



**Safe Passage Rally  
August 28, 2014**

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**Good morning and thank you.**

**It seems like just yesterday we were all gathered together to celebrate the end of winter ... at least we thought it was the end of winter. Who knew it was going to last another three months?**

**But you all persevered. The tougher the weather, the tougher your resolve for the children of Chicago.**

**For that I sincerely thank you. The mayor thanks you. The students thank you. The entire city thanks you.**

**Thanks to each and every one of you for going above and beyond the call of duty every day. Because of your dedication, Chicago's next generation arrives safely to and from school each day – their minds free from worry and focused on the classroom and learning.**

**Because of your professionalism, we finished another school year without a single serious incident involving a student along a Safe Passage route.**

**By almost any measurement, Safe Passage is a success.**

**Criminal incidents around schools are down. Our data shows that installing a Safe Passage route typically results in a 20 percent drop in criminal incidents around a school ... a 27 percent decline in incidents among students.**

**Student attendance is up. Safe Passage historically results in a 7 percent boost in attendance at a school ... which helped us set a new District-wide attendance record of 93.2 percent last school year.**

**More than the numbers, I know Safe Passage is working because I see it in the faces of the children as I walk with them along their routes to and from school.**

**They tell me they feel safer. They are more at ease. They know that someone is watching out for them ... and I cannot tell you what a relief that is for them and for their families. As a parent and a grandparent, I know how important that is.**

**You are the heart and soul of the Safe Passage program – you have accepted the enormous responsibility of monitoring these routes every day on behalf of our children.**

**And make no mistake, CPS children are all of our children. We have a shared responsibility to ensure that they arrive at school each day ready to learn and with the tools and support they need for success.**

**But when I look across this city, I know there is more work to be done ... more schools could benefit from Safe Passage.**

**That is why we have committed an additional \$1 million this school year to expand Safe Passage to 13 new schools ... giving students and their families piece of mind.**

**When the new school year begins this Tuesday – September 2<sup>nd</sup> – more than 1,300 Safe Passage workers will be stationed around 107 schools.**

**I have worked in a lot of great cities in my lifetime in education, but to me Safe Passage is truly what Chicago is all about.**

**It is about community partners, sister city agencies, faith-based organizations and many others working together for a common good – the safety, security and education of our children.**

**Over the summer CPS works closely with the Chicago Police Department, Department of Buildings, Streets and Sanitation, and others to ensure our city buildings, sidewalks and streets along Safe Passage routes are clear and safe on Day 1.**

**We ask our students to be ready on Day 1 ... you better believe we are going to be ready on Day 1 as well.**

**I will never waiver in my commitment to our students ... to ensuring that they have the high-quality education that will lead to future success.**

**But we cannot deliver on that promise if our students are afraid to walk down the street to get to or from school. So this is where our commitment to a high-quality education has to start.**

**It starts with Safe Passage and it starts with all of you.**

**Together, we will continue to reduce the likelihood that children will engage in or become victims of violence, and create safe and supportive environments in which every student feels secure, has the chance excel academically, and reach their God-given potential.**

**Thank You for all that you do to keep our children safe on their way to school.**