

## **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle Remarks Project Rainbow Launch | Wednesday, August 11, 2021 | 11 a.m.**

Good morning.

I'm pleased to be here today for the launch of this exciting new project. I'm grateful for the folks joining me today from some of our County's finest cultural institutions:

- Acknowledgements (separate page)

And a special thanks to Nick Shields, my Communications Director for envisioning this initiative. He developed the concept for Project Rainbow and has devoted many long days and late nights to this project. I'm grateful for his good work.

Our children—and frankly, all of us—have experienced a difficult and challenging year and a half during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students' routines and education were significantly disrupted; from playing with friends at recess to missing out on fundamental academic concepts, the pandemic has upended our educational institutions.

The pandemic has widened existing inequities, and our children are no exception. Initial research shows that on average, students lost at least three months of learning during the pandemic, but students of color fared worse, losing three to five months of learning.

While I taught high schoolers, all educators understand that early education is crucial and formative, not only for the trajectory of a child's educational career, but for the arc of their entire lives.

That's why I'm so proud to announce **Project Rainbow** today, a unique early education initiative.

Through this initiative, our partners have agreed to either produce new, or repurpose existing, educational video content specifically for children and families, that will air on the County's television station.

Project Rainbow is supported by a great number of public and private partners including the University of Chicago, Microsoft, our world class museums, and many more.

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This initiative is not only an engaging educational tool, but an example of the innovative, transformative work that government can accomplish through leveraging partnerships.

We certainly could not have launched Project Rainbow without the support of our partners. I'm glad that we can provide a resource to residents and families that also creates a sense of civic pride for so many organizations integral to our County.

During a time when children's education has been disrupted, we hope Project Rainbow will be a valuable resource for young learners and their families. We have created a breadth of content that is engaging, educational and fun, and will help to supplement children's early education and bridge the learning losses that has occurred over the last year.

We intend for Project Rainbow to be a resource for families and children in a flexible way that suits their needs. Think of a toddler home during the day with a caretaker, who can tune in and work on their ABC's. Think of children of parents who work from home, in need of high-quality programming for their iPad, to keep them busy. And after-school at the four o'clock hour, kids who are done with school for the day will have the opportunity to unwind with an educational alternative to TV time.

While I may have taught from history books and my students took notes on lined paper, I recognize the importance of merging education and technology to suit today's world.

Project Rainbow speaks to the County's efforts to bridge the digital divide and advance digital equity. With nearly a quarter of households in Cook County lacking access to broadband, it's important for this content to be available across platforms.

While today's initial launch centers on the content and app, this is just the beginning. Future programs will also be recognized as Project Rainbow initiatives, as we continue to work with our partners and identify potential opportunities to expand our programming and outreach.

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We've been through a storm with the pandemic upending life as we knew it.  
But after a storm, always comes a rainbow.

Now, I'd like to turn it over to Nick Shields. Thank you.