



ROBINS, KAPLAN, MILLER & CIRESI

FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2016

*The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children has awarded more than \$20 million in grants since 1999. More than three quarters 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 St. Paul Promise Neighborhood brings together families, schools, and the community to change the odds for children in the Frogtown, Rondo, and Summit-University neighborhoods of St. Paul.*

In its most recent grantmaking cycle, the RKMC Foundation for Children awarded more than \$1.3 million in grants for 2016. The 14 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 Excellent Schools

Closing Minnesota's educational opportunity gaps is a top priority of the RKMC Foundation for Children. It's a big task that can't be done alone. To the contrary, creating an education system that prepares all children for college and careers will take the entire community, including lawmakers, school leaders, teachers, and—critically—parents.

Parents play an essential role in their children's education. As any parent can tell you, shepherding a child to high school graduation involves thousands of decisions and tasks, from choosing a school to attending parent-teacher conferences. And that's just the start: Parents can play an influential role in shaping decisions that affect not only their children, but those of entire communities. Whether it's by exercising their right to choose a high-quality early learning provider, serving on a PTA, or contacting legislators to advocate for statewide policy changes, parents who raise their voices in support of their children make a critical difference.

The RKMC Foundation for Children supports organizations that lift up parent and community voices by offering information and resources to help them advocate for their children and guide them on the path to success. Here are two examples:

### Think Small

Think Small works with families, child-care providers, and communities to advance quality care and education of Minnesota's youngest children. The organization provides a variety of services to early childhood professionals and families, and it advocates for policy initiatives such as state-funded early learning scholarships and Minnesota's Parent Aware rating system for child care and early education programs.

Think Small's referral specialists provide families with important information on how to identify high-quality care and early learning opportunities for their children. The organization administers more than 4,000 eligibility-based scholarships for families to enroll in early learning programs with Parent Aware ratings, and it administers Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance for eligible low-income families in Ramsey County.



**Focus Area:  
Increasing Parent  
Demand for  
Excellent Schools**



Think Small's outreach staff works with families and child-care providers in low-income, immigrant, and other historically underserved communities to ensure that they can fully engage in Minnesota's early childhood care and education system. Among other services, it offers civic engagement and parent trainings to equip these communities with tools and resources to advocate more effectively for their children. Think Small also provides professional development opportunities to early learning professionals, with services ranging from classes and workshops taught in a variety of languages, coaching and business support, and career guidance for certification and licensing.

A \$125,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children is helping Think Small connect families to early learning scholarships and increase the number of early childhood programs that are Parent Aware-rated.

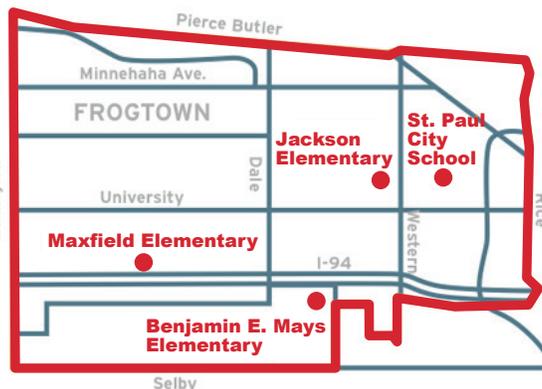
**St. Paul Promise Neighborhood**

The St. Paul Promise Neighborhood is an education initiative that brings together families, schools, and the community to change the odds for children in the Frogtown, Rondo, and Summit-University neighborhoods of St. Paul.

Launched in 2010, the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood provides a pipeline of education and wraparound services to families with children living in a 250-block area that includes some of St. Paul's highest-poverty areas. The Promise Neighborhood partners with a network of early learning centers and four local elementary schools, hundreds of parents, more than 80 organizations, and dozens of funders to serve 2,250 children and their families. Its school-based approach includes a navigation system, family centers, out-of-school academic programming, family support opportunities, and in-school coordination.

The St. Paul Promise Neighborhood started out by focusing on children from birth through fifth grade, but is now ready to scale up in pursuit of its ultimate goal of putting every student on the path to college and career success. The Promise Neighborhood is applying for a 2016 Promise Neighborhood Grant through the U.S. Department of Education for up to \$6 million per year for five years.

A \$50,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children is helping the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood continue to serve families and children, using education as a tool to end multigenerational poverty and systemic racism.



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