



ROBINS, KAPLAN, MILLER & CIRESI

FOUNDATION
FOR
CHILDREN

NEWSLETTER

February 2015

The Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children has awarded more than \$17.7 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.



In its most recent grantmaking cycle this fall, the RKMC Foundation for Children awarded \$1.35 million in grants for 2015. 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

Recent data shows that our education system is not producing results, especially for students of color. In 2013, less than 54 percent of Minneapolis students graduated in four years. With so many students experiencing failure, families, teachers, school administrators, and community leaders must pull together to demand schools that prepare all students for college and careers.

Parents play a critical role in their children's education—not only at home, but in schools and in the community. The RKMC Foundation for Children supports organizations that empower parents, providing them with knowledge and resources to help them advocate for their students.

Here are two examples:

Parent Aware for School Readiness

\$150,000

With research showing that up to 90% of brain development happens before children turn five, it's hard to overstate the importance of early learning. The skills that children start building as toddlers and even babies—with physical coordination, language, social interaction, and more—lay the groundwork for later success in school and life. Unfortunately, many of Minnesota's children aren't getting the support they need to thrive. Kindergarten-readiness assessments show that far too many of the state's youngest scholars—especially children of color and those living in poverty—fall behind before they even enter a classroom.

Research also shows that attending a high-quality preschool or daycare can pay big dividends, especially for at-risk children. But for many Minnesota families, finding a program that follows best practices for kindergarten readiness can be a challenge.

Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) helps families navigate the child-care marketplace by promoting and protecting the state's Parent Aware Ratings. These ratings are like a Consumer Reports system, helping parents locate high-quality child-care and early learning programs in their area. (over)



Focus Area: Increasing Parent Demand for Great Schools



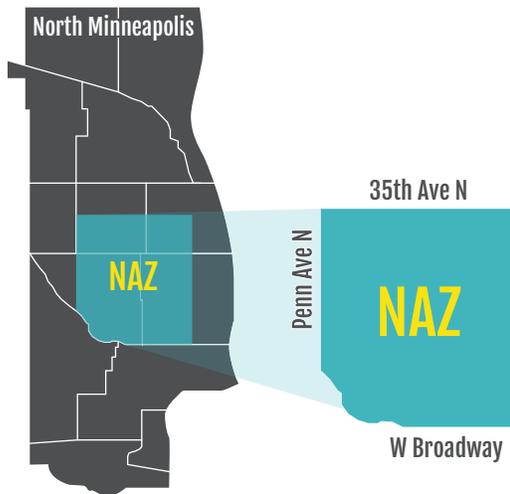
PASR doesn't actually rate programs—the State of Minnesota does that. However, PASR—an independent, business-led nonprofit—supports the ratings system by promoting it through ads, public outreach, and marketing. PASR also acts as a watchdog, working to ensure that the ratings improve as research evolves, and that politicians don't lower standards in response to pressure from special interest groups.

By improving access to information about child-care providers, Parent Aware for School Readiness aims to improve the school readiness of children across the state. With a \$150,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children, PASR will continue its work supporting the Parent Aware rating system to ensure that parents can make informed decisions about which early learning programs best serve their children.

Northside Achievement Zone

\$125,000

The Northside Achievement Zone aims to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty and permanently close the education opportunity gap in North Minneapolis. NAZ focuses on a 13- by 18-block area that has long struggled with poverty, violence, and underperforming schools.



With partner organizations and schools, NAZ is supporting hundreds of low-income families as they guide their children on the road to college. Inspired by Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone, NAZ is building an education pipeline to follow kids all the way from early childhood to college. Families enrolled in the zone are paired with Connectors (family coaches) and Navigators (issue-specific experts) who help them set goals related to education, employment, housing, and health.

As of mid-2014, NAZ was working with 660 families, including 1,640 children. A year-end report conducted by Wilder Research found that the longer students have been enrolled in NAZ, the more they've improved on state tests.

A \$125,000 grant from the RKMC Foundation for Children will help the Northside Achievement Zone continue to enroll families and provide them with wrap-around services, providing them with the knowledge and skills to make sure their children are on track for college.

Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation for Children Board Members

Michael V. Ciresi

John F. Eisberg

Louis King

Maureen Kucera-Walsh

Fr. Michael J. O'Connell

Kathleen Flynn Peterson

Carolyn Smallwood

Sandra L. Vargas

Roberta B. Walburn

**For suggestions or
comments, please contact:**

Luz Maria Frias

Vice President, Community Impact

The Minneapolis Foundation

lfrias@mplsfoundation.org

612-672-3829

The RKMC Foundation for Children partners closely with The Minneapolis Foundation to leverage their investment services, operating support, and community expertise.