



Rowe Elementary

Chicago, IL | Ron R. Manderschied, Board President

Grades Served: K-8 ■ Enrollment: 830 ■ Year Chartered: 2010 - 2011

Instructional Strategies: College prep

Student Demographics: 79% Hispanic; 14% Black; 5% other; 2% White; 85% FRL eligible; 16% Special education

A Mission to Serve

Rowe Elementary is a college prep public charter school in Chicago, Illinois with a mission to instill the expectation to go to college and provide rigorous academics along with emotional support to its students and families. Pride, success, and honor are celebrated traits of Rowe students (“scholars”), and the school provides a holistic education to guide its students, who are largely from low-income and minority backgrounds, through the path to college.

Rowe Elementary is an independent charter school run in partnership with the Northwestern University Settlement Association. The Northwestern Settlement has operated community programs in arts, education, and social services for Chicago’s West Town residents for more than 125 years.

From Vision to Reality: How CSP Funds Enabled Rowe Elementary to Open

In 2011 through 2012, Rowe received about \$350 thousand in grants through the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) to launch the school. Those funds were used to cover the cost of furniture and basic equipment for the classrooms. At the same time the founders also worked to raise private dollars to help support the school.

Ron Manderschied, president of the Northwestern University Settlement Association, noted that the CSP startup money was “very, very important because as an organization that needs to inspire community—by community I mean parents, the faculty, and private philanthropy...” there needs to be demonstrated support, and funding from the federal CSP conveys a validation of the school. He continued that receiving the federal CSP grant “assisted in drawing private philanthropy as a partner in the process.”

In terms of how Congress could support charter schools, Manderschied says, “If we want charters to really be leaders in trying to reform public education, we as charters need to accept a much higher level of accountability than the traditional neighborhood schools, but that should really come with equal access of resources. We’re willing to accept the accountability, but give us equal access.”

The Motivation to Open a Charter School

Northwestern Settlement’s partnership with Rowe Elementary is an extension of its youth-focused programming, with the goal of investing in children to develop individual potential and disrupt generational poverty.

On the decision to run a charter school, Manderschied says, “To the credit of our board of directors, they stepped up when very few people had ever even heard of what a charter school was. It was barely out of Minnesota and

STATEWIDE IMPACT

- ☒ Rowe is rated a Level 1+ school, the highest rating on Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS) School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) accountability system.
- ☒ Rowe scholars demonstrated above average growth on standardized reading and math assessments.
- ☒ -Rowe is rated as a top-level “excelling” school on the CPS Creative Schools Certification, which measures instruction, partnerships, school culture, and budgeting for arts education.

“If anyone is considering a school where there’s structure, where they take pride in their work, where the kids are allowed to grow at their own pace—Rowe would be it.”

— Haydes Muniz, parent



starting in different parts of the country. Our board of directors really bet the farm, spent out our endowment, and mortgaged all our properties to launch our very first charter school—with the idea that if we’re going to really address the issues of poverty and make each succeeding generation better, we needed to put our money where our mouth was and take that big risk, be an innovator, and make a change in the system.”

Heard in the Halls: Teacher, Parent, and Student Perspectives



“What makes proud to go to this school is that Rowe helps the scholars achieve what they want to do, and it helps them with their weaknesses. It helps them keep their strengths so that we get to succeed in life as we go on. Also that it focuses on colleges so that all scholars have a college in mind or have the feeling that they want to go to college.”

—Summer, 8th grade student



“We are able to really tailor our instruction to cater to the individual needs of lots of different scholars, coming from lots of different backgrounds, and really give them a custom education suited just to them.”

—Mariah Cobb, 1st grade teacher



“I am so proud of my son. I’m elated because he’s so determined. I see that in a lot of the kids here; they’re so determined to learn. They’re so determined to advance and do better. Even if there’s no reward for doing it, they do it, because they take pride in what they do.”

—Haydes Muniz, parent

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Bain & Company, a leading global business consulting firm, partners with Rowe to provide financial support, a financial plan, and research on instructional best practices.
- Neighborhood Bridges is a nationally recognized literacy program, offered through a partnership with Adventure Stage Chicago, which uses drama to instruct 3rd and 4th grade students in storytelling and social and emotional growth.
- All Rowe scholars receive instruction in drama, music, visual arts, Spanish, and physical education—including yoga, aerobics, team sports, and gymnastics skills.

