ROBINS, KAPLAN, MILLER & CIRESI
FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children has awarded more than $21 million in grants since 1999. More than 80 percent of that amount has supported educational programs and organizations, with most of the remainder dedicated to social justice and public health. The Foundation serves as a catalyst for creative, innovative, and systems-changing programs to achieve long-term impact in promoting equitable education and opportunities for Minnesota's children and youth.

The Northside Achievement Zone dosen't just engage with parents and students–it empowers them to be leaders!

In its most recent grantmaking cycle, the RKMC Foundation for Children awarded $1.35 million in grants for 2017. The 18 grant recipients include an array of schools, education programs, and nonprofits serving Minnesota's children.

The awards reflect three key priorities:

- Expanding **great schools** and school networks
- Increasing **parent demand** for schools that provide excellent education outcomes for all students
- Creating a **sense of urgency** to address the extreme disparities that exist in educational outcomes between students of color and white students in the Twin Cities

Focus Area:

Increasing Parent Demand for Great Schools

As any parent knows, getting a student all the way from preschool through high school and off to college is a huge undertaking. Families shoulder many responsibilities as they guide their children through the school system, from seemingly small tasks like checking bus schedules to big decisions like choosing a school. They also play a critical role as advocates for their students and communities, everywhere from parent-teacher conferences to school board meetings.

The importance of parents in their children's education can't be overstated. That's why it's crucial for all families to have the tools and skills they need to make informed choices about their children's education.

Empowering parents is at the heart of work being done by many organizations that the RKMC Foundation for Children supports. Here are two examples:

Northside Achievement Zone

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) is a collaboration of more than 40 organizations and schools that are teaming up to ensure that children living in poverty in North Minneapolis are prepared to graduate from high school and go on to college. NAZ implements an ecosystem of resources, emphasizing education and whole family support as the keys to ending multigenerational poverty.

"We aren't just engaging with parents and scholars. We are building empowered leaders of all ages," said Alysha Price, NAZ's senior director of program innovation and strategy. "We are able to achieve this because we honor them, we believe in them, and we recognize we are no different than the families we are engaging."

NAZ, which puts families at the center of its model for change, works extensively with parents to make sure they have the resources they need to be strong advocates for their students. At NAZ, Family Achievement Coaches have one-on-one meetings to

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Focus Area:
Increasing Parent Demand

help parents plan and set goals, which can be related to family priorities ranging from housing to education, careers, or health. NAZ parents can also enroll in Family Academy, a series of four multi-week classes that focus on best-practice parenting skills and empowerment strategies. For example, College Bound Babies, a class for parents of 0-3 year olds, teaches parents to foster early literacy, numeracy, and discipline skills.

In addition to these ongoing resources, NAZ organizes a variety of parent engagement events. This year, for example, NAZ held a school choice fair designed specifically to engage families that were undecided about where to send their children within weeks of the start of school.

As an organization, NAZ has grown its parent leaders from a cohort of 31 in 2015 to 65 and is on pace to reach 100 parent leaders in 2017-2018. It also has a 12-member Parent Advisory Board that keeps its work grounded in the experiences and perspectives of North Minneapolis families.

The RKMC Foundation for Children is proud to support NAZ, this year with a grant of $120,000. In addition, NAZ's innovative work has also attracted significant support from other funders, including a 2011 federal Promise Neighborhood grant that helped the organization scale up. Though that funding has now expired, NAZ recently received a major boost when Ballmer Group – the philanthropic organization founded by former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer and his wife, Connie – committed $10 million over five years to the organization. NAZ is now in the quiet phase of an investment campaign that seeks to raise a total of $35 million to help the organization replace the Promise Neighborhood grant through leadership support from Minneapolis-St. Paul and beyond.

Minnesota Comeback

Minnesota Comeback guides a coalition of more than 80 schools, community leaders and funders. Together, they are working to ensure that all students have access to a rigorous and relevant education, starting with the 30,000 Minneapolis students most at risk.

A key component of Minnesota Comeback's work is providing parents with resources to make informed decisions about their children's education. This year, for example, the organization launched Minneapolis School Finder, a resource guide for parents that answers their call for objective, relevant information on schools across the city. In addition to information on school programs, academics, and demographics, the guide offers tips for choosing a school, application and enrollment guidance, and a list of schools that are closing the educational opportunity gap. Learn more at minneapolisschoolfinder.org.

A $100,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children is supporting Minnesota Comeback as it drives the growth of high-quality K-12 schools that serve the city's highest-need students.

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The RKMC Foundation for Children is a private foundation that partners closely with The Minneapolis Foundation to leverage its investment services, operating support, and community expertise.