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Emanuel Visits 5th District's Coonley Touts CPS's Newest Regional Gifted Center

CHICAGO, IL—As Chicago's public magnet schools grow increasingly popular, U.S. Representative Rahm Emanuel (IL) today congratulated parents, teachers and administrators at John C. Coonley Elementary School on its designation as a Regional Center by Chicago Public School Board of Education at its February 27 meeting.

“Designating public schools like Coonley as a Regional Gifted Center magnet school will keep families with young children right here in the neighborhood instead of moving to the suburbs,” said Emanuel. “Coonley has a diverse student population, engaged parents and neighbors, and a motivated faculty and administration. It is a perfect example of a neighborhood school that goes toe-to-toe with any private school in the city.”

Regional Gifted Centers provide an accelerated instructional program in core content areas and include a world language or Latin, laboratory science, computer science and fine arts. A differentiated and enriched curriculum allows for skill development commensurate with student abilities and interests. Through inquiry based learning, students develop research skills and work collaboratively in small groups.

“The goal here is to give options to families in the 47th Ward and to work together to keep families in our Ward. In many cases, it takes the leaders of the community getting together to ensure that the 47th Ward remains a great place to live, work, and raise a family. That is why Congressman Emanuel and I worked collaboratively to push these initiatives through,” said Alderman Gene Schuler. “Through my efforts, we have provided capital funds from the City of Chicago to help improve both the inside and out of Coonley School.”

In the Chicago area, magnet schools have become increasingly popular. According to some reports, last year alone, Chicago's 36 magnet schools were flooded with thousands of applications. On average, for every one student, they received eight applications. The applications for classical and gifted schools were even more overwhelming, on average there were 6,800 applications for 1,600 spots. Although, in many cases, the selection process for some magnet are done by randomized lottery, deserving students who do not find a place are left with few alternatives.

“In the last century, we made certain that every child had access to a public education” said Emanuel. “In the spirit of that commitment, the time has come to mandate choice within the public education system in this century.”

Since taking office, Congressman Emanuel has dedicated himself to fighting for Chicago Public Schools. Since 2003, Emanuel has secured federal funding for the Chicago Public Schools After School Matters initiatives, the After School Counts program, programs for at-risk

youth and the Chicago Academy. Additionally, Emanuel has introduced the Preparing Excellent Teachers Act, legislation to provide federal grants to schools that want to mirror the success of the Chicago Academy, one of the most innovative public school teacher training programs in the country.

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Back to [Home Page](#)