

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chicago Education Nonprofit Celebrates 35th Year

Equalizing education and maximizing opportunity

Chicago (September 19, 2024)— For 35 years, High Jump has reshaped the educational landscape of Chicago by providing academic opportunity and pathways to over 3,000 students. Since its establishment in 1989, High Jump has been providing tuition-free access to advanced coursework and high school transition support in a collaborative environment, fostering students' social and emotional development to help them thrive in high school and beyond. These programs have more than doubled the likelihood of students completing college and the 35th anniversary of High Jump marks a moment of reflection as Chicago faces calls for more student support and investment in out of school time programs.

Dilara Akunduz Lesser, an alum who graduated from the program in 2007 shared, "High Jump is a thriving testament that every little bit of investment we make in our communities, and the scholars of tomorrow, compounds exponentially as time goes by."

In the face of entrenched inequities for middle school students of limited economic means, High Jump has provided pathways of opportunity for scholars to actualize their potential; High Jump is not just a program but a catalyst for change. Alum Heidi Ortolaza-Alvear shared, "I graduated from High Jump in the year 2000, and now, more than two decades later, it's clear to me that High Jump has been with me every step of the way." The transformative power of a High Jump education will continue to resonate, profoundly impacting the lives of our students, their families, their communities, and our city for years to come.

High Jump's journey began at the Latin School of Chicago in collaboration with Francis W. Parker School and with generous funding from the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation. This collaborative spirit has been the cornerstone of High Jump's success, as we have incrementally increased our cohort size through sustainable growth grounded in improving high school access and enrollment. High Jump marked this growth by adding two more campuses in partnership with Francis W. Parker School and the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools in 2012 and 2014.

High Jump's Executive Director, Nate Pietrini, declared, "We have grown the program to its largest size in our 35-year history – serving over 500 young scholars each year. We have deepened High Jump's support for those scholars with enhanced academic and social learning and support. We have begun to pave the future of High Jump as an organization to continue helping students for years to come."

Recently, High Jump brought its campus-based program to the community to remove access barriers and exponentially increase the number of students served each year. The new Community Scholars program, a cost-effective and scalable expansion model in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools, was launched as a pilot in 2021 and adopted as a permanent program in 2024. This program is a beacon of hope, continuing to advance the mission to close the education opportunity gap in Chicago and ensure long-term academic success for ambitious middle schoolers. Its success demonstrates the power of collective action and the potential for positive change in our education system.

High Jump is grateful to its program funders and partners whose efforts have helped expand our reach and inspire hope for a more equitable education system.

About High Jump

High Jump seeks to bring equity to education for Chicago middle school students who have exhibited ambition and potential and are of limited economic means. The program provides a positive and resource-rich environment where students receive academic enrichment, social-emotional skills training, and high school counseling with the goals of sending our participants to excellent college preparatory schools, ensuring their success while they are there, and enhancing their ability to gain admission to highly regarded four-year colleges and universities. highjumpchicago.org