

Presentation of
The ACI-Arne Duncan Award for Educational Equity
to
Linda Lenz, co-founded and publisher, Catalyst Chicago
at
5th Anniversary Breakfast
The Associated Colleges of Illinois'
Center for Success in High-Need Schools
Friday, September 25, 2009
Union League Club of Chicago

Introduction: Michael Portland, chairman, the Associated Collages of Illinois

Every reform movements needs a voice, and since 1990 Linda Lenz has given a voice to Chicago School Reform as founder and publisher of Catalyst Chicago, a print and online news magazine that covers the progress, problems and politics of Chicago School Reform. Linda is also co-founder and publisher of Catalyst Chicago sister publication Catalyst Ohio. Catalyst Chicago has won numerous local and national awards including recognition from the Society for Professional Journalist and the National Association of Black Journalists. Before launching Catalyst, in 1990, Linda was the education writer for the Chicago Sun Times and was an editorial writer for the Chicago Daily News. Earlier in her career, Linda received the Ford Foundation Fellowship in Education Journalism to conduct a national study of teacher accountability. She is former president of the National Education Writers Association and has won awards for editorial writing, magazine writing, investigative reporting and editing. Linda Lenz chronicles Chicago's school reform with integrity and thoroughness, and the work she does is central to advancing educational equity. Linda, we're honored to present you with this Arne Duncan Award for Educational Equity.

Remarks: Linda Lenz, publisher, Catalyst Chicago

Good morning! I would like to start by thanking Associated Colleges of Illinois for the work you do to get good teaching to the students who need it most., thank Secretary Duncan on his way back to Washington, D.C. for his having moved the Chicago Public Schools forward in the key areas of teacher and principal quality and community involvement through the community schools. And I'd like to thank both of them for this award.

This is going to sound commonplace but I truly am humbled to receive in the company of such illustrious leaders as Linda [Darling-Hammond] and Barbara [Eason-Watkins] and fabulous on the ground teachers, Maria [Zavala], Ernesto [Matias] and Eliseo [Martinez]. I'm also actually thrilled to receive it because I see this as recognition of the really important role that journalism

can play in reaching our educational goals. I mean of course we can sound the alarm but we also can examine issues, we can point to solutions, we can hold leaders at um, all different levels accountable.

Catalyst believes that improving large urban school systems requires well informed decisions and actions in many sectors and so Catalyst serves many audiences for school reform Professionals, we have Catalyst In Depth, our in print flagship quarterly -- if you haven't received a copy -- give me your business card I'll make sure you get one. Coming this fall we're going to start a newsletter aimed at parents. We're going to start briefing papers aimed at legislators, business leaders, and others who don't have the time to read sixteen different pages,. and we're going to launch online a Catalyst Caucus that is going to bring these diverse opinions together.

If you've been to our website you'd see that equity is one of the five principles that we try to live by, and I'll give you an example of how that manifests itself from our most recent issue on reaching Black boys. Associate Editor Sarah Karp gathered and crunched the data on school suspensions and came up with just some distressing findings. The previous school year -- one out of four Black boys was suspended at least once, and by you know keeping kids out of class those suspensions just grease the skids towards dropping out. In addition sixty percent of the students who were expelled were Black boys up from thirty-five percent, five years ago.

So yes as everybody here knows we have a, a long way to go, but I'd like to end on a positive note. I've been covering schools for about thirty years, about the time that Michael Scott first got on the school board -- long ago. And I've really seen significant progress. I think most fundamentally is that so many more people know more and really care more about educating our most needy students, and I think one of the big challenges right now is to educate everybody about what it takes to have a good idea succeed in real schools and real classrooms. Thank you very much.