



# City of Philadelphia

## MAYOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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### **MAYOR NUTTER CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CITY SCHOOLS; SEEKS COMBINED EFFORT OF CITY, SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES, FOUNDATIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS**

*Gates Foundation invites City to compete for \$40 million grant to increase high-performing schools and improve accountability*

**Philadelphia, December 20, 2011**– Mayor Michael A. Nutter joined by Philadelphia education, business and philanthropic leaders, announced today that he and other education leaders have signed a historic agreement to increase the number of high-performing schools in the City. The Philadelphia Great Schools Compact unites the mayor, school district and charter school leaders in a bold, collaborative plan to focus on replicating and sustaining the most successful school models, regardless of their governance structure.

At a press conference at the Stetson Middle School in Kensington, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced plans to make a \$100,000 grant to support the implementation of the Compact. Philadelphia joins 14 other cities that have signed District-Charter Collaboration Compacts with the support of the foundation. These cities are eligible to compete next year for a share of more than \$40 million in Gates Foundation funding and Program-Related Investments.

The Compact was approved by the School Reform Commission last month and has been signed by the Mayor, SRC Chairman Pedro Ramos, Acting Schools Superintendent Leroy Nunery, Ph.D., and organizations representing all but six of the city's charter schools. The Compact Committee, consisting largely of representatives of charter schools and the School District of Philadelphia, will begin meeting in January to formulate recommendations to the SRC for an improved, multiple-measures school accountability framework. The Committee also will make recommendations for increasing collaboration between district and charter schools in such areas as serving special-needs students, facility planning, developing school leaders, and aligning enrollment schedules and practices.

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“I am pleased to support an innovative program that will benefit all students who attend public schools in Philadelphia,” Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis said. “By working together, local and school district leaders, parents and the community can bring about the necessary changes that are conducive to a successful and healthy learning environment, while continuing to refocus our attention on the needs of each student. This collaboration will benefit not just Philadelphia, but the entire state.”

Mayor Nutter added, “The City of Philadelphia, the School Reform Commission, charter school leaders, and the Philadelphia School Partnership have made a commitment to work together to transform education through accountability, expansion of high-quality schools, and improvement of underperforming schools. Our goal is to enhance educational opportunities for about 50,000 students in the poorest performing schools in our district and charter school systems by creating high quality alternatives. By 2016 our goal is to not have a single student in a low performing school while raising the standards and quality of higher performing schools.”

“The newly constituted SRC intends to pursue the aims of the Compact vigorously,” said Mr. Ramos. “We know this requires great effort and steadfastness from all of us who have a stake in our students’ future—which means all of us in Philadelphia.”

In addition to the competitive funding opportunity offered by the Gates Foundation, the Philadelphia School Partnership, a one-year-old independent nonprofit, has begun putting together a “Great Schools Fund” to invest in the creation, expansion and sustainability of high-performing schools. PSP’s goal is to raise \$100 million by 2016 from individuals, corporations and foundations; it is currently in discussions with funders for matching commitments that could run as high as \$20 million.

“Despite facing a number of challenges this year on the education front, Philadelphia has brought together an impressively broad group of stakeholders to support the vision of the Compact,” said Don Shalvey, deputy director, College-Ready Programs, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “Each city’s Compact is different, and while we are encouraged by Philadelphia’s progress, we look forward to even greater collaboration between district and charter schools as they continue to strengthen the Compact.”

The first step toward greater collaboration is the formation of the Great Schools Compact Committee. Members of the Committee will represent charter schools, District schools, the Mayor’s Office on Education, the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the city’s philanthropic and business communities. The first task of the Compact Committee is to make recommendations to the SRC regarding the development of a new comprehensive system for measuring school performance. It will convene regularly with education-reform advocates, district and charter school management, and others to discuss other issues such as facilities planning, best practices, public policy, equalized funding, school governance and other matters. The Compact Committee will make recommendations to the School Reform Commission and charter boards, which are to “strongly consider” the recommendations under the terms of the Compact.

The Compact also calls for the formation of a new Office of Charter Schools whose executive director will report directly to the School Reform Commission. The Office of Charter Schools will be responsible for recommending the authorization, renewal, amendment, and revocation of charters to the School Reform Commission, as well as managing and coordinating communications with the charter schools, monitoring performance and financial health, and facilitating collaboration between charters and the school district.

The District has identified 88 District and charter schools enrolling nearly 46,000 students as being in the lowest quartile of performance in the city. Since 2010, the District has shifted approximately 20,000 of those seats in 22 schools to new management and/or school models through “Renaissance Schools” (transfer of management responsibility to a charter management organization) and “Promise Academies” (assigning new school leadership with support from the teachers union for flexibility on extended learning time). In the 2010-11 school year, Renaissance charters and Promise Academies registered gains on state proficiency exams well above the District average.

“The signing of the Compact represents a great first step for Philadelphia,” said PSP’s executive director, Mark Gleason. “Already, we have seen funders rally in support. We formed PSP knowing that our city has lots of people and institutions who care deeply about improving schools, but unless we are all working and funding in concert we won’t be able to achieve results on a large scale.”

**About:**

**The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates, Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

**The Philadelphia School Partnership:** PSP is a one-year-old nonprofit organization that invests in the creation, expansion and maintenance of great schools in the City. PSP intends to raise \$100 million in support of education reform in Philadelphia, contributing to the accomplishment of the overarching goal of the Compact: a 25% increase in the number of students in high-performing Philadelphia schools, be they district, charter or private, by 2016.

**Philadelphia Charters for Excellence:** PCE is an association of 22 City charter schools committed to providing high quality educational opportunities to public school students.

**The Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools:** PCPCS is a nonprofit association representing more than 50 charter schools in the City and supporting the principles of choice, quality and accountability in public education.

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