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Pioneering Investors Fuel Expanding Work of Portland Schools Foundation

Private Support for Cradle to Career Partnership is Leveraged by Public Investments

Portland, Ore. (June 20, 2011) – Recently, the Portland Schools Foundation (PSF) announced a \$100,000 investment by JPMorgan Chase for its expanding work around the Cradle to Career (C2C) partnership. Since that time, PSF has received a \$100,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, \$100,000 from the Portland Children’s Levy and last week Portland City Council voted unanimously to invest \$235,000 in our work to improve outcomes for our children and youth. The C2C partnership is a public/private partnership that supports bold, data-driven system alignment to increase success from cradle to career.

Regarding these investments, Portland Schools Foundation CEO, Dan Ryan said, “These commitments are necessary to bring about the system change needed to create improved outcomes for our kids. This change will take hard work, a lot of time and a willingness to stay focused on the outcomes, even when we have our inevitable disagreements. The vision of these pioneering funders allows Multnomah County leaders to build the new civic infrastructure that is desperately needed for better outcomes for our kids, especially those whom we chronically fail, namely kids of color and kids in poverty.”

“We have an obligation to prepare our students to be capable adults, to keep them in school and help them reach their full potential, including a living wage career.” Mayor Sam Adams said. “To achieve this, we’ve brought together government, education, nonprofit and private philanthropic partners to bring a level of focus on youth success that our city and our county have never had before. This effort, with leadership from the Portland Schools Foundation, will allow us to improve our education system strategically and collaboratively.”

These most recent investors join Living Cities and JPMorgan Chase as pioneering investors in the expanding work of PSF. “JPMorgan Chase is pleased to be a part of this exciting announcement and to be partnering with the Portland Schools Foundation,” said Regional Executive Vice President of JPMorgan Chase, Cree Zischke. “We support initiatives that provide opportunities to transform education and we view this grant as a crucial step in providing a pivotal element of a successful framework as it relates to the Cradle to Career partnership.”

Amid mounting frustration around persistent data highlighting our failure to prepare children and youth for success in college and careers, there has been a ground swell of unified energy and focus around a nationally recognized framework to support student success from cradle to career. This framework tracks

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both social and academic indicators and is grounded in evidence-based decision-making. The partnership, led by a 42-member Council is currently developing a series of community-wide strategic priorities intended to create measurable change.

“Cradle to Career will focus schools on those indicators that tell us whether we are making progress in preparing students to be ready for college or a career,” said Gresham-Barlow School District Superintendent Jim Schlachter. “This initiative has the capacity to transform our work and funding from both public and private resources will help ensure this work is sustainable. I am proud to be a part of the Council that is ensuring this initiative makes a difference for our kids and our community.”

Currently, Portland is one of only five U.S. cities designated as an official partner site in the national Strive network. In recent months the emerging local partnership has gained national attention for its systematic, cross-sector approach to tackling educational challenges. The Cradle to Career partnership in Portland and Multnomah County was recently featured at national convenings at the White House Council of Community Solutions in Washington, D.C., the Ford Foundation in New York, and a summit of Northwest cities convened by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle.

“Our goal at the Gates Foundation is to ensure that all children are prepared to succeed in college and in their careers, and we know that won’t happen unless public and private partners work together” said Ken Thompson, a program officer with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “That’s why we’re supporting Cradle to Career-type partnerships in Portland and elsewhere in the Northwest where community organizations, schools, business and government are coming together under the assumption that it’s the entire community’s job to make sure children succeed in school and life.”

“This project addresses a long-standing challenge to provide better support for children who are at risk of failure in school and beyond,” said Portland Children’s Levy Allocation Chair and City Commissioner Dan Saltzman. “We’re excited to be joining with the Portland Schools Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the City of Portland and JPMorgan Chase in bringing about real and sustained change for this vulnerable population.”

Since 1994, when the organization was founded to support parent-led advocacy for Portland Public Schools, PSF has advocated for excellent and equitable education for all children. That advocacy evolved into action around disconnected youth, when in 2007 PSF published the *Connected by 25* research that subsequently inspired the Ninth Grade Counts partnership that is aimed at improving graduation rates. The organization continued to expand its work in 2010, when the Board of Directors formally adopted the lead partnership role for C2C, which supports the six major school districts in Multnomah County.

The Portland Schools Foundation is an independent, community-based organization that mobilizes the private and public will and resources needed to guarantee a world-class public education for all Portland children. To learn more visit www.thinkschools.org.