



**Bronzeville Breakfast
February 17, 2015**

Good morning and thank you Pastor Harris and the Bright Star Church community for allowing me to be a part of this special day.

There is so much good will in this room. I can feel it.

We all want the best for our children. We would do anything to see them graduate from high school and go off to college, ready to make a difference in the world.

The sad reality is, far too many of our children never get this chance.

Far too many of our children in communities like Bronzeville fail to live up to their potential because the adults in their lives fail to provide the tools necessary for them to overcome the challenges they face.

Our mission at Chicago Public Schools is educate the whole child, and to do that you must think beyond the classroom.

That is why we continue to invest in the kinds of social-emotional supports that our children desperately need – programs that teach them how to build relationships, how to solve problems without conflict, and how to see a world that is larger than themselves.

But we cannot do this alone.

I look across this room and I see community leaders who as committed to this difficult work as we are.

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, my friends, you are that village.

The work you are doing to support children – particularly those whose young lives have been scarred by violence – could be the difference between them staying in school and on that path to success or falling through the cracks in the system.

[Pause]

I had the wonderful opportunity once to meet and introduce the great Bishop Tutu at a conference, and it was incredible. You really did feel like you were in the presence of someone very special.

Before I introduced him, he said something that has stuck with me to this day.

He said, “God puts people on Earth with one wing. And they can never fly, and they can never really move in any direction unless they lock arms with someone else.

“And then you have two wings to fly. And that is what God calls Angels.”

I say this to you because I want you all to understand how important it is that we lock arms on behalf of our children.

The children of Chicago need and deserve the collective strength of families, teachers, principals and community partners such as yourselves to rise above the challenges that must at times seem insurmountable.

Our children need each and every one of us pulling in the same direction with all our might.

So that regardless of their backgrounds and in spite of their challenges, every child who attends CPS will graduate knowing that they are ready and able to achieve their dreams.

That is how we teach the whole child.

Not just children who excel academically, but children who become leaders in their communities. Children who give back.

As you can see, I am passionate about the work that I do. And I could talk endlessly about our children and their potential.

I want to thank everyone here for your support, your prayers – both the silent and the spoken – which gives me the strength each day to serve the children of our city.

Thank you.

[If Introducing Gary McCarthy, use this]

It is now my pleasure to introduce a key partner in this work -- a man who shares my unwavering commitment to Chicago's youth and to the safety of our communities -- Police Chief Gary McCarthy.