

It's Back to School for NEA President Van Roekel Kicks Off Year Two of NEA's Priority Schools Campaign with Visit to Dayton



L-R Belmont High School Dean of Students John Seebeck, Ohio Education Association President Patricia Frost-Brooks, Dayton Education Association President David Romick, DPS Superintendent Lori L. Ward, National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel, Dayton Board of Education President Nancy Nerny, and Dayton Police Lieutenant Christopher Williams.

The president of the National Education Association congratulated local education and community leaders for forging effective partnerships that are turning formerly-troubled schools into positive learning environments. NEA President Dennis Van Roekel kicked off the Association's "Standing Strong for Students" Back-to-School Tour here today, with visits to Westwood PreK-8 School and Belmont High School.

The national education leader visited the two Dayton schools to see how local educators are working with parents and community leaders to improve student success. "In these changing times, providing every child with a world-class education requires more from all of us," said Van Roekel, a high-school math teacher from Phoenix, Ariz. "Teaching and learning can't just occur in the classroom. We must work together to help more students, in more ways and more effectively. We all—teachers, students, parents, elected officials and community leaders—are accountable for our children's success."

NEA is a strong proponent of community engagement and recognizes its positive impact on student achievement. Research shows a direct correlation between parent, family, and community involvement and higher academic performance and school improvement.

Van Roekel was joined by Ohio Education Association President Patricia Frost-Brooks, Dayton Education

Association President David Romick, and Dayton Public Schools Superintendent Lori L. Ward. "From larger classes to shrinking programs, public education is facing unprecedented challenges," said Frost-Brooks. "Yet with a steadfast commitment to our students, we push on. It's a pleasure to have President Van Roekel here in Dayton! We're proud to show off the great collaboration among educators, administrators and the community which is transforming Dayton schools."

The group began the day with a tour of Westwood, where an emphasis on positive school culture is giving students important life lessons on character and personal responsibility. The results have been overwhelmingly positive; the school's environment is now more orderly and stable. Students are awarded "Eagle bucks," good for special privileges and treats, for meeting the high expectations set by the Westwood staff.

Following the visit to Westwood, Van Roekel and the group traveled to Belmont High, where collaboration between staff, administration, the school district and law enforcement officials has led to an astounding drop in crime and encouraging improvement in academics. After a tour of the school, the group was joined by Lieutenant Christopher Williams of the Dayton Police Department for a roundtable discussion during lunch. Van Roekel congratulated the local team on a partnership that has

already shown positive results for students. He led a discussion on the importance of effective partnerships that engage all education stakeholders—teachers, parents, community leaders and elected officials—in helping to ensure the success of every student.

NEA's Back-to-School Tour marks the official start of year two of the Association's Priority Schools Campaign (PSC), a multi-year effort in 16 states to help transform 34 low-performing schools. PSC works in Dayton at Belmont.

A key component of PSC's work at Belmont is professional development to help educators engage culturally diverse students and students from low-income families. PSC will also provide on-site, on-line and on-paper technical assistance in the areas of community and familial engagement. Normally big-ticket line items in a district's budget, PSC will deliver these much-needed services at no cost to Dayton. In a tough economy, such support allows federal, state and local dollars to go further.

Van Roekel and NEA Secretary Treasurer Becky Pringle are crisscrossing the nation, visiting schools in seven cities, September 12-15th. The veteran educators are getting first-hand views of school improvements and strategies that can be replicated across the country. In addition to Dayton, the NEA leaders will visit Orlando and Miami, Fla., Evansville, Ind., Las Vegas, Nev., and Seattle, Wash.