DePaul, Loyola helping high schools

BY FRAN SPIELMAN
City Hall Reporter/fspielman@suntimes.com

Mayor Rahm Emanuel's push to provide high-caliber high school choices to stop middle-class families from fleeing to the suburbs got a boost Wednesday from new partnerships with two major universities.

DePaul will join forces with Microsoft to help Lake View High School make the conversion to one of five so-called STEM high schools specializing in science, technology, engineering and math.

When Lake View juniors and seniors become eligible for college-level courses, they'll take those classes at DePaul, earn transferable college credits there and become “first in line” for admission to DePaul. The university will also help develop the new Lake View curriculum and train Lake View teachers.

Loyola University will help Senn High School make the leap to one of five neighborhood high schools devoted exclusively to the rigorous International Baccalaureate diploma program tailor-made to prepare students for college.

Senn's IB program is currently confined to a select number of students. Loyola's School of Education will help prepare Senn for the statewide transition by revamping curriculum, training and supporting teachers.

Emanuel said the partnerships with DePaul and Loyola are two more pieces of the puzzle aimed at stopping middle-class flight.

“When you have a 5th-grader or 6th-grader at home, don’t look at moving out. Look across the city,” Emanuel told a news conference at Senn, 5900 N. Glenwood.

“Whether that’s selective enrollment, the International Baccalaureate program, a charter school like Noble High Schools, your neighborhood schools or whether that’s your magnet schools — whatever variation — I want parents to know you’re gonna have a choice in high school and a high-quality choice.”

The new partnerships with DePaul and Loyola are an outgrowth of the mayor’s plan to work with all of Chicago's colleges and universities to expand their five- and 10-year capital plans.

In exchange for the money and time they save by getting speedy construction permits and cutting through the bureaucratic red tape, the mayor demanded that they “take all of that expertise and bring it into our high schools and elementary schools.”

If that sounds like political hardball, it shouldn’t, the mayor said.

“You call it a quid pro quo, I call it quite persuasive — and it’s worked. I don’t think anybody got a shoulder dislocated in the process. There was nobody [who said], ‘We can’t do that. Forget it.’ Not one of ‘em. Everybody said, ‘We’re very excited.’”

Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, DePaul's president, added, “I know it’s not always completely obvious why a Catholic university would support the ambitions of a public school. But as I thought about the idea, I said, ‘Well, Catholic priests do mixed marriages all the time.’”

In late February, Emanuel disclosed that five technology giants would join forces with CPS and City Colleges to offer a six-year program that would allow high school students to graduate with an associate's degree and have the skills needed for jobs in the high-tech sector.

The following month, he announced plans to double the size of the city's International Baccalaureate program and devote five neighborhood schools exclusively to that program to prepare 3,500 more students for college.