Elev8 Chicago seeks to transform the educational achievement and life outcomes of middle-grade students in five Chicago schools, each in underserved areas of the city. The program is led by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Chicago office (LISC/Chicago), which organizes capital and other resources to support initiatives that promote healthy, stable neighborhoods.

Each of the five participating Chicago public schools is partnered with a lead agency that works with scores of local organizations on quality-of-life issues including education, family supports, public safety, healthcare and opportunities for youth. Those agencies have been highly effective at engaging Elev8 parents and community members in all activities. Elev8 Chicago focuses on these core components:

**Extended Learning:**
Elev8 Chicago helps support the extension of the school day with afternoon, weekend and summer programs including the International Baccalaureate curriculum, as well as high-quality mentoring and leadership programs for youth.

**Comprehensive School-Based Health:**
Adolescent-centered services and education in health centers encompass physical, mental, sexual and dental health, with an emphasis on prevention.

**Family Engagement & Supports:**
Community organizing on the local, state and federal levels include public-benefits screening, tax-prep assistance, fitness and healthy-living classes, effective parenting strategies, book clubs, and more through a “Center for Working Families” in each school neighborhood.
Points of Success:

- In the 2010-11 school year, enrollment in Elev8 Chicago Extended-Day Learning Programs increased by 21%, or to nearly 2,000 students, over the previous year.

- Nearly 400 adults participated in Elev8 Chicago services in 2010-11 in areas that included health and education, parent enrichment and employment, work and legal supports.

- On average, there were 582 visits per month to Elev8 Chicago school-based health centers, and a total of nearly 5,752 visits over the entire 2010-11 school year.

- While over half of Elev8 Chicago students surveyed in 2010-11 indicated that they have seen bullying at school, most of them feel the most safe in their school and the least safe in the neighborhood surrounding the school.

An Elev8 First for Parent Mentor Program

Ames Middle School is the first Elev8 site to launch Logan Square Neighborhood association’s nationally recognized Parent Mentor Program, which trains parents as classroom mentors for struggling students.

Through the program, parent mentors are encouraged to become leaders in their schools and politically active in their communities. They are also urged to pursue personal goals, such as finding employment or furthering their education.

Many have gone on to take ESL or GED classes, some offered through Elev8, and have become active on school committees, including the Local School Council. Mentors have also been paid through an Elev8 grant for additional service including home visits to parents of truant students.

Ames Principal Thomas Hoffman, who has credited the truancy outreach effort for helping to boost student attendance, calls the Parent Mentor Program “an enhancement to everything we do.”

“[Elev8] gives the students a place of safety. They love to be here [after-school programs] I have to chase them home.”

Robert Marshall, 8th-grade social studies teacher
Helping Students Overcome Challenges and Prepare for High School

A student who arrived at Reavis Elementary School two years ago as a 6th grader was constantly in trouble—for fighting, for cursing, for throwing food in the lunchroom, recalls Assistant Principal Dawn Casaday. In class, he was inattentive and performed below grade level in reading and math, she says. “He couldn’t sit still.”

But Elev8 made all the difference to him, adds Casaday.

His family agreed to enroll him in the school-based health center where he received mental health counseling and he was also paired with a mentor through an Elev8 partnership with the after-school programs. He enrolled in tutoring and signed up for enrichment activities from healthy cooking to comic strip drawing to bike repair.

Now an 8th-grader looking forward to high school, the student is rarely in trouble and has reached grade level on standardized tests in both math and reading. Since Elev8’s launch in 2007, he is just one of dozens of students Reavis Elementary has sent to high school each year better prepared to learn.

The school’s composite gains on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test since 2007 outpace the state’s. Gains in reading at Reavis have been particularly strong, with the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards rising 10 points between 2007 and 2011.

“In my regular classes, I was always smart so I settled for good [enough]. During the Elev8 program there was more one-on-one-time with the instructor, I got pushed to do more. Elev8 taught me to always do more.”

Brianna, a 10th-grade student
**Partners**

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**Ames Middle School**
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
PrimeCare
Advocate Behavioral Health

**Marquette Elementary**
SouthWest Organizing Project
Access Community Health Network
Metropolitan Family Services

**Orozco Elementary**
The Resurrection Project
Alivio Medical Center

**Perspectives Middle Academy**
Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation
Access Community Health Network
University of Chicago Hospitals

**Reavis Elementary**
Quad Communities Development Corporation
Near North Service Corporation

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