



The School District of Philadelphia

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Statements by

School Reform Commission Chairperson Robert L. Archie Jr., Superintendent Arlene Ackerman and Mayor Michael Nutter Regarding Dr. Ackerman's Agreed Upon Departure from the School District of Philadelphia

August 22, 2011

“Today the School Reform Commission and Superintendent Arlene Ackerman have agreed that Dr. Ackerman will step down as Superintendent and CEO of the nation’s eighth-largest school district effective immediately,” stated School Reform Commission Chairperson Robert Archie. “We have collectively made great strides, but we have much more work ahead. The School Reform Commission and Dr. Ackerman are in agreement that the work begun by her requires us to focus our mission and resources on building a system of great schools for all children.

“All of us wish to acknowledge the substantial debt we owe Dr. Ackerman for her hard work and dedicated service to the District. In 2008, when she was recruited to leave her tenured professorship and come to Philadelphia, less than 50 percent of the District’s students were at or above statewide standards for reading and math proficiency. Dr. Ackerman immediately set out a comprehensive plan to target reforms that would close the achievement gap while raising the District’s performance across the board. The aggressiveness of Dr. Ackerman’s five-year strategic plan, *Imagine 2014*, was outweighed solely by her personal commitment to demonstrating that given the right systemic reforms, all of our children can achieve.

“We see tangible evidence of the progress the District has made toward that goal in just three short years under Dr. Ackerman’s leadership. Dr. Ackerman and her team earned praise from President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan for an intervention approach aimed at turning around the District’s struggling schools under the Empowerment, Renaissance and Promise Academy initiatives. Dr. Ackerman did not shy away from taking on the tough issues that had been neglected for decades such as rightsizing the District through a five-year master facilities plan aimed at better utilizing our resources and implementing new accountability measures for staff. And Dr. Ackerman demonstrated real results: three years of gains in test scores; a 29% decline in violent incidents; 7% gains in the six-year graduation rates; and lastly, Parent University where more than 40,000 parents took courses throughout the past three years.

“Throughout her more than 40 years in education, Dr. Ackerman has always put the needs of children above her own. This decision, as difficult as it was for Dr. Ackerman, is consistent with her history, as well as recognition that for the District to best move forward, it must do so with new leadership. We are all grateful for Dr. Ackerman’s service and wish her the best in her future endeavors. Dr. Ackerman’s legacy will be long-lived, and we understand the passionate support she has in the community is a direct result of her commitment to serving the community. That commitment will be honored.

“Although earlier this year Dr. Ackerman’s contract was extended another year through June 30, 2014, Dr. Ackerman and the Commission have agreed that any money that would have been owed to her under that one-year extension would be retained by the School District to be earmarked for the nine Promise Academies and utilized for their benefit. According to Dr. Ackerman, ‘that is the best way to finalize the separation agreement because it still keeps the focus and emphasis on the children, as it should be.’

“Thus, by agreeing to this separation agreement, Dr. Ackerman and the School Reform Commission will help provide the District with opportunities to continue the Promise Academy initiative and other key *Imagine 2014* initiatives.

“Effective immediately, the Commission has named Dr. Leroy Nunery as Acting Superintendent. Dr. Nunery previously served as Deputy Superintendent/Deputy Chief Executive for the School District of Philadelphia and brings with him a wealth of experience. The Commission will also launch a search to recruit a permanent Superintendent as expeditiously as possible. As always, the Commission will continue to oversee the workings of the District, and we expect a smooth transition as well as an orderly opening of schools in September,” stated SRC Chairperson Archie.

“On behalf of the City of Philadelphia, I thank Dr. Ackerman for her service, her deep commitment to the city’s students and her educational expertise,” said Mayor Michael A. Nutter. “She took on many of the deep-seated, systemic issues that have been facing our schools for decades, such as low-performing schools long neglected, the right-sizing of the District’s aged facilities and new accountability measures for staff. During her tenure, test scores continued their upward trend, graduation rates improved and parents of school children became more involved with their schools. I plan to support many of the components of the *Imagine 2014* plan, including turning around our lowest performing schools through the creation of Promise Academies and Renaissance Schools.”

Secretary of Education Tomalis said, “I thank Dr. Ackerman for her years of service in Philadelphia. I look forward to working with Mayor Nutter and the School Reform Commission to improve opportunities for all Philadelphia’s children in the years ahead.”

Dr. Ackerman stated, “I am truly grateful for having had the opportunity and honor to serve the children and parents of Philadelphia.”

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