



**25th Anniversary of the Creation of Local School Councils
December 8, 2014**

Good evening and thank you. That was a very lovely tribute to a remarkable man.

I am so blessed to have been able to work with Mr. Deanes in my time at Chicago Public Schools. He was someone who, I think, was called to do his work in the community.

Serving Chicago's children was never a job to Mr. Deanes. It was a calling. And I think we can all be inspired by that message.

[Pause]

So, in the spirit of Mr. Deanes, I would like to say that all of us at CPS owe you a debt of gratitude ... we owe you for your time, your dedication and your professionalism to help us ensure that our students are graduating from CPS prepared for college, career and life.

I like to say that it takes an army of believers to transform a school district ... and to put students on a path to success. Well, my friends ... you are that army.

There are some 6,500 parents, community members, teachers and principals serving on 516 Local School Councils across our District.

A great public school is a beacon in the community. And LSCs were created to empower communities, to give them not only a voice but a leadership role in the running of their local schools.

This unique governance structure that we celebrate here tonight is now a model for parent and community engagement across the United States.

You are more than community partners, you are the eyes and ears of your school communities.

As members of your LSCs, you strengthen our schools by supporting our principals and by making sure the money we invest is reaching every child.

You have brought your own professional experiences to these roles, providing leadership to countless school activities, including fundraising, marketing and advocacy.

I have appreciated the opportunity to work closely with you ... and your input has helped shape my vision for CPS as well as the District's Action Plan, which is the framework that drives every decision we make.

With your help ... and with the hard work of our dedicated teachers, principals and parents ... our students are making tremendous gains inside the classroom.

We ended last school year with a graduation rate near 70 percent, a record high for CPS and among the best of any large school district in the country.

Our daily attendance is also at a record high. Test scores are up across all grade levels. Suspensions and expulsions continue to decline.

And more of our freshmen are on-track for graduation – some 84 percent – than ever before.

Gains like these do not happen by accident. They are a result of careful planning, strategic investments, and establishing a common vision for CPS and what we stand for.

But they are also about building and maintaining relationships with families and the communities we serve. They are the result of your tireless help and support in shaping our schools to be the best they can.

We are all in this together.

The children of Chicago need and deserve our collective strength to rise above the challenges they face. They need each and every one of us pulling in the same direction with all our might.

So while we proudly celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Local School Councils tonight, I want you to know we are continuously working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our LSCs.

We are examining and revising our training methods so that LSC members are well-prepared for the demands of the position.

We are encouraging more communication and better cooperation and coordination between LSCs, principals and District administrators.

And we are consulting with LSC members, including the city-wide Local School Council Advisory Board, on major policies and programs before we implement them.

Thank you again for your help. Your support. Your guidance.

Our work together is never easy, but the children of Chicago deserve our best efforts each day to enrich their lives and open for them a world of possibilities.

Thank you.