



# Where Excellence Is Tradition

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## **Public education – inclusive, diverse and unifying**

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Recently, I had the privilege of attending the end-of-the-year awards program for the English language learners (ELL) at Glenbard North High School. The evening's activities reminded me again of the great role that our American public education system plays in our local communities, our society and our culture in general.

As I interacted with the students and parents, I was struck by how comfortable and confident the students were. They were talkative, friendly and proud of their school and accomplishments. Their parents were particularly pleased with and appreciative of their students' success. Clearly, the local school was key in guiding their transition and integration into our community and culture.

Whether we are new refugees or grandsons and granddaughters of immigrants, throughout history, our local public school system has been the vehicle that assimilates and unites all of us as equal and respected members of our community, state and country.

The following are key examples of how our local schools have served in this critical role:

1. From kindergarten through 12th grade, teachers regularly reinforce our core democratic values. Our students regularly experience and learn what life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness means. Key values such as justice, equality, diversity, truth, popular sovereignty and patriotism are reinforced, not just in social studies classes, but in all classrooms, in the lunchroom, on the playground and on the athletic fields.
2. Our local schools are intentional about investing in the resources necessary to provide a pathway for ELL students to transition well and experience success. Studies have shown that limited-English-speaking students in the U.S. experience greater success than similar students from other nations with high proportions of immigrant children. This is impressive, as immigrants in American public schools tend to come from poorer families as compared to other countries.
3. We are proud of the success Glenbard ELL students have shown on the ACCESS test, which measures English proficiency, as more than 40% of our returning ELL students will enter our regular education program next year after meeting proficiency on this battery of tests. Our staff is focused on all students, including our ELL students, being ready for college and the global

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workforce. In the last several years, we have seen many success stories of ELL students succeeding in Advanced Placement courses and receiving scholarships to top tier universities.

I am proud to live in a community that values public education and understands the important role it plays in shaping our youth. The United States is a great country, in part, because of its strong local public schools.

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