundraise to secure the needed resources to execute broad and deep engagement. Finally, Natalie Neris, K1C Chief of Community Engagement, will serve on the district's SQRP Technical Assistance Steering Committee (TASC) -- comprised of a diverse set of stakeholders, including one K1C-affiliated parent -- that will ultimately recommend a new policy to CPS leadership.**

3. K1C provides communities and policymakers with unbiased data expertise.

- As CPS enters its school application period for fall of 2021 (October-December 2020), K1C is promoting the resources (videos and school data profiles) developed to help parents understand CPS's school quality ratings and each school's rating data so that parents understand the available information.
- K1C is developing a dashboard in support of Chicago Connected that will provide real-time updates to key stakeholders about connections, digital literacy training, and more.



- K1C is designing and implementing a digital literacy and workforce development plan to benefit Chicago Connected families. The plan will be led by a Guiding Team inclusive of K1C parents, community organizations, the City of Chicago, CPS, Chicago Public Library, City Colleges of Chicago, local/national workforce development experts, and representatives from the city's tech community. The objective is to debut digital literacy and workforce development programming in February 2021.

#### RECENT EVENTS & FUNDRAISING

- K1C has raised **roughly \$2.1 million** toward its FY21 budget of \$3.25 million. **K1C has a number of important multi-year renewals pending and expected during this fiscal year.** We hope we can count on your renewed support in the uncertain year ahead.
- Please contact Dave Casper and Daniel Anello about ways to continue to support Kids First Chicago during this critical time.