



October 25, 2017

Let's Appreciate Our School Principals

As a Chicago Public School teacher, I always had to be prepared for two reasons: first, to keep control of my classroom which kept the principal away from my classroom as much as possible, and second, to be prepared for that inevitable classroom visit from Dr. Vera Stevenson, the principal at Bridge Elementary School. The late Dr. Stevenson was a real leader, and she demanded true relationships between parents, students and the school. She was the strongest and most powerful leader in the school, with the power to hire and fire teachers and staff at the school, summon parents to the school, and suspend students. The principal of a school has power, and great public schools require great leadership. All across the West Side of Chicago, our public school principals are making a difference.

We celebrate National Principals Month during this month of October, which culminated with Principal Appreciation Week October 15 through the 21 and Principal Appreciation Day on October 20. This state-endorsed occasion is a reminder that parents, students, elected officials, government, LSCs, PTAs, and the full community must do everything we can to support our school principals to create the best possible community schools. It is a good idea to encourage and thank the principal at your community school to show your support. We should be grateful for our principals today and every day, given the responsibilities and resources they are provided to really be the CEO of our neighborhood schools.

"Principals are the CEOs of their schools, and so much more – and they're one of the key reasons that Chicago students are doing better than ever," said CPS CEO Forrest Claypool. "While we appreciate principals every day, we're so happy to dedicate the next several days to their work, and invite Chicagoans to say thank you to their principals, too."

"As a former principal, I know just how demanding and complex it is to be a school leader- and at the same time, how much principals are driving the improvements we're seeing for all of Chicago's students," said Dr. Janice K. Jackson, chief education officer, Chicago Public Schools. "We are deeply grateful for CPS principals' continued leadership and for their steadfast commitment to providing the highest quality education for every child, in every neighborhood."

"Innovative and effective school leaders are more critical now than ever in order to meet the evolving needs of public schools and students," said Heather Y. Anichini, president and CEO, The Chicago Public Education Fund. "We want to showcase the incredible work principals are doing across Chicago and are excited to lead a citywide effort to thank our more-than-deserving school leaders."

“More than any other city, Chicago knows the value of our principals and the way that they can change students’ lives for the better, which is why we’re asking every Chicagoan to thank their principals,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “We’ve seen record graduation rates, record elementary math and reading attainment, record college enrollment – and we know that when principals set high standards for students, they meet them. We’re grateful for our principals today and every day.”

I will start organizing and planning a crowdfunding campaign to help support our school principals meet their school needs here on the West Side of Chicago. We need to raise money to help students, parents and teachers on the West Side. The strongest schools have communities that not only expect quality schools, but also have people willing to work hard with their principals to help propel our students to success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Shawn K. Ford'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'L' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District