



Over 100 Reasons To Support Waters School

**As shared by our
community, partnership
organizations, parents,
students, and staff ...**

1. Waters School demonstrates consistently rising test scores: 90% in both 3rd grade Reading and Mathematics (2006 IL Report Card).
2. Waters School is featured as a Best Practice school in *Teaching the Best Practice Way* by Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar (Stenhouse, 2004).
3. 2006-2007: Waters is a shining member of the Chicago Department of Environment's Chicago Conservation Clubs. The Club is making great strides in forming strong working partnerships between the Principal, Engineer, janitorial staff, teachers and students to make important environmental improvements in the school and surrounding community.
4. My kindergartner knew what a spreadsheet was and recognized one when I was using a spreadsheet for work.
5. Since 1994 Waters School has been a safe haven for hundreds of Bosnian students who emigrated from their war-torn country in search of refuge.
6. 2007: Waters 7th and 8th grade students performed on stage at the House of Blues with musician John Knecht. After only two weeks of practice, students performed Brazilian songs and rhythms to a standing ovation.

2004-to present: Waters School hosts on-site university literacy courses for pre-service teachers that includes engagement with Waters' student community.

The Waters School Bilingual Advisory Council has hosted monthly La Canasta parenting classes for all Waters School families for numerous years.

2007: Waters School was a recipient of Lowe's Educational and Charitable Foundation grant for the after school Global Explorers program. The grant (authored by parents) was for \$5,000 for a cultural fusion project to deepen students' appreciation for other cultures by offering an innovative after school program to expose students and their parents to a range of other cultures via a variety of hands-on, arts-based activities.

2006: Waters School Fine Arts Team presented Model Parental Involvement at the District-wide *Fine And Performing Arts Magnet Cluster* kick-off seminar at the Chicago Cultural Center. Waters teachers championed the merits of genuine parental partnership as a way to create thought-provoking curriculum rooted in students' everyday experience.

Waters School students' artwork is frequently displayed at community venues. Currently, 5th grade students' multimedia community-based artwork is exhibited at the Cambodian Heritage Museum, 2831 W. Lawrence Avenue, Chicago.

2007: Hewlett-Packard Technology For Teaching Grant. Teachers garnered over \$30,000 in new technology to utilize the most current methods to enhance student learning. Waters School was one of two Chicago Public Schools to obtain this national award.

2007: Waters School involved 6 eighth grade co-researchers in the ethnographic study of parent literacy practices resulting in the authoring of an academic journal manuscript.

2002: Waters School garnered \$5,000 in monetary support from the Illinois Art Council to provide a dramatic arts integrated curriculum to 2nd-6th graders. This grant was in partnership with Lookingglass Theatre Company.

After hearing the teachers explain their the dedication and parts that they play in Art, Computer, Ecology and Music, I cannot believe what a gem of a school I have walked into.

The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) has selected Waters School for support as a model of school improvement through the arts for over ten years in a row.

2007: Waters School Students collected over one ton of electronic waste from the school community in partnership with Computers For Schools. Students engaged the community in an advocacy campaign to inform their neighbors of the environmental dangers of electronic waste, both at home and abroad, especially in countries such as India, Nigeria and China which receive the bulk of the world's obsolete technology.

I love coming to work every day! Every day I create something new and meaningful with the children. Many days I walk home thinking, This is why I became a teacher.

Waters School was the Chicago home site for the national parent project model and was chronicled in the book *More Than Bake Sales* by Jim Vopat (Stenhouse, 1998).

Waters School students participate in *Chicago Metro* Bilingual History Fair each year. Students have documented oral histories of family emigration from Guatemala, Bosnia and Mexico. Last year twenty-five students danced a Mexican polka as one of twelve cultural performances at this event.

2007-2008: Waters School was chosen as a recipient of the Picturing America grant to unify library science and visual arts through the discussion and study of American art masters throughout the ages.

Many students travel from outside the boundaries of our attendance area via CPS Options for Learning program to become a part of Waters School community.

2007: The Parent Ensemble, the Fine Arts Parent Group, collaborated to create the first bilingual Waters School family cookbook to act as an outreach project to the larger community and as a fundraiser with over 150 family recipes featured.

Thanks to the Waters School community who quickly picked up on the situation in Bosnia and supported not only students but their families as well, the school has been recognized as one of the first schools in Chicago with such a huge population of Bosnian students. When other schools could not take the newcomers, Waters opened its door to all of them. For many years the entire area around Waters was well known as a "Bosnian Village".

I get to work with the best teachers in CPS, right here at Waters School.

Waters introduced its first Spanish Immersion Camp this summer. We ran 3 camps. They filled up in 2 days.

Waters School has an administration that encourages and understands that students who are immersed in the arts will succeed and be our leaders in our future. Waters School is the site of murals co-created by students and major Chicago artists.

The CPS Board should fund a Technology teacher and Computer Program as a part of the basic necessity of an education in today's world.

In partnership with DePaul University, Waters School has received an Illinois Reading Council grant to support Parent Project and collaborating classroom's literacy projects including poetry studies and critical readers' theatre.

Since 2002, Waters School has received consistent, yearly funding to create project-based oral history projects that document a "People's History of Waters School," funded by the Oppenheimer Family Foundation's Teacher's Incentive Grants. These projects have resulted in multi-age, intergenerational bookmaking activities, multi-media installations, community-based murals and garden sculptures to stand as witness to the family histories of Waters School.

Waters School has emerged as a leader in the Fine and Performing Arts Magnet Cluster initiative of the Chicago Public Schools.

Olga Marquez, teacher at Waters School, published in *Stories From the Center*, illustrated model teaching practice at Waters School. This publication was mini-book for teachers utilized in workshops to share *innovative learning and* enhanced student achievement.

2007: Waters School has created a Tuition-based Preschool that is a great success in the community. Currently, a waiting list is in place (and full) for children who are enthusiastic to be a part of Waters School.

Waters School partners with the community-based Abrakoodle to provide after school and summer visual arts opportunities for Waters School students.

True arts integration is possible because of a flexible schedule that allows teachers time to meet with one another, talk about curriculum and actually plan thoughtful, creative lessons.

I will always remember Waters as where I began my teaching profession and it has left a profound impact on me. It was like a little family in the major city of Chicago where students and teachers felt welcome and safe... and that was definitely a positive coming from a small town Indiana gal.

My son began at Waters January of last year. We live just outside of the district. One month prior to his transfer, I was FRANTICALLY going from school to school (CPS Magnet) to find a school for my son to attend. I must have gone to about seven schools. My final stop was Waters. The principal walked me into the office and with the Vice Principal, told me not to worry that there was a place for my son at their school. The principal took the time and told me it would be done. I wanted to burst into tears. All the other schools took my application, but with a look "Don't even bother because you're not getting in." I have yet to hear any word from any of those schools.

Waters School is the subject of the 2002 video In and Out of School: Family-School Partnerships in Math and Science by Pete Leki and Jim Vopat (distributed by Stenhouse).

Waters School collaborates with numerous universities throughout the Chicago area as a demonstration site for project-based learning in parental involvement, multiculturalism, literacy, the arts and ecology.

2005-Present: Waters School Fine Arts project methodologies are used as literacy activities at World Relief Refugee Organization as an outreach to basic vocabulary acquisition for recent immigrant and refugee adults in the Albany Park neighborhood. I will never forget when I found out that the kids would have their "own" garden plot back by the field house...probably something that they would not have at their own home(s).

2007: The entire student body of Waters School studied, rehearsed and performed individual cultural exploration units as a week-long performance-based "traveling exhibit." Cultures and traditions of each continent were explored through music, social studies, mythology, traditions, dance, visual art and the culinary arts.

Parents and community members attended the culminating event---an International Day Festival which was funded in part by the House of Blues.

2007: Waters School is a one of nine CPS pilot schools chosen for the 1:1 Laptop Initiative for 6th grade students funded by the State of Illinois. Every 6th grader received a personal notebook and experienced integrated cross-curricular curriculum thorough the school year. This program will continue in the upcoming years.

Since 2002: Waters School student work featured at Changing Worlds Summer Institute as a model for arts integrated literacy projects to celebrate student experience and enhance student achievement.

Waters School is a model for numerous parental involvement opportunities—The Parent Ensemble, The Bilingual Parent Council, Parent Project, WatersToday, Parent-Teacher Cooperative and the Parent Patrol.

My light bulb moment at Waters was the Reading in Motion assembly. It's exactly what I hoped I'd be getting at Waters - a creative way to teach and reach kids across all levels. It was interactive and fun---the kids danced their way towards reading .

My daughter really has embraced the school - and others have noticed her growth.

2006: Waters School fine arts teachers present model flexible scheduling to other Fine and Performing Arts Magnet Cluster schools at professional development workshop.

The first Bosnian bilingual program in CPS started right at Waters School. Their teacher and middle school students had created many short stories, wrote fairy tales, and translated some children's books for primary and intermediate grade level students to read.

I have lived in the area for over 18 yrs. My oldest son graduated from Waters & now my younger son will be graduating this June.

My kids have gone to several different schools before Waters thinking other Magnet Schools were different. I am so pleased with Waters School, the teachers are great & the students are very appreciative.

Waters School has been active in the Building Curriculum, Community and Leadership (BCCLA) initiative, supported by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Waters Choral Ensemble has participated in the city-wide chorus contest, receiving "EXCELLENT" ratings in its performances.

2002: Art Resources in Teaching (A.R.T) recipient. Grant monies provided students in four classrooms with the opportunities to learn about traditional Latin American artists and explored folk art methods with local guest artists.

Waters School has provided numerous parent outreach and educational classes over the years---including steps to home purchasing, technology skills and language classes (both English and Spanish).

Our 7 year old is thrilled to have been accepted at Waters. We entered through the Options Program and I drive my son to school.

Our son is very excited about the stimulating hands-on approach at Waters. Ecology, the arts, and technology are integrated beautifully here. This is a school that cares about the children's emotional and educational needs. We have found the staff to be supportive and compassionate as well as passionate and enthusiastic about teaching at Waters.

This school is all about community and integrated learning and we are pleased with that! We feel lucky to be a part, and know that our daughter is getting just what she needs regarding education, socialization and compassion for people and the planet. This school has so many great things going for it and great people are at the top of the list!

Each 2nd and 6th grade student experiences a Chicago River unit - an integrated unit with Friends of the Chicago River. Students take field trips to the river and talk about watershed issues and practice water quality monitoring.

Waters School was selected to be one of three schools in the district to participate in the Supporting Communities through Arts Learning Environments (SCALE) initiative through a major grant from the Illinois State Board of Education.

I took a tour at the school recently and was very impressed by how engaged the parents and teachers I talked to were. They really love what they are doing here. The hallways are newly painted and adorned with kids artwork. The teacher I observed (1st Grade) really got the kids involved. They use an integrated curriculum which means the music lesson supports something they learned in math and then they later read about the concept. The school also has a top notch ecology program and is vying to be the premier Green school in Chicago.

Waters Elementary is one of the most community involved schools I've ever seen. They have woven a strong blanket of support for the children by giving extra time and attention; but the most important thing is that they really care.

Mr. Leki and Friends [of The Chicago River] have worked with numerous teachers and students to weave the study of the Chicago River watershed across the curriculum, including history, language arts and science. At Waters, students are not only learning about their local environment they are **giving back to their community and school by transforming part of their school grounds into a living, breathing native nature garden** complete with their very own ecological field house.

2006: Waters parents used their corporate relationships to run Waters' first attempt at a big community fundraiser at Crate & Barrel. We raised \$8,000. Over 100 people came. In 2008 we raised \$13,000. Over 200 people came.

A growing number of families attending Waters School understand the importance of good food for their children. Real food, not processed and if possible organic. Parents and faculty are currently researching organic food options and venues for the school lunch program.

Nurturing, encouragement and trust empowered students and their families to express and show part of their Bosnian heritage. Although many of our students graduated many years ago and went into adulthood, they still come back to visit, talk and remind us that: "There are no such teachers and there is no such excellent school as Waters. It's become our second home."

Waters School develops personal and interpersonal social skills, and promotes respect for cultural diversity. Waters encourages participation in various school and after school activities to help students develop self-esteem by striving for a personal best. Waters School was highlighted in the book *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. (Heinemann, Third Edition, 2005).

Parent Project, a 15 year parental involvement program at Waters School, has modeled teaching practice to parents in a book club format to provide parents with the skills to create connections between home and school communities in order to build student achievement.

Recent research is showing that people are more socially, emotionally and physically healthier when they have contact with nature. Work by Dr. Francis Kuo, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, has shown that kids and adults who have contact with nature have greater cognitive ability, greater impulse control and are less aggressive and less violent than people who do not have contact with nature. Dr. Kuo's findings only emphasize the importance of what Waters Elementary is doing.

Waters School has the potential to be a shining model of real urban integration in the face of so much dichotomization of gentrifying communities. We need to show that Chicago is not a city of "haves" in a few schools and "have-nots" in the rest. Waters presents a golden opportunity to prove that gentrification of a community does not mean disenfranchisement of the prior inhabitants. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have both populations learning together in a school that has earned this exemplary reputation, and to have them growing alongside each other in that beautiful garden?

I miss being at Waters School a lot and the schools that I have taught at since moving are definitely different and do not compare (from the parent/community involvement to the variety of grants and exposure to new activities that the students receive). Also the culture, ethnicity, customs, languages are so unique and everyone can learn something new from each student and/or parent. It was a wonderful experience and I love my memories from teaching there.

Waters School has an Ecology program! As far as I'm concerned, the most important subject we all can be educated in.

2007: Community neighborhood associations donated monies for recyclable FLOR tiles to carpet in the school Front Office and Library. Parent volunteers installed the tiles. What a committed accomplishment.

For the last three years, middle school students have run our Media Lab. Students have created video documentaries, artistic film shorts and provided teaching practice documentation for Waters School teachers to use at conferences and professional development workshops. Students have learned photo, music and video editing in an after school laboratory format.

Waters School resides in a safe neighborhood that is easily accessible by bicycles and public transit. Many families utilize these modes of transportation to get to school.

I have never been involved in parent groups that feel so strongly about helping.

2007: Students in grades 5 - 8 participated in the Dell TechKnow after school program at Waters. Fourteen students completed the 40 hour, 10 week course. Students learned how computers work and to identify main components. They helped each other take apart their machines and put them back together. At the end of this after school program students were able to take the computers home and keep them.

2003: Waters' Ecology program is the winner of the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum's Educational Leader Award.

2007: Waters School students' photography enriches the surrounding community with over twelve 24 x 36 banners displayed on neighborhood street lamp posts. Waters School after school programming paid for this community beautification project.

After looking at 15 magnet schools I walked into Waters. And stayed. I have never seen a school like this that TRULY celebrates multicultural diversity, integrates so beautifully the class curriculum through art, teacher collaboration and hands on learning, AND teaches, through its ecology program, the value of our environment and planet.

Waters School has a "built-in" Science Lab with the garden.

2007: Waters School Parent Patrol was honored by Mayor Daley. Waters School has a core group of teachers that really do care about the students' education and their lives and their futures.

2007: Waters School middle school students collected 46 pounds of batteries to be recycled through CPS Battery Recycling to help preserve our environment from hazardous waste.

2006: Waters School was a model arts integration demonstration site for the National Arts Education Association's National Conference. Over fifty arts educators from around the country toured the school and learned about our arts integrated curriculum, flexible scheduling and after school programming from Waters School staff and students.

Waters School Chorus sings at a variety of community venues such as elderly homes, neighborhood festivals and hospitals.

Waters is a model of a neighborhood school. My two children have gone there - one currently and the other graduated from there and is now at Lane Tech. Waters art and environmental programs are unparalleled in the school system. These programs provide a nurturing atmosphere for the kids. Plus, the conscious approach by the teachers and administration, parents and community to multi-lingual and multi-cultural education based on equality is an enormous asset to the children's learning. Parent and community involvement is on an incredibly high level - and that approach has been built up for the last 15 years.

2007: At Waters first annual Silent Auction this year we raised \$28,000, netting out at \$24,000. We were packed at 225 people. We had only expected a little less than 150.

2007: Waters School students collected and donated 65 recycled cell phones to a local neighborhood organization. These cell phones were then reprogrammed as emergency care (911) phones and given to elderly community members who may need life-saving medical assistance.

The José Alanis Community Garden (Waters School Garden) provides urban garden plots for classrooms, Waters School families and community members. This network of invested partners take care of the garden throughout the year and harvest fresh vegetables to eat throughout the summer.

Our family's bilingual status is celebrated and encouraged. There are many different cultures here learning from each other.

Waters School resides in a neighborhood that is full of unique businesses that are individually owned. Many of these small business owners send their children to our school.

Upper elementary students at Waters School are very well behaved and there are few discipline issues at our school.

I give the community recruitment tours. When we ran an open house, the music teacher did a 10-minute demonstration of Reading in Motion with the kindergartners. The room was packed with interested parents. Outside parents have no idea what really goes on here. I want to show them. The crowd around the principal that day to "get in" was unlike anything I'd seen here...once they got taste of what their kids would experience.

I immersed myself into the school, watched their staff, saw what they were doing with and for the kids, came home and to my husband I announced, "She [our daughter] is going to Waters. Hands down."

In Fall, Winter and Spring, students participate in a nature-based field experience at Sauganash Nature Preserve that focuses on education, restoration and exploration. The students are introduced to nature in a way that fosters a personal connection to our natural areas. Volunteer parents and community members are active participants in the field visits as well.

2006: Parents collected over 20,000 Milk Caps from Kemps in one semester to raise almost \$1000.00 for Waters.

After my daughter's first week of Preschool at Waters, she came home and said, "Mommy, Miss Flores is the best teacher ever."

During a paint-the-school-party, not only did over 45 families show up to paint, but Old Town School of Folk Music came and entertained the kids for 3 sessions, Starbucks donated coffee and Costello's fed everyone. It was truly a community effort.

La Canasta parent leaders were trained in providing learning through play activities and brought these skills to other parents at

Waters School in an empowering teaching role. Parents shared these skills with other La Canasta members and Tot Tuesday parents.

Reading In Motion is a Waters School core curriculum that provides all Kindergarten student with the opportunity to learn early phonemic awareness through music, song and dance.

WatersToday, a newer parent group, introduced Tot Tuesdays and Fun Fridays to the school in 2005-06 school year. These are free activities where neighborhood families are allowed to come in with their young tots and get acquainted with the school. Involved parents host these events, so that they can answer questions if they come up. It has been great marketing for the school.

2006-2007: The Parent Ensemble, the Fine Arts Parent Group, has created a powerful connection between new and veteran parents.

We have created the first ever parent-written newsletter, organized the annual Day of the Dead celebration, Halloween Fun Day, International Day, created a community cookbook and sung and danced together at fine arts events.

Waters students receive recognition and learn about technology use in other schools in Illinois through participation in events such as TECH 2000, 2005, 2007.

Teachers put forth time and effort to secure grants to purchase much needed software and hardware, giving our students the technology experiences they would not otherwise receive.

We offer additional technology training via programs such as Dell TechKnow and in 2007/08, TechCrew, a student-driven technology maintenance/certification program.

Waters has the uncommon advantage of having a cohesive staff/family/administration relationship, in which the needs of the students are considered first.