

# Southwest Chicago

## Southwest Chicago



Members of the Southwest Chicago cohort at the summer outing.

The Southwest Chicago Consortium serves the city neighborhoods of West Lawn, Gage Park, and Chicago Lawn. The project grew out of education organizing in neighborhood schools by the Southwest Organizing Project and was funded in the 2006 round of grants to prepare candidates for certification in Elementary Education. When the original University partner on the planning grant was unable to continue, Northeastern Illinois University stepped in to fill that role. Since the North Lawndale and Southwest Chicago projects have the same higher education and public school partners, these two projects work closely together on many issues.

The partners are

**Southwest Organizing Project  
Northeastern Illinois University  
Richard J. Daley College, City Colleges of  
Chicago  
Chicago Public Schools**

The University is the fiscal agent on the grant.

**The Cohort:** The Southwest Cohort has 44 active participants; 10 of them are men. 73% are Hispanic, 25% are African American. All candidates had some college experience before entering the program. Nearly all live in Southwest Side of Chicago, more than half in a single zip code (60629). Thirty-eight are employed, 16 in local schools.

The Southwest Grow Your Own Project, under the leadership of Imelda Salazar from the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), Kristi Madda from Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) along with staff from Daley College as well as local Chicago Public School principals have had an extremely successful first year.

One of the unique facets of our consortium's efforts is that we have created a "feeder" GED program for the group of candidates who had a strong appetite for learning, but lacked preparation in English or completion of the GED in order to commence college level courses at Daley College. These nine are receiving English instruction and preparation classes for GED. They will also be introduced to some of the COMPASS tests used as entrance exams at Daley College.

In addition, the consortium is working together with SWOP's "Parents as Mentors Initiative" to recruit candidates for its Grow Your Own Program with the schools that SWOP is currently in partnership with in Southwest Chicago: Talman Elementary School, Marquette Elementary School, Morrill Elementary School, and Eberhart Elementary School.



Xamira Ortez at the GYO Press Conference outside Marquette Elementary School