

# KIDS GIVE DALEY ADVICE

**DEAR MR. MAYOR – Get rid of parking meters, fill the potholes**

**By Stefano Esposito:** One wants Mayor Daley to arrange a personal meeting with Beyonce. Another demands the mayor fix the city's potholes, saying, "That's the least you can do." And another suggests the mayor take all the gangs he can find and "put them in the army."

And then there's Shania, who doesn't want anything from the mayor, except his company: "I am going to the park today. I think you should come with me. We can plant seeds. We can also slide down on the slides."

Sometime today, the mayor will receive three boxes stuffed with about 2,000 letters from Chicago Public Schools third-graders offering suggestions on how he can improve their city. It's all part of the centennial celebration of the 1909 Plan of Chicago, Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's grand vision for a growing city and its environs.

"The idea is for children to understand they are actors in history, too," said Emily J. Harris, executive director for the Burnham Plan Centennial.

The letters were written last spring as part of a third-grade Chicago history class.

But are third-graders genuinely interested in improving civic life?

Apparently they are. Some young letter writers plead with the mayor, others demand immediate action and some warn of an exodus if nothing's done.

Ben, a student at Louisa May Alcott School on the North Side, has a solution that could perhaps help



soothe voters infuriated by the recent parking meter debacle.

"I think Chicago would be a better place if all the parking was free," Ben writes. "If you choose to read this and put my plan into action, you would need to take out all the parking meters. You would also have to make all parking lots free and ban parking tickets. If you want, you can make a speech about this, but you don't have to."

Yehya Albasery, a student at Sauganash Elementary, also on the North Side, seems to be looking out both for his parents and the mayor in his letter about fixing potholes.

"You can . . . be sued by the person who gets hurt or the owner of the car who wants his or her car fixed,"

Yehya writes. ". . . And what happened to all the taxes that my parents paid? You at least can fill the potholes and it [will] make our lives easier. . . . That's the least you can do."

Recycling, pollution control and more shelters for the homeless were among the most frequently mentioned concerns.

And then there's a letter from Timothy, a student at Nathan Hale Elementary School on the South Side who begins by asking the mayor for more cops to combat crime, but then gets a bit personal.

"Do you have any children in life?" Timothy writes. "If you do, cool. . . . Do you have a wife? Awesome. Thank you for listening to my idea."