



**Peace Day event
September 19, 2014**

Good afternoon and thank you.

On behalf of Chicago's children, I want to thank each of you for your time, your compassion, and your vision for peace in this world.

We may wish for peace. We may call for peace. But peace will only be realized when we work together for a common purpose ... when every school, every block, every neighborhood and every corner of this city hears our collective voice spreading love, empathy, compassion and understanding.

On this day, in CPS schools across this city, students are being asked to reflect on what peace means to them. As in past years, some are designing posters and artwork, while others are reading poetry or participating in anti-violence marches.

Peace Day in Chicago is not about one single expression of peace ... it is about bringing peace into your heart, and into your life.

Under the leadership of CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Board of Education, Chicago Public Schools is investing in social-emotional supports, conflict resolution, self-reflection programs and other restorative practices to ensure healthy learning environments for our students.

Social-emotional learning is helping students build relationships, develop self-awareness and responsible decision-making. Peace circles and peer juries are opening student-led conversations to ease conflict and significantly reduce out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.

Last school year, nearly 500 CPS central office and network staff participated in a District mentoring program for students in kindergarten or the 8th grade.

I firmly believe, like our CEO, that the presence and attention of a positive adult role model can dramatically change a child's life. Simply by being there each week, mentors make their students feel important and show them that there is a caring adult who is interested in their lives and wants to see them succeed.

Mentoring proved to be so rewarding for the children, and adults, that Barbara Byrd-Bennett is doubling the size of the program this school year and is calling upon the community to join us.

With your help, together we can develop children who are more self-aware ... more socially-aware ... more equipped to succeed ... and to preserve through life's challenges.

By the time that child leaves CPS with a diploma in hand, we want him or her to believe that peace is possible – if we are all willing to work for it.

Thank you.