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BLONDEAN Y. DAVIS NAMED ILLINOIS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

Dr. Blondean Y. Davis, Superintendent of Matteson Elementary School District 162, has been named the 2008 Illinois Superintendent of the Year. The award, sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Administrators, will be presented on November 17 during the Second General Session of the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators and Illinois Association of School Business Officials 75th Joint Annual Conference in Chicago.

Dr. Davis was selected from among more than 800 Illinois superintendents and will represent Illinois in the National Superintendent of the Year Recognition during the 2008 AASA National Conference this spring. The National Superintendent of the Year Award is co-sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and ARAMARK. A \$10,000 college scholarship will be presented in the name of the National Superintendent of the Year to a student in the high school from which the superintendent graduated.

Noting that the award was a great honor, Dr. Davis said she was privileged to work with magnificent staff members, supportive parents, and a Board of Education that consistently focuses on the best interests of children. "Our teachers work hard to produce excellence in the classroom," said Dr. Davis. "They are supported by our principals, school staff, and involved parents who insist on a good education for their children. I thank them all for making this award possible."

Dr. Davis was appointed superintendent of District 162 in 2002. "Since her appointment, Dr. Davis has provided the instructional leadership and vision that has made our district a place of pride and accomplishment where our children are demonstrating high levels of academic achievement," noted Alicia Rodman-McCray, School Board President of Matteson School District 162. The District has consistently increased the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores with the most recent composite score on the 2007 ISAT rising to 80 percent, an increase of 45% since 2001. Two of the District's seven schools were ranked on the 2007 ISAT among the top 10 school districts in the southland suburban area of Chicago.

This amazing academic achievement has happened as the school district underwent a significant demographic change over the last 10 years and student enrollment dramatically increased. In the past five years District 162 has increased its enrollment from 2,842 to 3,347 students. In addressing the continuing increase in student enrollment Dr. Davis oversaw the construction of large additions on five of its six schools, the opening of a pre-kindergarten/kindergarten school, and the hiring of new staff, almost doubling the size of the teaching staff.

In all of the district schools, new computer labs were opened complete with SmartBoards, projectors and software designed to provide students with differentiated lessons unique to their individual academic

needs. Audio enhancement technology was installed in many district classrooms with a plan to install it in all of the district schools in the near future. This technology provides teachers with the support that enables them to address the various levels of student achievement and understanding.

“What Dr. Davis is accomplishing strongly demonstrates that inspired educational leadership can help to ensure that children achieve their highest potential to learn, regardless of socioeconomic realities that are often cited as insurmountable barriers preventing optimal educational results,” said Gery Chico, former president of the Chicago Board of Education. “Dr. Davis’ success does not surprise me. When I became president of the Chicago Board of Education in 1995, we quickly discovered the tremendous asset we had in this educator. As we worked to turn around arguably the worst school district in the nation, we relied upon Dr. Davis for leadership and skillful execution of our policies and plans...Every project which Dr. Davis undertook was accomplished fully and successfully, always in the best interests of the children.”

District 162 emphasizes providing the staff with professional development programs focused on effective best practice instructional strategies proven to raise student achievement. Student assessment and data driven instruction are utilized by the district staff to develop lessons targeting the content, concepts and skills that the students are required to learn.

Dr. Davis’ educational philosophy is driven by the research of Dr. Ron Edmonds, the founder of the Effective Schools Movement. According to Dr. Edmonds, “We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.”

Prior to District 162, Dr. Davis was in charge of daily management of the Chicago Public Schools from 1995 to 2001. She supervised seven regions and the 600 schools. She also served the Chicago Public School system as Deputy Chief Education Officer, district superintendent, principal, assistant principal, counselor, and teacher. She was Associate Professorial Lecturer at St. Xavier University where she trained prospective principals and was the senior consultant to the Illinois State Board of Education, working with schools on the State Academic Warning List. Dr. Davis was the first woman president of a Phi Delta Kappa Chapter. Awards recognizing her accomplishments include the Whitman Award of Excellence in Educational Management, the Reader’s Digest American Heroes in Education Award, Chicago Assistant Principal Association Distinguished Service Award in Education, the Mercedes Mentor Award, the Kathy Osterman Award for Superior Public Service, the Frederick Patterson United Negro College Fund Outstanding Service Award, the Par Excellence in Education Award, the United Negro College Fund Harold H. Hines Jr. Benefactor’s Award and the Diversity, Inc. Award for Leadership.

Dr. Davis was the Citywide Chairperson for the United Negro College Fund from 1994-2001 and raised over eight million dollars for aspiring college students. She was also the 2004 Honorary Chairperson of the Ebony/UNCF Fundraiser, the General Chair of the Southside 2004 NAACP Annual Dinner and the Honorary Chairperson for the UNCF South Suburban-Will County Campaign in 2007. Dr. Davis is a member of the Illinois Association of School Administrators, Phi Delta Kappa and Rotary One. She is a past member of the Board of Directors of the Lincoln Park Zoo. She is a product of the Chicago Public Schools with a Master’s and doctorate from Loyola University. Her career was chronicled by WGN-TV on “Chicago’s Very Own.”

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