

## Principal-for-a-Day

On November 2, 2006, as President of the Chicago History Museum, I had the pleasure of visiting Carl Von Linné Elementary School as one of its Principals-for-a-Day. What a school! There was a dynamic new administrative team in place headed by first-year principal, Daniel W. Rohan, along with assistant principals, Evelyn Román and Daniel E. Lucas. I spent the whole day at Linné and managed to visit ten classes. I only wish I could have seen them all.

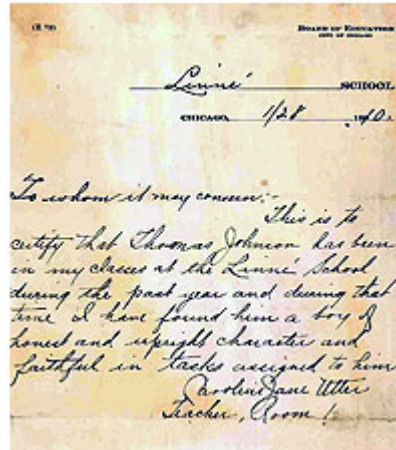
The school honors the achievements of its long-time principal, Mr. Charles A. Giglio, even as it has a vision with even greater ambitions. The Linné School values its history. There is a gallery of historic photos at the school, as well as two historic murals. One is from 1910, and depicts a scene from the early days of Chicago: "Settlers and Indians." Another is a depiction of the life of Carl Von Linné from 1939. Both are historically and artistically important murals.

The visit was a very sentimental one for me, as well. My grandfather and his brother and sisters attended the Linné School during its early days. They lived on North Albany Avenue, just south of Irving Park Road, at a time when this was a community of Swedish immigrants. The founding of the Linné School, and the choice of the famous Swedish scientist as its namesake, was a great source of pride in that community.

MONTH	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
English	88	88	89	83	89
Reading	87	84	83	84	79
Spelling	82	80	80	80	94
Writing	82	80	80	80	86
Arithmetic	90	88	90	85	86
Geography	86	85	87	87	95
History	86	85	87	87	95
Music	83	84	87	80	80
Drawing	74	77	81	84	84
Physical Culture	80	80	80	80	87
Physiology	74	76	80	80	80
German	—	—	—	—	—
Latin	—	—	—	—	—
Manual Training	80	83	88	87	90
Cooking	—	—	—	—	—
Sewing	—	—	—	—	—
Half Days Absent	0	0	0	0	0
Times Tardy	2	0	0	0	0
Times Dismissed	2	0	0	0	0
Department	2	2	2	2	2

During my visit, I brought three documents from my grandfather's days at Linné: a school certificate, a report card and a letter of recommendation that he received from his eighth grade teacher. In those days, it was rare for members of Chicago's immigrant communities to go beyond eighth grade. My grandfather, Thomas G. Johnson, Sr., was no exception. He took his letter from the Linné School to the nearby State Bank of Chicago, which was willing to hire the children of Swedish immigrants because it was owned by members of the community. He began in the mailroom and worked his way up to Vice President of the First National Bank of Chicago.

Now, of course, the world has changed, and students of all communities need to go much farther with their education in order to make their way in the computer age. Some things, of course, have not changed entirely. It is not



always easy for members of immigrant communities to get their first jobs. Most of the students at Linné are from Chicago's Latino community. They know, and the staff at Linné knows, that education is the key.

It was my great pleasure at a meeting of teachers and other staff to thank them personally for teaching our children. This is the most important job in our city.

During my classroom visits, I shared photos and artifacts from the Great Chicago Fire. The museum came to the classroom! There was great curiosity and enthusiasm as the students learned stories from their very own city.

At the end of the day, I stood with Mr. Rohan as he said "good bye" to the students. One of the third-grade girls tugged on my sleeve and said: "More history!" I say, "More schools like Linné, and like so many of the other schools I have visited in Chicago!"