



GAMALIEL OF METRO CHICAGO

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-For Immediate Release-

Parents and Supporters Demand Adequate Teacher Training for Minority Ethnic Children in Illinois

Chicago, IL – January 17, 2013 – Parents, educators, elected officials, and community residents join to demand adequate teacher training on language and racial sensitivity for English Language Learners (ELLs) students. There will be a press conference on Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 10:30am, at the James R. Thompson Center (100 W. Randolph St.) to address the issue. Participants in this press conference include the Office of Catholic Schools, Raise Your Hand for Public Education parents and teachers.

Lack of this type of teacher training has added to 28 percent of students to drop out of school - in the State's rising population of school aged children who do not speak English as their first language, according to Illinois State Board of Education. (http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/conf/2011/IL_school_code_Robinson.pdf). Additionally, The Common Core Standards were developed for native English speakers, but bilingual students were left out. Parents and other community leaders are concerned that English Language Learners (ELLs) will not be able to meet the new standards without the appropriate support.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires that ELL content is included in teacher preparation programs this year. But, the board leaves it up to colleges and universities to decide how they are going to teach this content. Currently, universities are considering three options: a stand-alone course, embedding content to existing courses, and workshops. Bilingual education experts and community leaders are asking for two college courses for teacher candidates so that ELLs do not fall behind. With an increasing population of ELLs (1 out of 10) in Illinois, it's important that their needs are also met.

According to Rep. Elizabeth Hernandez (24th District), “When certain obstacles are in the way of our children’s learning, we have to address them head on. This issue is not new and will continue to affect so many until we tackle it with the cooperation of parents, educators, administrations, and the state. Educating our children is a priority and this policy is an opportunity for English Language Learners to have a better future.” Vanessa Dorantes, parent leader of the Academy of Parents in Leadership, says, “Not only students would benefit if teachers are trained to work with ELL students, but their parents would benefit also because the teachers would better understand the social, economic, cultural, and linguistic context of the parents, and communicate more effectively with them.”

Dr. Sonia Soltero, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum in the College of Education, DePaul University, says “I am concerned that the easy way for most teacher preparation programs will be to embed the content of ELL education rather than create stand-alone courses, a course much like the special education course. There are many pitfalls in trying to embed a complex topic like

ELL education into existing courses.” The workshop option demotes ELL education to ‘a couple of workshops will do the trick.’”

DETAILS OF PRESS CONFERENCE:

WHAT: Press conference to address the need for a state law that would require adequate teacher training related to bilingual students and English Language Learners (ELLs)

WHEN: Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 10:30a.m.

WHERE: James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph St. Chicago, IL. 60601 (Blue Room, 15th Fl)

WHO: CPS Parent Leaders from Gamaliel of Metro Chicago, State Representative, Elizabeth Hernandez (24th District). We are expecting a total 60 people to attend.

Parent leaders from GMC have been working and meeting with university representatives and civil rights organizations about this issue. Providing two credit bearing stand-alone courses on ELL competencies to meet the IL Professional Teaching Standards will better prepare teacher candidates to address the needs of the growing ELLs population in Illinois.

ABOUT US: Gamaliel of Metro Chicago (GMC) is regional member of the Gamaliel Network. GMC’s mission is to develop new community leaders through building networks of “core teams” and alliances with other community groups to build an organization capable of responding to issues of education funding reform, economic development, civil rights of immigrants, universal healthcare, older adult economic and social well-being, and workforce development. The Gamaliel Network is made up of affiliates in 18 states, South Africa and Great Britain. President Barack Obama was a community organizer with Gamaliel in the 1980’s.

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