



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CHA Youth Take the “Next Step” to Success**

*25 CHA students celebrate improved reading and math scores at ceremony*

CHICAGO – Twenty-five talented Chicago Housing Authority high school age students who increased their average reading level by nearly three grades and their average math level by almost two grades were honored at a graduation ceremony Thursday for “Next Step: College Prep” - a summer educational program sponsored by Siemens Technologies, Illinois Institute of Technology and Windows of Opportunity.

The program, created in 2004 to improve academic skills, provide career exploration and help youth increase their ability to graduate high school with competitive grades, is a seven-week session that addresses both core subjects and long-term life skills. Students listened intently as CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan, Siemens Senior Account Executive Jeffrey Carroll; Siemens National Sustainability Education Manager Charley Cohen, Windows of Opportunity Executive Director Crystal Brown-Black and Leroy Kennedy, Vice President of Community Affairs and Outreach Programs at IIT, emphasized the importance and significance of their accomplishments.

“The Plan for Transformation remains dedicated to improving the lives of CHA leaseholders all over the city, and this program is an example of that,” said Jordan, who lived in public housing as a child. “The completion of ‘Next Step’ marks an important milestone in lives of these students, so that they can successfully move forward to the college or university of their choice.”

Utilizing a one-on-one web-based curriculum created by the Siemens Building Technologies’ Building Education Division, CHA youth worked at their own pace to improve their math and reading scores in “Next Step.” The reading portion focused on rate and comprehension, and the math curriculum emphasized computation and word problems to assist with problem solving.

The results were emphatic: the 2009 summer graduating class increased its average reading level by nearly three grades, and its average math level by almost two grades.

Next Step was available to 25 CHA high school-aged students who were either juniors or seniors. The curriculum also addressed soft skills such as resume-writing, interviewing and professional etiquette, and a variety of professionals visited the classroom to discuss the

importance of appearance, proper speaking in the workplace, and professional etiquette as part of the transition from high school to college.

The program was conducted in a computer lab/classroom at IIT, with lunch provided in the university cafeteria - giving the students exposure to life on a college campus.

The class also enjoyed field trips, including a trek to Siemens Building Technologies corporate headquarters in suburban Chicago, and lunch at a downtown restaurant where students met with an etiquette coach.

“Siemens is very proud of the students that have completed the Next Steps program,” Cohen said. “Our four-year association with the children and instructional staff has been rewarding. Partnering with the Chicago Housing Authority and Windows of Opportunity to deliver this program has been a privilege. This program represents the best of what public-private partnerships should be about. As an organization, Siemens is committed to supporting lifelong learning and this program goes a long way in giving students the tools to succeed on that journey.”

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**Suggested caption for photo:  
CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan and Siemens National Sustainability Education Manager Charley Cohen pose with the graduates of the "Next Step: College Prep" summer educational program sponsored by Siemens, CHA, IIT and Windows of Opportunity on Aug. 6.**

