

# THE DAILY splash

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EDITOR: SUSANNA NEGOVAN

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'FOREVER' NO  
MORE: A JUDY  
BLUME FILM



The International Conference on Education

# BRIGHT IDEAS

## THE VICE PRESIDENT OF CONCEPT SCHOOLS ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

**R**egardless of the neighborhood, city or country, education is the most critical issue facing today's children. That was never more evident to me than during this week's inaugural International Conference on Education, held right here in Chicago. More than 200 educators, researchers and advocates from more than 15 countries gathered to share new ideas on how we, as educators and innovators, can prepare our students to succeed.

Whether you're a parent or neighbor, we all recognize that education does not come in a one-size-fits-all program. That's why it's critical that we continue to keep our minds open to new and innovative tools that help our students succeed. These past two days, we heard about Singapore's high bar for teacher education, Russia's work to integrate blended learning models into the classroom and South Africa's efforts to close the achievement gap.

If those issues sound familiar, it's because they are. The challenges and opportunities we face in Chicago are not unique. And we all have a place at the table in addressing them, whether we're re-

searchers studying the use of social media in learning, advocates identifying the best way to support teachers or educators turning policy into practice.

This passion to empower our youth through education is why I became a science teacher 16 years ago, and it's why I helped found Concept Schools, a nonprofit charter school operator that emphasizes math and science in a rigorous and student-centered curriculum. At Chicago Math and Science Academy in Rogers Park, we see firsthand what education means to our students.

Ayesha, for example, is a graduating senior who fled with her mother from Afghanistan when she was 6 years old. She told me that because she is a girl, she wouldn't have been able to go to school if they had stayed. Today, she is preparing to attend Grinnell College on a full academic scholarship.

Brandon is another graduating senior at CMSA. He lives on the West Side of Chicago, and for the last three years has spent two hours each day traveling

to and from school. The schools near his home just weren't working. He is graduating with a full scholarship to the University of Illinois.

Teliane is a refugee from the Congo. She came to CMSA as a 7th-grader and has succeeded thanks to her diligence and motivation. Teliane has also accepted a full scholarship to the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she will be majoring in chemistry in the fall.

Fellow educators can attest to the never-ending work it takes to effectively reach students and prepare them for academic success and beyond. As I reflect on the International Conference on Education, I am encouraged that others share my commitment to never rest, to never be satisfied with where we are today, because there are always more doors to unlock within our students — and within our craft as educators.

Students like Ayesha, Brandon and Teliane are counting on us, as are students around the world. The solution is not an easy one, and that is why we'll continue to dialogue and come together around the most critical issue before us: our children's future.



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