

Chile honors SPPS chief, Valeria Silva

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Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent Valeria S. Silva was recognized with two awards from her homeland of Chile.

El Mercurio, the newspaper of record in Chile, selected Superintendent Silva as one of the top 100 Female Leaders for 2010. The award has been given for nine years to women who make differences in various fields, such as education, politics and business. Readers nominated more than 600 candidates before a panel narrowed the list to 100.

"I am truly honored and deeply humbled to be mentioned along with such outstanding women in my homeland," Silva said. "I hope that this will further show our students here in St. Paul and children in my home country that with hard work and dedication, they can reach beyond their wildest dreams."

Among others who received the recognition this year are former Chilean President and current United Nations Secretary Michelle Bachellet and current Chilean First Lady Cecilia Morel.

As a recognized leader, Silva has been invited to return to Chile in April 2011 by the International Schools Association to work on education issues at a time when education reform is becoming a top priority for Chilean President Sebastian Pinera.

"True, I don't live in Chile, but in the eyes of my home country, I am a successful leader in education and our issues are very similar - quality teaching, closing achievement gaps and changing the culture of education," Silva noted.

She is especially excited about the opportunity during a time when the country is offering new incentives to attract talented people to the teaching profession, including free education.

"Education is about passion - you are changing lives," Silva said.

In separate ceremonies, the City of Santiago, School of San Gabriel, recognized her with their Alumna Award of the Year for 2010.

In acceptance of the very personal honor, Silva remarked, "This is the first time my mother and family members were able to hear me deliver a speech and see me receive an award. To be in their presence to receive this distinction fills me with a deep sense of gratitude."