

Robbinsdale's Aldo Sicoli gets Alliance's award for equity and social justice

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SYOSSET, NY – June 25, 2014 – The National Urban Alliance (NUA) for Effective Education will give Dr. Aldo Sicoli, superintendent of Robbinsdale Area Schools, the "Leadership Award for Promoting Equity and Social Justice" on July 7 in Minneapolis during its Summer Academy.

The award celebrates superintendents who have focused on equity and social justice through education. Sicoli is the third superintendent to receive this award since 2005.

"I am surprised and honored to be the recipient of this award that is a testament to the hard work and commitment of so many people in Robbinsdale Area Schools," said Sicoli. "One of my greatest joys as an educator is to see students learning, growing and achieving. If we are going to be effective as educators, we must celebrate and embrace the value that diversity brings to our schools."

The NUA promotes student-focused advocacy and organizational guidance to accelerate student achievement for all students. Sicoli has integrated the goal of social justice in his district's strategic plan and worked to reduce academic tracking – the practice of grouping students for instruction according to past academic performance – due to the lowering of standards for some students while raising them for others.

"Dr. Sicoli is a tireless leader for diversity and recognizes the importance of student learning in diverse schools and classrooms. He focuses on the strength of students' experiences and skills, rather than limiting student potential through remediation of weaknesses in learning and

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achievement," said Eric Cooper, NUA president.

According to Cooper, Sicoli has fostered a unified district vision to embrace the large demographic shifts in the district, which has gone from 63.9 percent white in 2004, to presently 47.3 percent white, 30.3 percent Black and 12.6 percent Hispanic.

The NUA has partnered with the district's West Metro Education Program's (WMEP) desegregation initiative, using the culturally relevant teaching and personalized learning for all students reflected in "The Pedagogy of Confidence" by Dr. Yvette Jackson, as well as engaging and empowering students through NUA's "Student Voices" project. Students in grades 3 through 7 who take buses to suburban schools have made three times the progress in reading and math as their peers who don't, according to WMEP data.

Participation in ACT pre-college testing is equally impressive in the district. The percentage of students taking the full battery of core courses to prepare them for college indicated that Robbinsdale had gone from having 39 percent participation in 2007 to having 89 percent in 2013, which places it above statewide and national averages.

"Our partnership with NUA has strengthened our ability to provide an equitable education to all students by creating an environment in our district where there are high expectations for both staff and students," said Sicoli.