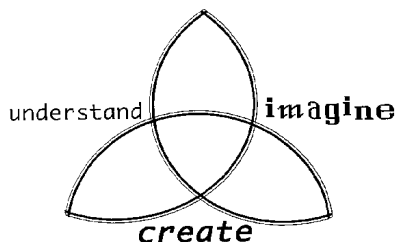




*“Reading
Chicago and
Bringing it
Home”:*

*A Civic Literacy
Tool Kit for
Families*

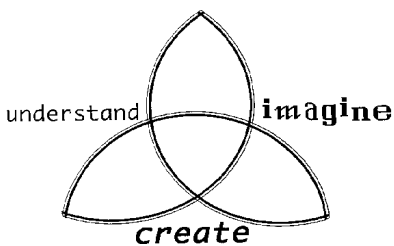


developed by Imagine Chicago
www.imaginechicago.org



“Reading Chicago and Bringing it Home”:

A Civic Literacy Tool Kit for Families



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*with support from the
Chicago Annenberg Challenge*

July 2001

Reading Chicago and Bringing it Home



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Introduction And Overview

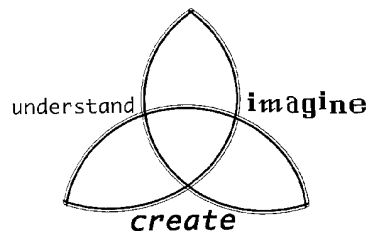
Imagine Chicago, a non-profit organization founded in 1992, offers everyone, especially young people, the opportunity to invest themselves in the city's future. Individuals and organizations focus constructively on their capacities and opportunities to make a difference as they –

understand what is

imagine what can be, and

create what will be

By working in partnership with individuals and more than 100 local organizations, schools, museums, businesses and community groups, Imagine Chicago has designed and implemented innovative civic projects that connect generations and cultures and have lasting institutional and community impact.



One of Imagine Chicago's programs that has received high praise and extensive community involvement is the **URBAN IMAGINATION NETWORK**. UIN is a school-museum collaboration facilitated by Imagine Chicago in partnership with DePaul's Center for Urban Education. Its goal is to improve reading comprehension in the content areas of science and social studies --and renew schools as community learning centers. It has included development programs for parents, teachers, and school administrators. This book focuses on the parent development component of the program. Information about the other components can be obtained from Imagine Chicago's website: www.imaginechicago.org or you can contact us at:

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Acknowledgments and Thanks

The Urban Imagination Network was the work of many hands.

Thanks go first to DePaul's Center for Urban Education, and its director Dr. Barbara Radner. It was her vision of bringing reading alive through a school-museum partnership which originally created the Urban Imagination Network—and which turned Imagine Chicago's attention toward working with public schools and the city as a learning environment. The Center's ongoing work as a curriculum partner and school developer has significantly contributed to the success of every piece of the Urban Imagination Network's work, including the parent program.



This program could not have happened without the generous funding and spirited support of our foundation and corporate underwriters, especially
Chicago Annenberg Challenge
Seabury Foundation

Commonwealth Edison	Peoples Energy
The Chicago White Sox	The Chicago Bulls
Ethnicgrocer.com	Dominick's Finer Foods
Building Solutions, Inc.	Advocate Health Care
Rand McNally	Chicago Transit Authority
4th Presbyterian Church	Kenilworth Union Church
Christ Church, Winnetka	South Shore Bank

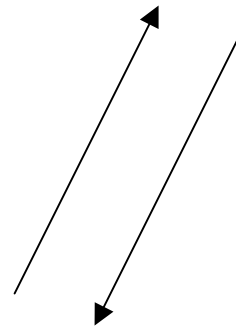
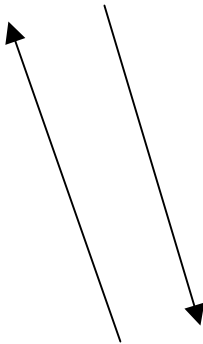
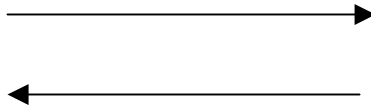
Thank you!! We could not have done it without you!

The program was ably managed this year by Edith Njuguna and Kris Cox, working in conjunction with wonderful parent coordinators and enthusiastic parents from Corliss High School, John Hope College Prep, Gale Community Academy, Alfred Nobel Elementary, Suder Elementary, Locke Elementary, and Byrd Community Academy. Our warm thanks to all the schools and their staff, as well as to Nancy Cobb who helped in the preparation of this book.

--Bliss Browne, Imagine Chicago, July 2001

Urban Imagination Network Goals

- Improve student and parent reading comprehension in the content areas
- Refresh and renew the vocation of teachers
- Increase vital school–museum connections and use of museum–based approaches to learning
- Expand school–community partnerships
- Integrate asset–based planning (“understand–imagine–create”) into school development
- Develop and sustain an inspiring learning community of engaged and imaginative students, teachers and parents



Linking reading to city living

Urban Imagination Network

Goal: Improve Reading Comprehension

A Strengthen Family Literacy

- Citywide Workshops
- School-based workshops
- Parent Designed activities
- Parent-led Field Trips
- Individual Development Accounts

B Develop Teachers and Schools

- Teacher Renewal program
- Integrating arts across the curriculum

C Connect Community Resources

- Schools
- Museums
- Corporations
- Churches
- Public resources
- External partners

Urban Imagination Network Parent Program Components

“Reading Chicago”
Monthly citywide
workshops

“Bringing It Home”
Monthly in-school
workshops

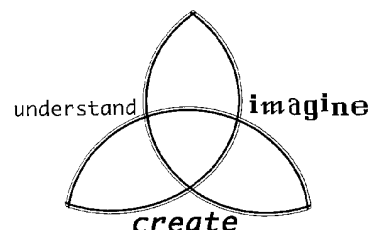
Parent-designed
family activity book

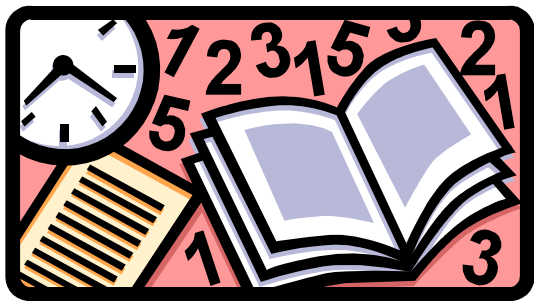
Parent-led
family field trips

Individual Development
Incentive Savings Accounts
to purchase computers
for use in the home

Program Goals

1. To improve parents’ effectiveness as family educators by
 - Developing reading, research and workforce skills
 - Learning to organize and understand information central to their life in the city
 - Improving computer skills and access in the home
2. To strengthen school–community connections by increasing parental involvement in both school and community activities
3. To leverage school funds spent on parent development by attracting family literacy support from corporations and foundations





Preparation

SCHOOLS

Meet in person with the school principal and teachers to discuss how this program will benefit the school and to clarify roles. Improving reading comprehension and strengthening school–community connections are central priorities in every school. Making clear to administrators that this program does both will help make clear that this is not something else to “add to their plate” but a program that strengthens and supports the core educational mission.

PRINCIPAL’S ROLE

- Visibly support the program
- Identify and support a “parent coordinator”
- Ask teachers to strengthen links back to the classroom
- Offer meeting space on a monthly basis
- Provide quality communication and support to parents

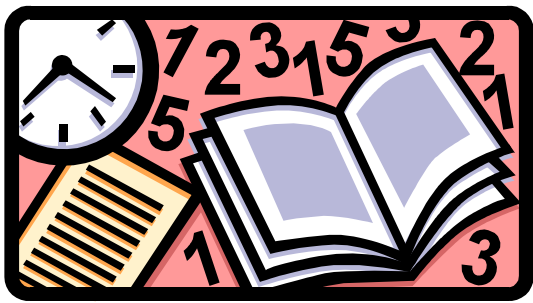


TEACHER’S ROLE

- Encourage family involvement in the classroom, family learning activities and daily reading at home
- Send flyers home as needed to encourage program participation

PARENT COORDINATOR (the most critical role)

- Contact parents about program dates and interests
- Recruit parents and encourage parent participation
- Ensure visible communication about the program within the school (ex. oversee parent bulletin boards and post flyers)
- Arrange dates, location and refreshments for in–school meetings
- Follow up with necessary logistics like ordering buses, copying materials, tracking program expenses, etc.



Preparation


MUSEUMS

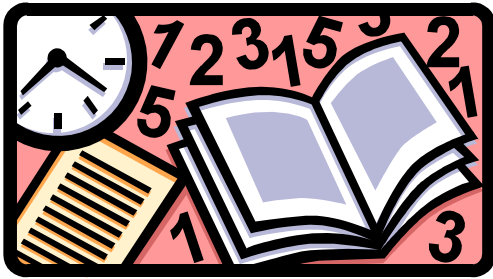
PROGRAM MANAGER'S ROLE

- ✓ Identify date/time museum is needed
- ✓ Identify logistical issues
 - Group size and date
 - Refreshments needed
 - Bus stop/parking location
 - Special entrance information
 - Room set-up needed
- ✓ Identify proposed topic
- ✓ Develop draft agenda for discussion
- ✓ Discuss optimal integration of museum resources



MUSEUM'S ROLE

- ✓ Help link exhibits to workshop topic 
- ✓ Provide meeting space (and specify costs involved)
- ✓ Arrange refreshments within museum
- ✓ Identify/provide speakers, materials
- ✓ Provide orientation and welcome to the museum and connect parents to ongoing opportunities for family involvement

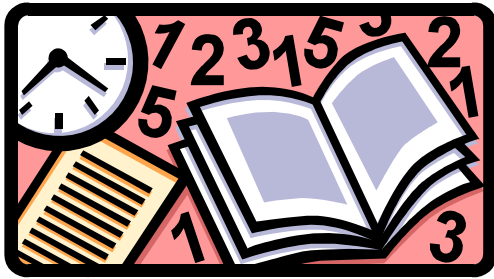


Preparation

PARENTS



- ☑ Meet in advance, at each school, with active parents and school officials to find out what parent organizations already exist and are well supported. Make sure to coordinate activities in a way which enhances and complements existing meetings and programs.
- ☑ Invite parents to identify topics that are important to them and use these in program development.
- ☑ Hold recruitment meetings at each school when parents are likely to be there (orientation day, first day of school, report card pick-up). Have program flyers available and an attractive program “parent story board” visible.
- ☑ Offer incentives for parents to recruit new parents into the program. Give incentives that are consistent with the program’s goals, like books, passes to museums etc.
- ☑ At the first session, give parents a full year calendar so they know when sessions are scheduled at each school. If they can’t attend a session at their school, suggest they make it up at another school.
- ☑ At the initial meeting, give each parent a large attractive binder, with dividers, so they expect and look forward to building a resource base month by month.



Preparation

PROGRAM SPONSOR



- Write and administer grants
- Work with school staff and parent coordinator
- Create flyers and agendas and distribute them
- Order or duplicate materials needed
- Conduct, with schools, parent recruitment days
- Conduct in-school workshops
- Lead and organize monthly museum workshops
- Build partnerships with museum staff and corporate sponsors
- Solicit incentives
- Write press releases
- Pay invoices
- Develop and organize ways to sustain the program
- Document and share activities and outcomes

Urban Imagination Network

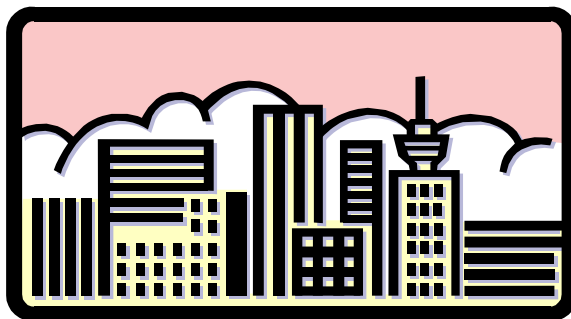
Reading Chicago and Bringing it Home

Monthly citywide
workshops



Each month, network-wide parent development workshops were held at museums and other central city sites. Each workshop concentrated on teaching active reading strategies using content at the heart of a family's budget and a city's life.

- Transportation
- Financial management
- Food
- Housing
- Communication
- Technology
- Energy
- Education
- Recreation



Like the Wacker Manual created at the turn of the century of the 20th century to educate Chicago school children about the Plan for Chicago, this course taught civic literacy—how to be an active citizen and what makes the city work. It also built and strengthened basic reading comprehension skills essential to making sense of information from any source.

IMAGINE CHICAGO worked with six local museums, the DePaul Center for Urban Education, and other civic organizations to develop and connect the curriculum. All workshop materials were done in both English and Spanish.

CITYWIDE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Topic	Date	Skill	Value	Venue/Partner
Transportation	Sept.20, 2000 10 AM- 1 PM	Reading Map	Reading at home	Chicago Historical Society/Rand McNally
Income	10 AM- 1 PM Oct.20, 2000	Budgeting Saving/Investing	Investing in educational assets	4 th Presbyterian Church South Shore Bank
Food/culture	10 AM- 1 PM Nov. 15, 2000	Proper nutrition	Respect for all cultures	Field Museum, Dominick's Ethnicgrocer.com
Housing	10 AM- 1 PM Dec. 13, 2000	Housing rights and responsibilities Rent vs. buy	Space as a reflection of cultural values	4th Presbyterian church Building Solutions Inc
Communication	10 AM- 1 PM Jan. 24, 2001	Technology literacy	Positive Communication	4 th Presbyterian
Health	10 AM- 1 PM Feb. 21, 2001	Preventive health care	Valuing and stewarding family health	Advocate Health Care/Illinois Masonic Chicago Bulls
Energy	10 AM- 1 PM Mar 21, 2001	Analyzing bills Conserving energy	Ecological awareness	Museum of Science and Industry Peoples Energy
Education- Family evening	4-7 PM Apr 11, 2001	Focused research	Lifelong learning	H. Washington library
Recreation	10 AM- 1 PM May 23, 2001	Discovery and reflection	Appreciating learning environment	Chicago Botanic Garden
Recreation- family	6-9 PM May 28, 2001	Using city resources	Balanced life Home/city connections	Comiskey Park Chicago White Sox
Graduation	10 AM - 1 PM June 20, 2001	Celebrating accomplishments	Persistence Showing others what is possible	Chicago Historical Society

Monthly in-school workshops were also organized in each school, at a time convenient to parents and other school activity schedules. These workshops concentrated on skill development related to the topic.

Urban Imagination Network

Reading Chicago and Bringing it Home



In-school
workshops

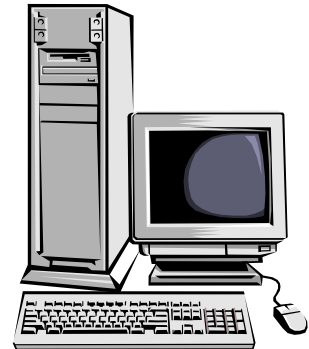


These onsite bi-lingual workshops were held monthly at the individual schools. They concentrated on applying what parents learned at the monthly reading workshops to teaching children at home and at school. Each month there was a focus on a core value shared by families and schools (saving money, healthy eating etc.) and a core competency essential to city living (map skills, budgeting etc). Parents especially skilled in a given core competency served as a mentors to other parents. As parents successfully demonstrated core competencies, they earned books and additions to a Chicago “tool kit” (local maps, museum passes, dining and cultural activities certificates) that encouraged and enabled family learning and city participation. Parents also designed family activities to do with their children that would reinforce the reading strategies and key ideas associated with each topic.

Urban Imagination Network

*Reading Chicago and
Bringing it Home*

Individual Development Account



The IDA incentive technology savings account was especially developed for this program by Imagine Chicago, South Shore Bank and a local family foundation. Each parent was given an opportunity to open a savings account for the exclusive purpose of purchasing a computer with Internet access. Parents were required to save a minimum of \$450 and maximum of \$500. If they were successful in doing so, and completed the program's graduation requirements, their savings were matched dollar for dollar and used to purchase a state-of-the-art computer system (computer, printer, monitor) for their homes. 73 of 90 graduating parents chose this IDA option and received computers.

Parent Organized Field Trips



Each participating school received a budget of \$1500 for a parent-organized and led field trip to a local educational venue



Parent Designed Family Activity Book

The curriculum from the citywide and on-site workshops, including the parent-designed activities and applications were published in a book, which was presented to the parents at graduation. The goals were to reinforce the lessons learned, to recognize the parents' contributions as educators and to make the program replicable by others.

Budget



Reading Chicago and Bringing it Home was funded almost entirely by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC), a foundation created for the purpose of supporting school reform efforts by networked schools working with an external partner. The parent development funding was part of a 6-year funding commitment to the Urban Imagination Network. The IDA computer match funding was provided by a local family foundation.

Salary *\$100,000* *1 FT program director*
1 4-day/wk. Young adult intern
1 PT senior program director
1 PT financial administrator

Meeting Expenses

\$ 7,000 *Transportation*
\$15,000 *Food at meetings inc. graduation*
\$20,000 *Resource materials (books, maps,*
printed materials, calculators, binders)
\$ 3,000 *Payment to museums for space*

Book *\$ 5,000* *Publication curriculum/parent activities*

IDA *\$50,000* *Computer match funding/account admin*
\$200,000

Total Parent Program Costs plus costs of in-school parent coordination





Lessons Learned

SCHOOLS



- The Parent Coordinator can “make” or “break” the program so it’s well worth the time to develop a positive relationship and create a win-win environment for them.



- Think of ways to supplement the recruiting process beyond program flyers --like a calling tree, parent bulletin board, informal coffees, parent column in the school newsletter, etc.



- Keep school staff informed and involved – both teachers and principal. Feedback should be continuous! Invite them to meetings held at the school as well as to any citywide celebrations. Ask for their feedback and any comments they’ve received from parents about the program.





Lessons Learned

MUSEUMS



Make sure you take the time to visit and meet the people at the museum – the phone should just be your starting point.



Physically visit the rooms and exhibits to be used so you can have an agenda that puts the ideas together well. Review any written materials and maps. Ask to meet the speaker so he/she gets to know your group's needs well.



Treat museums like partners not just venues.



Take time to understand what the museum wants to accomplish with families. See if your program can help develop the museum's mission and capacities.



Lessons Learned

PARENTS

- Parents are the best ambassadors to other parents
- Creating small incentives for parent-to-parent recruitment will increase the size of parent participation.
- Taking adequate account of other school or parent programs will positively impact participation and support
- Ask parents at the recruitment meeting to identify what the best meeting time is.
- Have recruitment and agenda resource materials available in more than one language – this sends a strong message that non-English speaking parents are welcome and encouraged to participate. Having a bi-lingual (English/Spanish) African-American translator present at all sessions greatly enhanced both cultural group's interest in the other's language and culture.



Feedback tools

Feedback tools



To evaluate program effectiveness, we looked at levels of participation, self-reported evaluations done at each workshop, demonstrated competencies, exhibits and books created by the parents, and savings committed by the parents during the ten-month program.

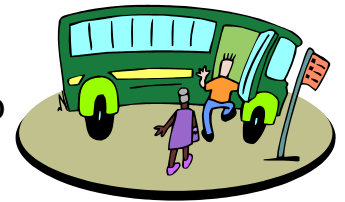
Keeping Learning In Sight

Written reflection reinforces learning. Parents completed “learning logs” after each workshop in which they summarized:

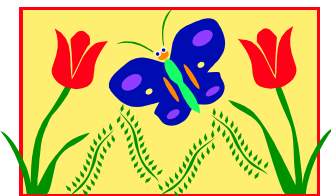
- Three key “insights” about the day’s topic
- Ways they would apply what they learned to strengthen family reading, to expand city and museum connections, and to increase participation in their child’s educational development.

Evaluations were collected and summarized for program sponsors and partners. At graduation, the original sheets were returned to the participants as a personal “learning portfolio” .

Field Trip Evaluations Program participants also were asked to summarize benefits from parent-led field trips they organized.

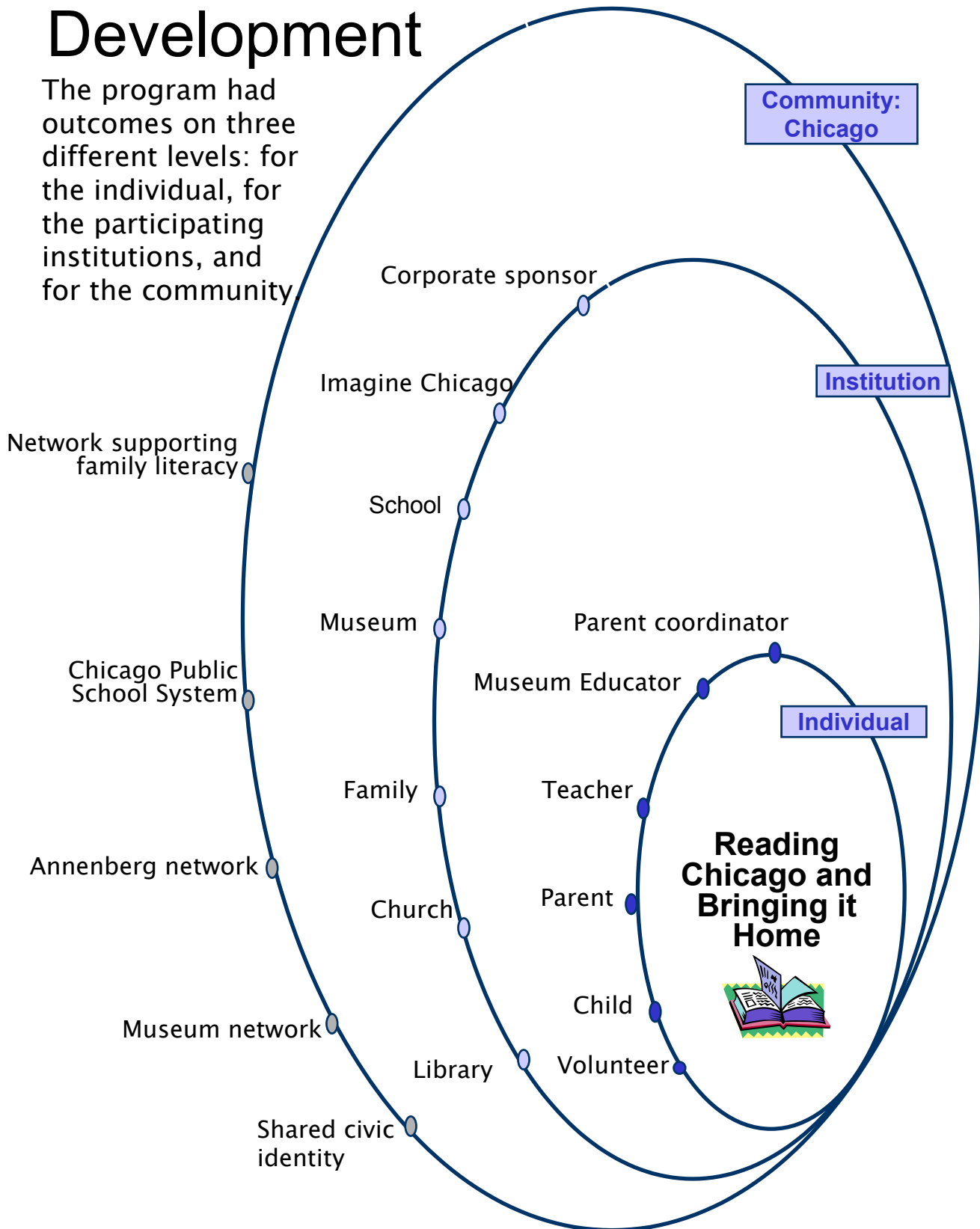


Program Summary Evaluations At the end of the program, participants were asked to fill out a transformation sheet which chronicled changes in both behavior and values. A summary of this can be found in the “So What” section of this booklet.



Three levels of Development

The program had outcomes on three different levels: for the individual, for the participating institutions, and for the community





Activity Measures

No. of parents participating:

- Non-English speaking parents comprised about 35 % of the total number of participants
- 292 parents participated in at least one session
- 123 attended at least 5 workshops

No. of Chicago Public schools participating : 7

Museums participating in this year's program:

- Chicago Historical Society
- Field Museum of Natural History
- Museum of Science and Industry
- Chicago Botanic Garden



Corporations who provided resources or in-kind support: 9

What results?

To graduate, parents were required to:

Attend 15 of the 19 workshops, 7 of which had to be in-school

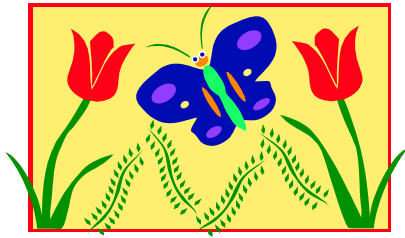


In 2001, 90 parents graduated

To be eligible to purchase the computers the parents had to:

- o Attend 15 of the 19 workshops, including both of the income sessions plus 5 additional in-school sessions.
- o Open a savings account and save at least \$450 by the end of May

73 purchased home computers through the IDA program



TRANSFORMATIONS

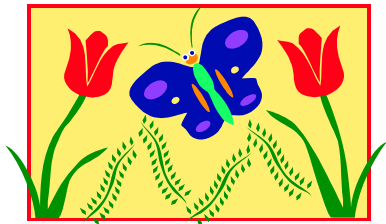
What is different now as a result of this program?

The program was effective in building reading skills, computer skills, communication skills and parents' confidence and competence as educators and active citizens. But it also built the capacity of participating partners.

Schools learned new strategies for parent involvement. One high school saw parent participation triple. The newly involved parents joined the ranks of school volunteers.



Museums learned new ways of tailoring outreach programs to attract hard-to-reach parents and teachers. The program provided opportunities to develop and test family activities in a way which connected to school reading goals.



TRANSFORMATIONS

Parents were asked to chronicle changes as a result of the program by finishing the phrases:

“I used to ... but now I...”

“My family used to...but now we...”

Parents reported and demonstrated...

Increased Self-Esteem

In the past, most parents did not speak up or speak at all at meetings. They were afraid that they wouldn't articulate properly or their ideas wouldn't matter. As a result of the program,

Parents became very vocal and actively involved in their schools and communities. They began to feel listened to and respected.

Some then took on volunteer work within their schools and many began attending other community meetings.

Verbal and written skills increased tremendously.

Listening skills and sensitivity to others' opinions deepened as the year progressed.

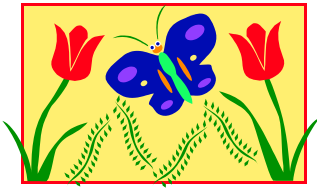
Improved Social Interaction

Most reported a sense of isolation before the program.

Now they report making friends, talking freely to others and getting involved at their children's schools.

Many parents reported that their patience level, especially with their children, grew tremendously. That led to improved family relationships.





TRANSFORMATIONS – Parents

Increased Community Involvement

In the past many parents reported they just stayed at home...

Now parents are questioning things they don't feel are right rather than being silent and letting things happen to them.

Parents are volunteering and participating in school and community meetings.

Parents are much more aware of resources available to them.



Greater Appreciation for Other Cultures

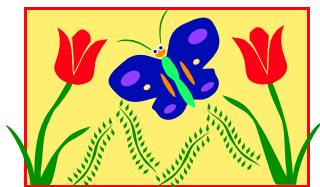
Many participants felt “other” people, especially if they spoke another language, were “standoffish” and their ways were funny.

In the program, they got to work and learn together with parents of other cultures, learn about those cultures and their values.

This led to a new appreciation of the cultures and a greater respect for “differences”.

They also found parents to be more alike than different, realizing they had many of the same needs and concerns.

Groups began to “mix” rather than always sit with people they knew.



TRANSFORMATIONS – Parents

Utilizing City Resources to Learn

Most parents reported that the only thing they did prior to the program was stay at home, go to work or to church. Few had gone beyond that. The women, in particular, were very isolated and felt very alone.



Now they are actively going to the museums, zoos and parks they visited. They have learned the city is an educational environment available to them.

For most families, it now is almost a weekly planning event to decide where to go and family activities to do together rather than just staying home doing nothing.

The parents now know how to use public transportation – a whole new world has opened up as a result!

When they go to museums they now “focus” on a topic to learn from rather than just “roam”.

Saving Income/Energy

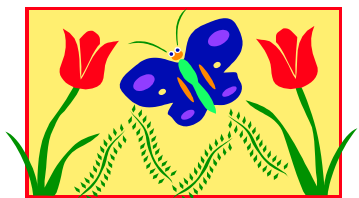
80 parents opened bank accounts to save for their computers with the IDA program.

Many families set up budgets for the first time.

Most parents found and implemented simple methods to reduce cost on their energy bills.

Several commented that they now know how to save for things they value, rather than just “getting and spending”.





TRANSFORMATIONS–Parents

Understanding Parents are Teachers Too

An overwhelming number of parents said before the program, they felt that learning was the teacher's job and happens only in school.

Now parents realize how they can be teachers too.

They actively help their children with homework; they take them to the library and museums, plant gardens and have so much more to talk about and do.

Many learned the value of storytelling and how they could use that as a way to share and teach at the same time.



Learning is for Everyone

Parents rediscovered that learning is for everyone, and can happen anywhere. No one is too old or young, rich or poor, literate or illiterate, to learn. Each generation, each individual, has something to teach and to learn.



A final word from one of the parents...

My Will

I thought to be alone this year
to worry about the world and
what harm it will bring.

But I stopped and said no!

I will break that cycle
for my namesake.

I have been traveling
with some friends of mine.

Their names are Imagine Chicago.

They taught me many things
about the world.

How it's made up of people, color,
beauty, places and opportunity.

Now I seek to be united,
and what greatness I will bring
to the world.



--Paulette Brown

A parent from Suder School

June 2001