



January 11, 2007 Southwest News-Herald - City

Education Reform, Says Daley

Visits Carroll-Rosenwald School to Honor Certified Teachers

By **DERMOT CONNOLLY**

Mayor Richard M. Daley and Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan visited Carroll-Rosenwald Annex School on Monday to discuss education issues.

The mayor spoke of the need for education funding reform in Illinois, where he said, the present system requires schools to depend too much on property taxes. He was on his way to Springfield for the inauguration of Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the start of the new legislative session, and the mayor said he would press the funding issue there.

Duncan held a press conference afterward to congratulate Carla Vides and Gale Harris, two teachers at the school at 2601 W. 80th St. They were among 171 city teachers who recently earned National Board Certification, a process established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Daley was introduced by Ald. Lona Lane (18th), who credited him with improving the school system since taking control of the system several years ago.

With dozens of students gathered near him, Daley then rang the ceremonial school bell.

"You're not the only ones who are getting down to business today," he told the pupils, referring to the state legislators starting a new session the same day. He said that while in Springfield, he would push for more state funding so property taxes could be lowered.

He pointed out that in 2006, two-thirds of elementary school students in the city were meeting state standards, up from one-half in 2005.

"We are making progress but we need to do more. We need to offer two years of pre-school and a full-day kindergarten," said Daley.

"We can't keep raising property taxes but if we don't do something, we'll be cutting more programs every year and that is not fair to the students," said the mayor.

"The election was a stumbling block. No one wanted to do anything before that," said the mayor, asserting that elected officials are now serious about reworking the formula for state funding to schools.

"This is the best chance we have to get it done," said the mayor, pointing out that Democrats consolidated their control of both houses of the state Legislature in the last election, and hold all the statewide offices.

"There are a number of proposals already on the table. Let's all get together in a room and work this out."

He said education funding would also be discussed during the February meeting of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, a group of 272 mayors from the Chicago area.

Duncan said later that Illinois is 49th out of 50 states when it comes to public funding for education.

"Boston gets \$2,000 more per student and New York City gets \$4,000 more per year than Chicago. We

could do a lot with that money," said Duncan.

"But it is not all about money," he added, turning the attention to Vides and Harris, the two teachers at Carroll-Rosenwald who earned national certification.

Vides, a first-grade teacher with 11 years of experience, said she liked the idea that the certification process would require "self-evaluation."

"I feel I have become a better teacher. There are monetary incentives but it's just a rewarding process. I would like to encourage other Chicago Public School teachers to get certified," said Vides.

"I am a person who always loves a challenge," said Harris, a special education resource teacher with 21 years of experience, the last eight at Carroll/Rosenwald.

"You might think you are a great teacher, but you can always improve. I feel I have become a better teacher. I wanted to offer my students the best I had," said Harris. She said certification brings with it "an awesome responsibility. I have to reach out to other teachers."

Introduced in Chicago about nine years ago, the National Board Certification program is open to any teacher with at least three years of experience. The performance-based certification includes videotaping the candidates in the classroom so their teaching methods can be analyzed. The teachers also go through a detailed testing process. Many don't pass on the first try, the teachers said.

The non-profit Chicago Public Education Fund spearheaded efforts to bring the National Board Certification program to Chicago schools, and has investing \$6 million in the effort so far, and more than \$9 million has been invested by the state.

"We see ourselves as venture philanthropists," said chairman Tim Schwertfeger, the chairman and CEO of Nuveen Investments LLC.

"We look for and test new ideas in public education," said Schwertfeger, who attended the press conference with Janet Knupp, founding president of the Fund.

"Today I applaud the success of these teachers," said Knupp. "Our goal is to raise the level of public education in Chicago."

She said three national studies have shown that teachers who complete the National Board Certification process are more successful.

Knupp said that as of now, 645 teachers in the Chicago Public Schools have become National Board Certified. The goal set by Mayor Daley is to bring that to more than 1,200 by 2008. She said there are roughly 24,000 teachers in the system and the long-term goal is to have 10 percent certified.

Adell Brock, the first-year principal of Carroll-Rosenwald, became a National Board Certified teacher in 2002, and mentored Harris and Vides.

"I use a lot of what I learned as a principal as well," said Brock, adding that her goal is to have a core group of nationally certified teachers at her school.

"Your best teachers are getting better," said Duncan.