



A Smarter Philadelphia School by School: Dwight Evans' Education Strategy

On a February morning in 2004, gunfire from warring drug dealers sprayed the schoolyard at Thomas M. Peirce Elementary School. As children ran for cover, ten-year-old Faheem Thomas-Childs was caught in the crossfire and killed as he passed the school's gates. Two gang members were convicted in the shooting and are currently serving prison time, but tragic stories like this are all too common in our City.

We have a responsibility to make our schools and streets safer for our children and for ourselves. But fighting crime will not – by itself – make our City safer. It is a sad irony when violence occurs on school grounds like that which claimed the life of Faheem, because it is in our schools that our long-term hope for ending violence lies.

The gang members who killed Faheem are beyond redemption. And while two of them sit in prison, a younger generation is right behind them – in fact, this tragedy is not unlike those that happen nearly every day here in Philadelphia. Just this month, a man opened fire in a recreation center in my own neighborhood: Three people who were inside playing basketball at the time were wounded. These stories represent the seemingly unending cycle of violence that left 406 people dead last year and nearly 2,000 shot and wounded.

We can and will fight crime, but if we fail to improve the quality of our education system, many youths will succumb to a life of violence in the same way that Faheem's killers did.

As I said in my crime strategy, *A Safer Philadelphia Block by Block* http://evansformayor.com/assets/pdfs/public_safety_plan.pdf, we need four basic elements to make our community. Just as a table becomes unstable if any of its legs are weak, our City is less stable and less safe if all four elements are not present:

1. **Better Law Enforcement.**
2. **An Effective Justice System.**
3. **Quality Education and Economic Opportunities.**
4. **Community Partnerships and Involvement.**

I outlined in my crime strategy specific proposals for what we must do to address the other three legs of the four-legged table of public safety – in this paper, I discuss in more detail:

- **Keeping our kids safe** by placing more police officers in schools, promoting conflict resolution strategies, getting more fathers involved in their children's education, and providing greater access to after-school programs so students can learn in a secure environment.
- **Increasing access to early childhood education programs** by offering financial incentives to providers who are willing to partner as a way to provide more early childhood education opportunities to Philadelphia families.
- **Modernizing schools for better learning** by equipping all classrooms with computers, reducing class size, making better use of community resources, and providing healthy environments for students to learn.
- **Improving teacher recruitment, retention, and development** to attract our best and brightest students to join the teaching profession through a loan forgiveness program and signing bonuses, and thereby increase the supply of highly-qualified teachers.
- **Ending the dropout crisis** by providing more focused educational support programs such as alternative placement opportunities and transition programs as well as expanding successful intervention programs citywide.
- **Reinventing high schools** and putting students on the path to success by expanding dual enrollment opportunities and improving participation, in addition to increasing civic engagement opportunities.
- **Improving the school-to-work transition** by offering tax credits to businesses that provide more internship opportunities to Philadelphia students, and working with the School District to expand vocational programs.

- **Strengthening the connection to higher education** by bringing together the entire education community – from early education to higher education – to address gaps in the education system and raising awareness of the educational opportunities offered by the Community College of Philadelphia.

By promoting and improving education, it is my belief that we can reduce crime, lift people out of poverty, build a strong, vibrant middle class, and increase civic engagement.

I speak from experience: Philadelphia schools were in such a state of decline that in 2001 I led the effort that resulted in the formation of the School Reform Commission and the hiring of CEO Paul Vallas. Since then, student tests scores have improved, new schools are being built, and parents and students have quality education choices available to them.

In spite of those successes, the School District of Philadelphia still needs improvement and a mayor who will champion its cause.

My plan describes my priorities for working with the School Reform Commission and the School District of Philadelphia, under CEO Paul Vallas' leadership, to ensure that our children are given the tools they need for a prosperous future, our adults are given the opportunities they need to succeed, and our City develops the resources to make it prosperous and safe.

Our next mayor must have the experience, ability, and fortitude to achieve these goals. Having served as the Democratic Appropriations Chairman in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the past 17 years, I have a long, proud history of serving the people of Philadelphia. And as demonstrated by the success of the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation in my West Oak Lane neighborhood, I can bring communities and businesses together to make our City a better place in which to live, work, and play. We must work together to achieve the goals described in this plan, and as your next Mayor, I will work tirelessly to help create a Smarter Philadelphia, School by School.

Keeping our Schools Safe

Problems with our education system directly affect the City's safety and, conversely, the lack of school safety undermines every aspect of the education we provide to our children. In a hostile environment, students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach. School safety will be a major focus during my administration, because I believe that if schools are safe, then teachers, administrators, and students can concentrate on the business of learning.

Recent crime data indicate that our schools generally are bucking the citywide trend of rising violence and crime. For example, during the first three months of this

school year, serious incidents dropped by 11 percent when compared to the same three months from the prior school year. And last school year, the number of serious incidents dropped by 13.4 percent from the previous year.

These trends are the result of significant efforts during the last few years by the School District, its Office of School Climate and Safety, and the School Reform Commission, among others. I applaud many of the School District's recent efforts, including the installation of 2,300 surveillance cameras and the hiring of 250 community group employees to help monitor school facilities over the past two years. Another 1,000 cameras and an additional 150 community group employees are to be added this year.

Through a \$1.7 million annual grant that I have helped to obtain for the School District in each of the last two years, thousands of parents are helping to make schools safer. In addition, metal detectors are being used in every high school, and mobile detectors are available to other schools where administrators wish to use them.

Although Philadelphia's schools are gradually becoming safer, one of the greatest challenges facing our City is the reality that some of our schools still are not safe havens for learning. Government is not doing its job if people cannot feel safe in their neighborhoods and schools. As noted in my crime strategy, I will build upon these efforts to secure our schools and improve student safety by emphasizing the following:

- **Find the Weak Links in Every School's Security Efforts – and Fix Them.** I will ask the School Reform Commission to initiate a comprehensive annual assessment of safety within our schools. It is not enough to identify what the problems are – I will work with the School Reform Commission and City Council to provide sufficient resources to fix whatever problems are discovered. This may require technologies such as metal detectors, door locks and alarms, and communications systems. It may require physical changes to school facilities, such as limiting entrances and exits to specific locations, and alarming all other doors that lead inside or outside. Or it may require funding for counselors, training and education programs, or skills-building curricula to avoid drug use, gangs, or violence.

Some funding for these security upgrades may be allocated as part of the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia that I have helped develop and fund as a state legislator. Some will come from requiring schools receiving public capital improvement funds to conduct a needs assessment of their school's safety features and to upgrade security measures at the same time that they implement other improvements in school buildings. Still other security upgrades will be paid for by seeking safe school funding from federal and state sources. Because of my experience as Chairman of the state House Appropriations Committee, I am confident that an

Evans' mayoral administration will be able to find every available dollar that it will take to improve the safety of each of our schools.

- **Assign Police to Public High Schools.** I will station additional Philadelphia police officers in every high school at which the principal requests one. These officers will make our schools safer and in doing so will enable schools to get on with the mission of educating our youth. In particular, I would like to see more strategic deployment of police officers and other security officers and adults in and around all Philadelphia schools at the end of the school day in order to ensure that our students get home or to after-school activities promptly and safely.
- **Require Enhanced Safety Drills.** I will make certain that every school conducts regular safety drills so that every student and teacher knows what to do during a serious emergency – not just fire drills, but lockdown and shelter-in-place drills to protect life and safety in the event of dire threats on campus. Each school already has procedures for these, but they need to conduct regular drills, in coordination with local law enforcement.
- **Increase School-Based Conflict Resolution Strategies.** We must do more to incorporate peer mediation programs and Peaceable Schools approaches into the Philadelphia public school system. The Peaceable Schools approach seeks to create schools where every member of the school community, from the crossing guard to the classroom teacher to the students, has adopted conflict resolution skills and believes that a diverse, nonviolent society is a realistic goal. An evaluation of Peaceable Schools programs used in four multi-ethnic school districts in New York City found a 71 percent decrease in physical violence in the classroom, 66 percent less name-calling, and fewer verbal insults. In addition, I will fund dating-violence curricula and presentations: We must do everything possible to help our young people learn appropriate ways to manage conflict within relationships without resorting to violence of any kind.
- **Require Better Critical Incident Planning.** The Office of School Climate and Safety issues annual school safety plans to help schools and school officials prepare, prevent, respond, and recover from a variety of emergencies and critical incidents. Despite the vast majority of these plans being devoted to the *prevention* of emergencies and critical incidents, only a small fraction of the annual safety plans provide much guidance regarding an effective *response*. Other school districts have taken a more proactive approach to crisis response planning: In California, for example, school districts received Crisis Response Boxes from the state Attorney General's Office that guide school officials through the development of rigorous crisis response plans and enable officials to keep other information that will be vital during a critical incident together in

one easily accessible place – items such as maps, blueprints of the school campus, master sets of keys, teacher and employee rosters, fire alarm, sprinkler, and utility shut-off procedures, student photos, and the like. Philadelphia schools need to follow a similar, user-friendly approach to enhance school safety planning, and as Mayor, I will ensure that this occurs.

- **Provide Access to High-Quality After-School Programs for all Philadelphia Children.** A new study by Catalyst and the Women’s Studies Research Center at Brandeis University shows that the workplace productivity of parents suffers when they are worried about what their kids are doing after school. Keeping children safe and learning throughout the day, including after school and summer time, is necessary for all children and their families. As Mayor, I will take every step to pursue all national and state funding – 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Safe and Drug Free Schools monies – to ensure that all our children and families have access to the highest quality after-school programs, whether in schools, community centers, playgrounds, or other neighborhood locations.
- **Engage Parents and Adults in School Safety by Instituting a “Security Dads” Program in Schools.** As Mayor, I will do everything possible to encourage more parental and adult participation in school functions. In addition to embodying the notion that it takes a village to raise a child, this serves as a constant reminder to students that parents and adults indeed are interested in their well-being and education. As part of this effort, I will create a Security Dads program that will provide a visible presence of active fathers and interested men patrolling hallways, offering tutoring help, and attending after-school events, such as school dances, concerts, and athletic events, among others. Modeled after a successful program in Indianapolis, Security Dads will be trained on school policies and procedures, and given special clothing to identify them. This program has increased adult participation in the schools and decreased behavioral problems among students.
- **Improve Access to Information about Schools for Parents** by creating an easy-to-use Internet site. Parents should be able easily to obtain information about schools in their neighborhood simply by typing their zip code into a website. Although the School District already provides some school information on its website, it can be difficult to navigate and information can be hard to find. As Mayor, I will work with the School District to create a web-based education portal for parents that will provide quick and effortless access to information on student test scores, after-school programs, school safety and incident reports, and school policies for all public, charter, and private schools in their neighborhood. In addition, I will equip all free, public computers such as those in city

libraries with an icon linking to this web-based education portal to further improve access to information about Philadelphia schools.

- **Institute a “Parents Recruiting Parents” program** to encourage greater parental involvement. Developed in a Michigan school, this program assigns a small group of parents to play the role of recruiters responsible for contacting other parents about issues and concerns related to their children’s education, and help strengthen school programs through greater participation by parent volunteers as a result. As Mayor, I will seek opportunities to enhance parent competency using creative programs like this one that easily can be instituted in the Philadelphia public school system.

I also will work with parent associations to support and fund *additional* school safety initiatives, such as education and outreach efforts to remind parents and students about how to avoid and resolve conflicts, emphasize school safety rules and procedures, and provide available resources and tools, such as the School District’s Anti-Bullying Hotline. And I will gather input from parents and students on additional school safety strategies.

Increasing Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs

The availability of affordable, high-quality early childhood education – which includes child care, preschool, and after-school care – is invaluable to the development of our children and the ability of their parents to earn a living. Research on the importance of high-quality early childhood education programs points to some critical findings:

- Center-based care, particularly when it is of high quality, can help close the gap between at-risk and other children, increasing the likelihood of better educational and social outcomes.
- Poor-quality care can pose hazards and risks to young children, particularly those already at high risk of academic and social failure.
- High-quality preschool programs can reduce future public expenditures by minimizing costs incurred for remedial and special education, crime and incarceration, and future unemployment and welfare dependency.

Early childhood education can be a cost-effective public investment, with benefits that can far exceed the initial investment of public funds. Recent studies on the impact of high-quality early childhood education programs found returns on investment as high as 7 to 1, in addition to considerable social dividends including better school success and significantly higher lifetime earnings for both the children and their mothers. In

particular, early childhood education and high-quality child care appear to produce the most pronounced returns and benefits among low-income children and families.

In spite of the benefits that early childhood education offers, it is estimated that as many as one-third of all children aged 0 to 3 do not have access to affordable early childhood education programs in Philadelphia. In many cases, it is children from middle-income families who lack access. These families often make too much to qualify for subsidized programs, and yet do not make enough to pay for early childhood education for their children.

More than 630 licensed child care centers and group homes, and 760 registered family child care homes, operate in Philadelphia. In addition, the Philadelphia School District operates a number of early childhood education programs, including its Comprehensive Early Learning Centers, Pre-K Head Start, and Bright Futures, a school-based pre-kindergarten program.

Most of these programs receive funding from the state. Pennsylvania is doing a better job than many states of providing state-level funding for child care and early childhood education. The state's fiscal year 2006-07 budget includes a substantial investment in early care and education, increasing child care and early childhood education funding by \$59.5 million over the previous year. State funding for child care and early childhood education-related services and initiatives totals \$688 million in fiscal year 2006-07 – funding that, as Appropriations Chair, I fought for.

But despite what seems like substantial capacity and funding to meet Philadelphia's child care needs, there remain significant gaps in service, particularly for low-income families. According to Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, as of July 2006, the waiting list for a subsidized child care slot in Philadelphia had topped 1,000 children. A 2002 Department of Health and Human Services report showed that only 16 percent of eligible families in Pennsylvania were receiving subsidized child care slots, pointing to an even greater magnitude of need.¹

Furthermore, *high-quality* child care programs may be in short supply. A 2001 United Way study found that two out of 10 centers in Philadelphia provide good-quality child care services, while the rest ranged from poor to mediocre.² The state and early childhood education advocacy groups have been seeking to improve the quality of child care programs in Philadelphia in recent years through initiatives such as the state's Keystone Stars program, a continuous quality improvement system – but as of June 2006, only about 39 percent of the licensed child care centers and registered child care family homes in Philadelphia were participating in this quality-improvement initiative.

¹ QUEST, "Affordable Child Care," (Spring 2002). Available at: http://www.paquest.org/child_care.htm

² United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Improving School Readiness Project, "Early to Rise: Improving the School Readiness of Philadelphia's Young Children," (2001).

As Mayor, I will make Philadelphia a national leader in early childhood education. In order to meet this goal, I will:

- **Make Early Childhood Education a Priority through Greater Funding.** School District officials estimate that it will cost \$50 million over three years to expand early childhood education to all children in Philadelphia. I will seek the funding necessary by:
 - Ensuring that no money is left on the table and all State and Federal Title I and Head Start dollars for early childhood education are being spent.
 - Maximizing the use of federal and private grants by strengthening the School District's non-profit arm to identify and obtain more funding.
 - Partnering with the business community to expand funding and support of high-quality early childhood education.
 - Using city funds to supplement existing early childhood education programs as funding becomes available due to my efforts to streamline city government and spending, like procurement reform and the development of cost sharing agreements among city agencies to reduce operating expenses.

- **Create a City-Funded Pilot Program to Produce More Spin-Off Child Care.** The goal of this pilot program will be to create an urban child care oasis where low-income parents can bring their children to receive the best possible care and education while they work. Such centers, which might expand services at existing comprehensive early learning centers or lead to creation of entirely new child care and early childhood education centers, will offer:
 - **Drop-off child care services:** Sometimes parents need someone to watch their children for a few hours when they have to work late, go to the doctor, or attend to other competing obligations. Few center-based providers offer this sort of drop-off service because it typically is unprofitable – it is difficult to predict the need or usage and staff these services appropriately.
 - **Parental training opportunities:** Being an effective parent is the hardest job there is, but it is not something that comes naturally to all. The City's model child care center will offer parent training programs, including at night and on weekends, where inexperienced parents can learn parenting skills from trained and educated child care providers.

- **Professional early childhood education training opportunities:**
There is a crying need for child care providers. The centers will serve as initial training sites for those interested in becoming licensed childcare providers. These training programs will be developed in coordination with the state child care licensing authority, local community colleges, community-based programs, organizations such as KidZone Philadelphia, and colleges that provide early childhood education coursework.

To advance this pilot initiative, my Administration will provide two \$150,000 grants to child care centers that agree to provide these services. Centers will be judged not only on their ability to expand child care services to the widest number of children, but also on their ability to use partnerships to leverage city dollars and obtain additional funding from foundations, organizations, businesses, or other sources. The City's funds will be usable to hire staff, subsidize child care slots, expand service hours, pay for additional required services, advertise the availability of services within the community, or otherwise provide more services to children, parents, and trainees. It is anticipated that each center receiving this funding will provide services to an additional 50 children per week.

Modernizing Schools for Better Learning

My school modernization plan will result in

- better school buildings,
- state-of-the-art schools and classrooms with small class sizes, and
- healthy schools.

Better School Buildings

After years of little-to-no capital investment in Philadelphia public school buildings, the School District is finally now making significant progress in modernizing schools and classrooms across the City. Thanks in part to a five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that includes \$1.5 billion for infrastructure improvements, the School District has embarked on an aggressive rehabilitation and expansion plan to overhaul and modernize schools, bringing them into the 21st century. Specifically, the CIP calls for:

- Creating new high schools and renovating several more.

- Converting middle schools into high schools and elementary schools, thereby expanding elementary schools to serve students in kindergarten through 8th grade and phasing-out middle schools altogether.
- Reducing overcrowding in elementary schools by building more schools as well as adding additions and annexes to existing buildings.
- Undertaking several major renovations and upgrades in schools throughout the City to ensure that they are structurally sound, energy efficient, and equipped to support modern technologies.

Yet this can be only the beginning. Although the CIP represents progress, rehabilitating and modernizing the City's educational infrastructure is an arduous task. Overhauling buildings, the majority of them more than 50 years old, will require more funds, dedication, and support from the School District, the School Reform Commission, the City, the State, and the community for years to come.

To enhance this effort and ensure that capital improvements to our education infrastructure continue, as Mayor, I will:

- **Coordinate and Expedite City Services to Support and Enhance the School District's Capital Improvement Process** by reducing regulatory and political barriers that prolong the process of building new schools and expanding existing ones. As Mayor, I will streamline city services like permitting, licensing, and zoning, to prevent unnecessary delays and reduce expensive cost overruns.
- **Provide Greater Access to Land in Order to Build More Schools.** The lack of available land has posed a challenge to the School District in its effort to build more schools, which has severely hampered development plans. That's why I will establish a land-donation tax incentive of up to 30 percent of the property value for private owners who donate land to the School District where new schools and annexes are needed. A similar tax incentive program is being used effectively in Arizona.
- **Secure Capital Funds to Support Additional School Improvements and Sustain Ones Already Made.** As Mayor, I will see to it that sufficient funding for capital improvement of our educational infrastructure is made available – whether this requires me to seek support from the business community or travel to Harrisburg to lobby our state General Assembly for additional state dollars.

State-of-the-Art Schools and Classrooms with Small Class Sizes

Today's students must be prepared for the ever-changing skill needs of a global economy. Philadelphia students therefore must graduate high school with the skills and competencies needed to enter the workforce and find employment in what is quickly becoming a technology-dependent economy.

Governor Rendell's Classroom for the Future is one initiative already underway that's helping to modernize the classrooms of 9th graders in 13 Philadelphia high schools by equipping students' desks with laptop computers. While this is a good first step, as many as 6,000 classrooms still need to be updated – most of which serve students in grades 6 through 12.

In addition to technology grants, the City of Philadelphia also has benefited from the passage of the Pennsylvania Charter School Law – legislation I helped to secure – and the creation of 52 charter schools that now serve Philadelphia students and their families. Not only do charter schools generally have smaller class sizes, but they also increase the number of education options available citywide.

New public-private partnerships have formed as a result of the School Choice Movement that has led to the development of exciting, innovative education models. One such partnership in particular, between the School District of Philadelphia and Microsoft created a technology-based educational model called The School of the Future. The school incorporates Internet exploration and modern technology into daily teachings and serves a diverse group of students, including minorities and those living below the poverty-level. The School of the Future is a great testament demonstrating how students can achieve when placed in a positive environment regardless of their economic background. It represents as an exciting, new education model that can be replicated in schools throughout the School District.

As Mayor, I will:

- **Make Class Size Reduction a Top Priority.** We cannot provide a high-quality education to students in overcrowded classrooms. Yet today, many, if not, most of our students in elementary schools are in classes with 25 students – some with more than 30. This is simply too many. As Mayor, I am committed to reducing class size to no more than 22 students and striving to reduce most classrooms to fewer than 20.
- **Equip All Classrooms with Laptop Computers,** whiteboards, printers, and projectors by 2012 through funding support provided by the City, State, and private donations.
- **Maximize the School District's Fundraising Effort.** The Children First Fund is a tax-exempt education foundation whose purpose is to raise funds to support the School District's education mission. I will use my

leadership authority, as Mayor, to unite as partners with Schools CEO Paul Vallas to enhance private contributions made to this fund to improve education in Philadelphia schools. New resources obtained by these efforts would enable the School District to hire as many as 800 new teachers needed to end the overcrowding problem.

- **Actively Seek Out Other Partnership Opportunities** to create more education options and modernized classrooms. The partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and Microsoft demonstrates how collaboration can truly make a difference in education.
- **Encourage Better Use of City Services**, like the City's libraries, as an option to increase student access to technologies not currently available in schools. As Mayor, I will work to develop programs that make better use of the Free Library's services to benefit Philadelphia students.
- **Organize a Technology Education Roundtable**, which I will chair, to bring representatives from the Philadelphia School District and higher education community together to provide Philadelphia public school students and teachers greater access to computer literacy courses and training as well as computers.

Healthy Schools

My Philadelphia school and classroom modernization effort also will ensure that healthy behaviors are promoted through school-based health centers, allowing room for physical education and athletic fields, and ensuring environmentally sound building practices.

As Mayor, I will:

- **Improve Student Performance by Ensuring that New Health Clinics are Located in Areas Close to Schools and Expanding Access to School-Based Health Centers.** School-based health centers, in particular, have been shown to improve student performance, reduce disciplinary problems, and improve overall health status of students. Specifically, they have been credited with reducing absenteeism, school disciplinary referrals, and hospital emergency room use. In Dallas, for example, School-Based Health Centers were reported to decrease absences by 50 percent among frequently-absent students and school discipline referrals by 85 percent among students who receive mental health services.
- **Establish a Coordinated Support Services Committee** to coordinate and streamline services now offered to students in order to reduce duplication and to identify ways to enhance support services to students

not currently receiving them. The Committee will be comprised of representatives from my administration, the School Reform Commission and the School District, KidZone Philadelphia, local schools, and city agencies that provide services to schools and their students, such as Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, and Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation.

- **Promote the Joint Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities Owned or Managed by the City for Use by Philadelphia Schools.** Students should have access to athletic fields, play grounds, and parks for use of physical fitness activities, and schools should be encouraged to use them.
- **Ensure a Healthy School Environment in all Philadelphia Schools.** Philadelphia's school children deserve to learn in the healthiest possible environment. My administration will take steps to ensure that our students are protected from environmental hazards and can breathe clean indoor air by working with the School District to prohibit smoking as well as diesel trucks and school buses idling near school buildings; requiring all new school construction and repair plans to incorporate the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "Tools for Schools" program to promote a clean indoor environment; making sure that all schools are lead free; and working to create a public-private Green Schools Fund to provide bonus funding to new schools that want to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

Improving Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Development

Our students deserve a good, highly-qualified teacher in every classroom and an inspired principal in every school. It is therefore time we improve what has been called the "educator marketplace," and provide incentives for our best and brightest to join the teaching profession. It's a winning cycle: Great teachers inspire students to *become* great teachers.

It is for these reasons that I have put together a legislative package with House Committee Education Chairman James Roebuck that we will push for this legislative session to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and development in all school districts in Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia. For the Philadelphia School District, in particular, it is my hope that this legislation will help to reduce class size through the hiring of more teachers. Specifically, our teacher recruitment, retention, and development legislative package calls for:

- **A Pennsylvania Governor's School for Teaching in Philadelphia** as recommended in the Governor's Commission on Training America's Teachers.

- **A “Call Me Mister” program**, a special teacher recruitment program to recruit graduating African-American high school males to become elementary school teachers.
- **A Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program and Professional Personnel Recruitment Initiative.**
- **Teacher signing bonuses.**
- **An Urban Educators Recruitment Program** to boost the supply of good-quality educators in city classrooms.
- **Expanding Required Teacher Induction** from the present one-year to two years with more clearly defined requirements and guidelines for teacher induction through State Board of Education regulation as recommended in the Governor’s Commission on Training America’s Teachers.
- **A Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program** to provide funding for expanded teacher induction programs in economically disadvantaged school districts.

Ending the Dropout Crisis

Many large, urban school districts throughout the country report on-time high school graduation rates at or below 50 percent – a percentage much lower than their suburban counterparts. And Philadelphia – at about 56 percent – isn’t doing much better.

A report released last fall by the Philadelphia Youth Network on the City’s high school dropout crisis points out that the dropout rate not only hurts individuals who drop out of school – it hurts the economic health of the local and regional economies, because it diminishes the supply of educated and skilled workers available to fill needed jobs.³ The report titled, “Unfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia’s Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005,” classified dropouts as:

- Students who are incarcerated in a juvenile justice facility;
- Students who are failing academically;
- Students who dropout due to excessive absences or were expelled and did not return; and

³ Dr. Ruth Neild & Dr. Robert Balfanz, “Unfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia’s Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005” (Johns Hopkins University 2006).

- Students who are pregnant or parenting.

Another recent article on the impact of dropping out of high school on an individual over a lifetime noted:

“Dropping out of high school today is to your societal health what smoking is to your physical health, an indicator of a host of poor outcomes to follow, from low lifetime earnings to higher incarceration rates to a high likelihood that your children will drop out of high school and start the cycle anew.”⁴

It is therefore critically important that action is taken now to provide more alternative educational options to Philadelphia youth like job readiness skills and education-to-work options, and in doing so reverse the current high school dropout crisis.

As Mayor, I will target the most at-risk populations with the following initiatives:

Incarcerated and Troubled Youth

- **Expand Successful Programs that Reduce Delinquent Behavior.** One such program that I helped fund called “Don’t Fall Down in the Hood” is designed to provide intervention services for juvenile offenders who have been arrested for minor offenses, like theft or narcotics possession. It is a City- and State-funded community-based program that encourages young people to take full advantage of the opportunities to improve their life chances and helps them to recognize their full potential, in addition to, improving academic performance. The program operates several workshops on Entrepreneurial Training, Life Skills, Computer Literacy, Life Lab, Trends and Conflict Resolution.
- **Increase the Number of Alternative Education Spots Available** by expanding the Camelot Schools model for struggling students. The Camelot Schools are private schools that have provided safe, nurturing environments to thousands of children struggling at home, school, or in their communities. These schools provide positive reinforcement, intensive therapy, and counseling for troubled students and have been tremendously successful. As Mayor, I will seek to expand the Camelot Schools model so that we can help at-risk children set a new direction in their lives.

Students Who Are Failing Academically

- **Replicate and Increase Successful Dropout Intervention Programs.** Because nearly half of all future dropouts can be identified during the 8th

⁴ “Dropout Nation,” by Nathan Thornburgh, *Time Magazine*, Sunday, April 6, 2006.

and 9th grades⁵ our dropout intervention programs must increase their emphasis on students at these levels. Many of these at-risk students are youthful offenders, foster children, and pregnant or parenting teenagers who are or were in the City's social service system. We must reach out to these at-risk students early and provide them with individualized support. Model programs such as the Coalition of Metro Area Community Schools' Come Back Fairs link dropouts to both academic options for completing high school and to community resources to support them to achieve their goals. Initiatives such as KidZone Philadelphia that ensure linkages to the health, human, and social services these students are entitled to will be expanded throughout the City.

- **Institute an Early Warning System to Monitor the Performance of At-Risk Students.** Research shows that factors such as absenteeism, poor behavior, failing math, and failing English are good predictors as early as 6th grade are good predictors of a student's academic success or failure later in life.⁶ To ensure that students have the best chance of succeeding academically, I will work with the School District to adopt a district-wide early warning system to track students at-risk of dropping out as early as middle school and follow them through school until graduation from high school. Students identified as at-risk will be provided with immediate remedial assistance and other supports.

Over-Age/Underachievers

- **Expand the Use of Transition Schools** that provide opportunities for older students to earn a high school diploma in a more suitable environment so they have a better chance of succeeding academically and graduating.
- **Ensure that Every 9th Grader Completes a Personal Education Plan (PEP).** Upon entering high school, all 9th graders should be required to prepare a Personal Education Plan that contains information about his or her education and career goals. The plans should be reviewed annually in a meeting between the student, and his or her parents, teacher, and guidance counselor, to ensure that the student is staying on track and the school is providing the education and resources the student needs to be successful.

⁵ Ruth Curran Neild and Robert Balfanz, *Unfulfilled Promise*, The Center for Social Organization of Schools at The Johns Hopkins University, 2006.

(http://www.projectturn.net/downloads/pdf/Unfulfilled_Promise_Project_U-turn.pdf)

⁶ Philadelphia Education Fund, May 25, 2006 Presentation on Dropout Prevention Research (<http://www.philaedfund.org/powerpoint/mgmpres5-25.ppt>)

Pregnant and Parenting Youth

- **Place a Greater Emphasis on Pregnancy Prevention in Middle and High Schools.** Pregnancy prevention programs that promote abstinence first but include information on safe sex and birth control have been proven effective in reducing teen pregnancy rates.
- **Expand the ELECT/Cradle to Classroom Program for Pregnant Teens.** Between 40 and 80 percent of pregnant and parenting teens in the U.S. end up dropping out of school.⁷ In Philadelphia, there are an estimated 15,000 teen mothers. Providing these teens with practical help for getting through school is a critical step in helping them graduate. A successful program known as ELECT/Cradle to Classroom provides pregnant and parenting high school students with information about everyday needs like child care and parenting advice. However, it reaches only a fraction of the mothers who need support. My administration will expand the reach of this program to help more teen parents stay in school.

These initiatives will encourage our youth to remain in school and ultimately will lead to a safer, smarter Philadelphia. Working together, we can instill hope in our children and show them a future brighter than the one of gangs, drugs, and violent crime.

Reducing Truancy

We still must do all we can to discourage truancy among those who *do* remain in school. We must change the way we look at our truancy problem so that we quickly identify students who skip class and take measures to ensure they come back to school. As Mayor, I will work with the School District to:

- **Back Lowering the Compulsory School Age from Eight to Six.** It is simply not in a child's best interest to delay the start of education until they are eight years old. That's why I support legislation sponsored by State Representative James Roebuck to allow the Philadelphia School District to lower the compulsory school age to six and require all children of that age to be enrolled in school. The change would not apply to homeschooled children. It's a bill that I co-sponsored now and in the past, and it is one in which I will continue to support if elected Mayor.
- **Contact Parents Regarding Every Student Absence to Reduce Truancy.** I will work with the School District to require that all parents be notified by phone (and/or text message on their cell phone) that their child did not report to school and ask parents to verify that their child's absence

⁷ Pregnant and Parenting Youth: Do we Know How They Fare in School? Fall 2005, <http://www.thenotebook.org/editions/2005/fall/pregnant.htm>

is legitimate. We will use a consortium of parent, community-based, and faith-based organizations (i.e., GPUAC, Parent Assistant Desks, and Home and School Associations) to make these calls and to work to get kids back in school.

- **Use In-School Truancy Courts as an Alternative to the Formal Court Process.** I will work with the municipal court system to hold school-based sessions with children and their parent/guardian to determine appropriate punishment. Youth who complete all requirements made by the court and continue to stay in school could avoid having a juvenile record.

Of course, the most important way to increase school attendance, reduce truancy, and prevent youth-based crime is to provide our children with a high-quality education so they are inspired to learn. In other words, excellence in teaching will automatically lead to higher attendance – and consequently reduced crime – among our youth.

These initiatives will encourage our youth to remain in school and ultimately will lead to a safer, smarter Philadelphia. Working together, we can instill hope in our children and show them a future brighter than the one of gangs, drugs, and violent crime.

Reinventing High Schools and Putting Students on the Path to Success

Economists predict that, soon, as many as 70 percent of all jobs will require some post-secondary education. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has determined that 80 percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the U.S. require college-level training, especially in math and science. The increasing evidence that the senior year of high school is no longer used effectively by most public school students has led to a national demand to redesign the American high school.⁸

To address this issue, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has adopted a new model of delivering middle school and high school education called Project 720. Project 720 includes education-based programs that nurture the interest, talent, and commitment to academic achievement of low-income, minority, and other at-risk students and helps them become college graduates. These programs combine secondary and post-secondary curricula and are delivered primarily by community colleges. Project 720 programs enable students to take college-level coursework while in high school that meets both high school and college academic standards and degree requirements.

⁸ *Redesigning the American High School* is an initiative of the National Governors Association initiated by NGA Chairman Governor Mark Warner of Virginia in 2005.

As Mayor, I will:

- **Promote the Expansion of Project 720 Programs in Philadelphia to Increase Participation by Philadelphia Students.** Project 720 aims to “create high school environments that are student-centered, results-focused, data-informed, and personalized in a way that is seamlessly supported by systems, resources, technology and shared leadership.”⁹ We must focus on expanding the number of Philadelphia high schools participating in Project 720.
- **Expand Dual Enrollment and Early Admission Options to Every High School Student Who Wants One.** Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to take college-level courses and receive credit that counts toward their high school graduation requirements as well as for college credit.¹⁰ By engaging with more intense, more challenging courses, many of them will build the confidence and aptitude to succeed in higher education. These programs not only give students a head start on college courses, but also can reduce the cost of higher education for children of middle- and low-income families.

Germantown High School and La Salle University – two of my own alma maters – have teamed up and developed a program for high school seniors to enroll in college-level courses and apply for early admission at La Salle University. Just this year, 50 high school students from Germantown High School have enrolled in this program. Opportunities like these should be available to all students enrolled in a Philadelphia public high school. That’s why, as Mayor, I will reach out to the City’s higher education community and ask them to adopt one or more high schools to provide more students the opportunity to enroll in college-level courses and reserve a set number of spots for Philadelphia students to apply and seek admission at a college or university in the City.

- **Increase Philadelphia’s Share of Funding for Dual Enrollment Programs through Greater Participation.** Pennsylvania has taken a lead in reforming high school curricula and offering students more innovative choices as they approach graduation. Currently, an estimated \$8 million is devoted to dual enrollment programs statewide, but unfortunately, the Philadelphia School District – the largest school district in the State – only receives about 2 percent of this funding due to low participation rates. As Mayor, I will work to increase participation by expanding dual enrollment program offerings citywide, and in doing so, will make certain that Philadelphia’s share of state funding increases.

⁹ Pennsylvania Department of Education, Project 720 Program Guidelines. http://www.pde.state.pa.us/c_and_i/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=112829

¹⁰ Project 720, Philadelphia Department of Education (<http://www.project720.org/>)

- **Encourage Greater Youth Participation in Civic Leadership.** I believe that all students should be active participants in government. In October 2005, I held a Civic Leadership Summit at the National Constitution Center to empower youth with the knowledge and tools to become civically engaged while improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods. I want to provide students with learning opportunities like this that expose them to government and inspire them to create change in the community around them. Research shows that citizens are more likely to participate in public life if they believe their participation matters and feel a sense of connection to their community.¹¹ It is for this reason that I am committed to increasing student participation in the governing process and increasing participation in civic leadership. As Mayor, I will work with the School District to raise greater awareness of civic engagement in middle and high schools specifically through expansion of a program called Project Citizen. Project Citizen, started as part of the Civic Leadership Summit, asks students to identify a problem or issue in their community, gather information on the problem, examine different solutions, develop their own public policy, and create an action plan to be implemented. The program enables students to focus on the role of state and local governments in relation to their neighborhoods and communities.

Improving the School-to-Work Transition

Not everyone who graduates from high school goes to college – even among those students who have the resources to do so. That’s why it is so important that Philadelphia students graduate from high school well-prepared and equipped with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to find a good-paying job with benefits. Students should have options available to them – whether they choose to continue their education or enter the workforce.

To jump-start this effort, as Mayor, I will work with the School District to expand alternative education options and work-related opportunities, such as:

- **Working with the business community** to ensure that vocational programs are relevant and meet the needs of employers in Philadelphia.
- **Providing for better transition** from traditional educational courses to vocational programs and job readiness training courses.
- **Linking vocational programs and work-study opportunities** directly to the student’s educational plans and goals.

¹¹ Carpini, M (n.d.) *The Youth Engagement Initiative*. Retrieved January 19, 2005, from The Pew Charitable Trust Web site: http://www.pewtrusts.com/misc_html/pp_youth_strategy_paper.cfm#problem.

- **Seeking additional support from local institutions of higher learning** to increase access to job readiness programs, work opportunities, and career counseling.
- **Encouraging career exploration through mentorship programs** with local companies.
- **Continuing to work alongside Chairman Joseph Frick of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce to double the number of paid summer internships** for eligible, underprivileged Philadelphia youth and providing tax credits to urge the participation of regional employers.
- **Creating a “Joint Education Committee.”** We expect our children to study hard and take advantage of the education that is offered to them, but we must do our part, ensuring that the education they receive helps them become productive once they enter the workforce. With this in mind, I’ve always supported the concept of a seamless education system that looks comprehensively at our City’s education needs. As Mayor, I will create a group of education leaders with a perspective that spans the entire life cycle of a student’s learning experience. This group should meet monthly, collaborating on the links between primary, secondary, and higher education as well as on the skills needed by graduating students entering our workforce. This group will consist of a wide variety of leaders within the School District of Philadelphia, our college and university system, the Community College of Philadelphia, the School Reform Commission, and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board.

For our City to have the prosperous and safe future that it deserves, we must provide opportunities for our young people to learn valuable skills. Not all of our children will attend college, and those who do not must become self-sufficient, contributing members of our communities nevertheless. As Mayor, I will work to instill hope in *all* of our children so they do not succumb to gangs and lives of violent crime.

Strengthening the Connection to Higher Education

The next generation of Philadelphians must be prepared for the New Economy. While advances in technology present incredible opportunities for the future, they also place enormous demands on our teenagers. They must learn to thrive in the face of global competition and the rapid pace of change. I have faith that they will rise to these challenges, but we must do our part to help them.

Philadelphia is blessed with a wealth of excellent colleges and universities, but attending one of these institutions is still out of reach for many of us. With only 14 percent of working Philadelphians with a college degree, our city ranks 92nd among

America's 100 largest cities in the percentage of college educated residents.¹² There are few things more tragic than to see the potential in our children unrealized simply because they are unable to pursue a higher education. As Mayor, I will do all I can to make college more affordable and accessible for our Philadelphia's children, including:

- **Promoting the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP).** Over the past forty years, nearly half a million students have enrolled in Community College of Philadelphia classes.¹³ The CCP offers more than 70 degrees and certificates in high-demand subjects such as business, science and technology, and as an alumnus myself I know firsthand how attending this institution can lead to new opportunities. But I believe the College is underused. It's a tremendous resource for the City and we could be doing much more to promote it to our children as well as to adults seeking to enhance their job skills. As Mayor, I will vigorously promote the Community College of Philadelphia as an outstanding choice for higher education. Not every Philadelphian will earn a degree, but every single one of us should strive to learn the skills needed to thrive in this New Economy. The CCP should take a larger role in this effort, helping our residents obtain skills they need to be successful.
- **Ensuring that the City Collaborates with Local Colleges and Universities.** I understand the value provided by our local colleges and universities. They play a vital role in stimulating our economy, educating our workforce, and attracting new jobs and investment. In short, Philadelphia can only be as successful as its college and university system. But our City hasn't done everything possible to help these institutions. As Mayor, I will take every opportunity to help our colleges and universities expand and improve the education they provide to our students.
- **Helping Philadelphians who Started College to Complete Their Degrees.** In 2005 the Pennsylvania Economy League and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board released *Graduate! Philadelphia*, a comprehensive analysis of the state of higher education in Philadelphia. Their findings are cause for concern: Our City has nearly 80,000 residents who have some college credit but for various reasons were unable to complete their degree.¹⁴ And our City is rather unique in that we have more people who started college but didn't get a degree than we have people who finished college and obtained one. According to the study, if we were to help 10,000 of these Philadelphians finish college, City tax revenues would increase by nearly \$4 million in the first year and

¹² Pennsylvania Economy League and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, *Graduate! Philadelphia Report: The Urgent Need for a High Quality Workforce in Philadelphia*. June 2005. <http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org/>

¹³ Community College of Philadelphia, January 25, 2007. <http://www.ccp.edu/site/about/>

¹⁴ Pennsylvania Economy League and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, *Graduate! Philadelphia Report: The Urgent Need for a High Quality Workforce in Philadelphia*. June 2005. <http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org/>

by nearly \$275 million over the next 30 years.¹⁵ The City would also save \$300 million in social services costs over 30 years.¹⁶

As Mayor, I will support the following recommendations of the *Graduate! Philadelphia* report and actively work to increase the number of residents who complete their college education:

- Work with higher education institutions and the State to provide more flexible arrangements for adult students. This includes more 2+2 coordination between 2-year and 4-year colleges and more cross-institutional alignment of course curricula so students can take classes at multiple campuses. With changes like these we can accommodate the demands of students with children and full-time jobs.
- Provide incentives for employers to encourage their workers to complete college.
- Create cohort-based, condensed courses. By creating shorter changes that start several times a year – much like many Executive MBA programs – we can provide the flexibility that many working students require.
- Introduce financial incentives. Working with the college and university system, we can offer financial incentives for Philadelphians to return to college. Some examples include: readmission fee waivers, book vouchers, discounted child care facilities, online courses, and assistance with transportation.
- Launch an outreach campaign to increase awareness about the new opportunities to finish school.

¹⁵ Pennsylvania Economy League and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, *Graduate! Philadelphia Report: The Urgent Need for a High Quality Workforce in Philadelphia*. June 2005. <http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org/>

¹⁶ From the *Graduate! Philadelphia* report: “According to Rand Corporation estimates that disposable income increases \$3,500 for a 30-year old African American woman head of household who completed a college degree in California in 1997. The same study estimates a savings in public social services of \$3,500 per year for each 30-year old African American woman head of household who completed a college degree in California in 1997. From Vernez, Georges, Richard A. Krop, and C. Peter Rydell (1999). *Closing the Education Gap: Benefits and Costs*. Center for Research on Immigration Policy. RAND Education.”

How We'll Pay for It

Pennsylvania ranks near the bottom in school funding equity, according to Education Week.¹⁷ Gaps in funding are most apparent between wealthier and poorer districts. Philadelphia – a school district with a high proportion of poorer neighborhoods – often suffers as a result.

On average, the Philadelphia School District spends less than \$11,000 per student compared with districts in surrounding suburbs that spend anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000 or more. Yet Philadelphia's is the most diverse School District in the Commonwealth and serves more poor students, students with special education needs, and students whose first language is not English. Educating these students requires more resources to overcome educational challenges. As a result, Philadelphia students may not receive the same level of education that their suburban counterparts do because the School District must make do with less.

The current financing problems that the School District experiences should in no way overshadow the praiseworthy progress that the School Reform Commission and the School District have made in improving the education provided by the City's public schools. But we simply need to find more money to implement all the improvements I call for in this plan.

There are a number of revenue generation and enhancement strategies that I will pursue to pay for these education initiatives outlined in my plan such as:

- **Increasing the share of property tax revenue from 58 percent to 60 percent.** Councilman Wilson Goode Jr. recently introduced a bill to shift as much as \$100 million in the next five years in property tax revenues from the City's General Fund, where it goes now, to increase the share of property tax revenue the School Reform Commission receives by 2 percent. It is a bill that I also support. If passed, the School Reform Commission could stand to receive about **\$20 million more per year** – money which could be used to reduce class size through the hiring of more teachers.
- **Maximizing federal and foundation discretionary grants by aggressively pursuing new grant opportunities.** A school district as large as ours should be able to obtain another **\$2 to \$3 million** more.
- **Significantly boosting donations to the Children First Fund** – a tax-exempt education foundation whose purpose is to raise funds for the School District's operations such as teacher development, recruitment, and retention and curriculum upgrades. The most successful example is New York City's Fund for Public Schools, created in 2003 and boasting

¹⁷ Quality Counts 2005 report, *Education Week Magazine*, <http://www.educationweek.org/ew/index.html>

donations totaling \$124 million by 2005. The fund's success is attributed to Mayor Bloomberg's and School Chancellor Joel Klein's partnership, which has greatly increased the support of the business community for New York City schools. As Mayor, I am committed to working with Schools CEO Paul Vallas to raise awareness of the Children First Fund and aggressively seek additional support for our schools in a manner similar to the one Mayor Bloomberg has used successfully. Through greater support from the mayor's office, I believe we can boost private donations by as much as **\$6 million over two years** for Philadelphia public schools.

- **Leveraging city-owned real estate.** The City of Philadelphia operates about ten parking garages and another eight parking lots. Net parking revenue for the City in FY 2007 is estimated to be \$26 million. To continue generating that amount of revenue (assuming a 5 percent rate of return on the principal), the City would need to set the asking price at \$520 million and divest itself of all the operations and maintenance of the garages and lots. If the City were able to identify at least \$200 million in real assets it could sell, the principal could be invested and the proceeds could be used to finance education programs. At a 5 percent rate of return, the City would realize **\$10 million annually**.
- **Capturing revenue from expiring tax abatements.** City Council authorized a 10-year tax abatement to support the conversion of eligible vacant or deteriorated commercial or industrial buildings into multi-family residential properties (i.e. conversion abatement). Its success prompted Council to expand the eligibility of the 10-year abatement to include the upgrading of rental housing, new residential construction, and improvements to owner-occupied properties in 2000 and 2003. Thus, there are three types of 10-year abatements currently in effect: Rehabilitation and Upgrading (owner occupied); Rehabilitation and Upgrading (investor-owners); and New Construction (owner occupied or investor-owners). The proceeds from expired abatements should link the missions of educational improvement and affordable housing. The combined revenue from the expiration of the abatements from 2009 to 2015 averages **\$1.7 million annually, for a total of \$12.1 million**.

In addition to these funding options, I know there are things that the City could be doing to improve operations, which could save the School District of Philadelphia money that could be spent on education, such as:

- **Developing cost-sharing agreements** for trash collection, school safety officers, health clinics, even transportation, among others.
- **Ensuring adequate and timely reimbursements** for City educational programs and services administered by the School District of Philadelphia.

- **Asking the local college and university system to play a greater role in educating Philadelphia youth** by creating shared resource agreements for use of facility space, equipment and supplies, as well as other items and services.

As Mayor, I will work to implement such operational improvements and direct my Administration to identify others like them.

Record, not Rhetoric

Education is paramount to me – and my record demonstrates a commitment to children that dates back nearly three decades and is not merely typical campaign rhetoric. Beginning with my first job as an elementary school teacher in the Philadelphia public schools, to my current position as chairman of the state House Appropriations Committee, I have fought to improve the quality of education in public schools.

I advocated for programs to give teachers and administrators the tools they need to excel as educators and to be accountable for their performance, I have worked to expand school choice options for parents. And I have fought to equalize funding between wealthy and poor schools.

In the early 1990s, I was troubled by the growing disparity in state funding for public schools. In an unprecedented move, I initiated a joint effort between the state House Appropriations Committee and the Education Committee. Under my leadership, the committees developed a school financing proposal that would ensure that all students have comparable access to quality education. The resulting legislation provided a guaranteed subsidy for each student based on a district's poverty level, enrollment and tax base. It was the first step in achieving parity in funding for districts. Since then, I have championed Governor Ed Rendell's efforts to increase state investments in education. I fought for Philadelphia's kids in the state legislature, with over \$30 million in increased funding for the Philadelphia School District this year.

I put my political career on the line when I authored the legislation that became the framework for a city-state partnership to run the Philadelphia School District. I knew that the long-term needs of children far outweighed any short-term political costs my support might carry. As a result of this partnership, new schools are being constructed, school safety has improved, and test scores have gone up for five straight years.

I also pushed for an innovative education reform plan that includes increasing parental involvement in our schools and providing more quality educational choices for parents. I was instrumental in securing the passage of Pennsylvania's Charter School Law in 1997 that has led to the creation of 56 charter schools serving students and families throughout Philadelphia.

And I was instrumental in securing passage of Act 46-1998, the legislation that stopped a threatened shutdown of the Philadelphia School District. In 2001, I led the passage of Act 83, the legislation that provided for the takeover of the Philadelphia School District by the School Reform Commission, chaired by James Nevels, and the appointment of Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas.

I was also instrumental in securing the passage of Pennsylvania's Charter School Law (1997). There are now 56 charter schools serving the students and families of Philadelphia, including the West Oak Lane Charter School, begun by me in 1998. In 2004, I, in conjunction with the Black Alliance for Educational Option and the Lotus Academy, opened the doors to New Media Technology Charter School, a digital project-based learning high school.

As a result of Act 83, which I sponsored, FOUNDATIONS, Inc., a national educational non-profit organization, was able to establish a relationship with the School District of Philadelphia to provide management services to six low performing schools in Philadelphia.

Over the years, I have led efforts to provide job training for the hospitality industry in both the Philadelphia School District and the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC). I also led the charge for the Multicultural Affairs Congress (MAC) as an arm of the Pennsylvania Convention and Visitors Bureau in developing plans to attract African-Americans, Latino, Asian-American, and Native American tourists and conventioners to Philadelphia.

Just as a table becomes unstable if any of its legs are weak, Philadelphia is less stable and less safe if we cannot provide a high-quality education to our children. We must give our children hope, helping them learn the skills necessary for success and showing them alternatives to gangs, drugs, and violence.

As Mayor, I will provide the full support of the city administration in continuing the positive changes Philadelphia has seen in its school system over the past five years. I will provide additional resources to the District to ensure that the programs that have led to increased student achievement — increased time on task, a core curriculum, higher standards, and more professional development for teachers, as well as a modernized classroom — are able to be sustained by the District. I will use the full force of the mayor's office to provide modernized facilities for our children, to end the dropout crisis, and increase the resources available for early childhood education.