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Philadelphia Schools Gains New Institute For Teacher Diversity

By Patricia Hawke

The Philadelphia schools need to improve the effectiveness and diversity of their teacher workforce.

Currently, 85 percent of their students are African American, Latino and Asian, but they have only 38 percent teachers of color.

After discussions initiated by Congressman Chaka Fattah with School Reform Commissioner Sandra Dungee Glenn, Philadelphia schools' secretary of education, President and CEO Dr. Sharon Robinson of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), and the AACTE's Vice President M. Christopher Brown II, a resolution to the Philadelphia schools' diversity problem was conceived.

Fattah, Philadelphia schools officials, and other partners in a joint news conference officially launched the Dr. Ruth Wright Hayre Urban Teaching Institute in April 2006. The institute is supported by the AACTE and Temple University's College of Education, and operated by the Philadelphia schools. Its purpose is to train student teachers as urban classroom specialists, who will then be recruited into full-time teaching positions with the Philadelphia schools.

The ground-breaking institute will recruit college students from 700 of the best teacher training colleges across the nation. They are looking for the best and the brightest future teachers, who already are committed to making a difference in urban education. Though they will begin with 20 to 30 teachers this fall, the goal is to prepare up to 100 student teacher "fellows" each year for urban teaching positions within the Philadelphia schools. At least 50 percent of these teachers will be of color.

In addition to the urban classroom training, the institute will provide:

- Improved pass rates among teachers of color on the Praxis exam through a test preparation initiative. The exam is required for teacher certification.
- A cultural proficiency program to assist teachers to connect their classroom instruction with the students' diverse cultural experiences.

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- Cultural proficiency standards have been proposed for use in evaluating Philadelphia schools educators.
- A teacher diversity advisory council will advise the Philadelphia schools on its teacher diversity initiatives, and will consist of community-based partners.

The Philadelphia schools and Fattah's office will provide funding, with the Congressman pledging to secure grant money for the institute. Marketing efforts have been focused on teacher recruitment from universities with large African American and Latino enrollments in nearby states and Puerto Rico.

The institute is named for the outstanding Philadelphia schools educator, Dr. Ruth Wright Hayre (1910–1998). Hayre was the first African American to teach full time in the Philadelphia schools, the first African American senior high school principal in the Philadelphia schools, and the first African American and female president of the Philadelphia schools board of education. She won numerous

awards locally and nationally, and co-wrote "Tell Them We Are Rising: A Memoir of Faith in Education" with Alexis Moore and Ed Bradley. Hayre exemplifies what the institute stands for — diversity and quality teachers. The institute fulfills Fattah's belief that "you don't have to sacrifice diversity to have quality" in the Philadelphia schools.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Philadelphia schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/pennsylvania/philadelphia/index.html>

285 Philadelphia Schools' Students Awarded \$800,000 In Scholarships

By Patricia Hawke

The Philadelphia Education Fund has been in operation for 20 years. A nonprofit organization, the Fund partners with school districts (including the Philadelphia schools), other nonprofit organizations, businesses and individuals to provide scholarships for students in the Philadelphia schools system. Its purpose is to initiate and implement innovative educational programs, of which they have several. They work to improve the quality of teachers in the Philadelphia schools, conduct educational research, and engage the community in school reform. The Fund is one of the largest of 86 education funds that are affiliated with the national Public Education Network.

One of the programs that are sponsored by the Fund is the Philadelphia Scholars Program that awards Last Dollar Scholarships to Philadelphia schools students. In June 2006, they awarded \$800,000 in scholarships to 285 schools students.

Over the last 16 years, the Fund has awarded more than \$5 million to students, who attend 15 high schools of the Philadelphia schools system — many of these youth were the first in their families to attend college. Scholarships range from \$200 to \$4,000, helping to fill the gap between a student's

Philadelphia Schools Gains New Institute For Teacher Diversity

financial aid package and actual college costs. Scholarships cover tuition, fees, books and transportation. They are renewable for a maximum of six years for students attending accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities across the nation.

Scholarship funding is from Philadelphia donors (many of which are the city's most prominent philanthropists in the financial industry), but includes hundreds of individuals, businesses, and organizations. The most active donor is John C. Bogle, chairman of the National Constitution Center and former chairman and founder of the Vanguard Group. Besides wanting to make college a reality for Philadelphia schools students, Bogle hopes that these same children will one day invest in Philadelphia's next generation.

Once such group, which raises funds for the Last Dollar Scholarship program, is the Scholars Advisory Committee. To date, they have raised \$16 million. A. Morris Williams, Jr. chairs the committee, is the president of Williams and Company, and was formerly an executive of Morgan Stanley. He and John Neff, a committee member and former managing partner of Wellington Management Company, are the two driving forces behind the Philadelphia Scholars Program. Together, they provided the seed money for the program's launch.

Williams wants to help the Philadelphia schools students reach their goals, hoping to inspire others to support higher education in Philadelphia. Neff wants to give something back to the community that has been so good to him, and sees supporting education as a way to give students an opportunity for a better life.

Most investors in the scholarship program for Philadelphia schools students recognize the something must be done to help the city's youth succeed. Without the opportunity of a higher education for today's students, Philadelphia will be left wanting for an educated workforce in the future. The donors' generosity helps the Philadelphia schools students have a better future, as well as helping the city succeed tomorrow.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more information on Philadelphia schools visit

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