



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State Education Department Launches First-of-Its-Kind Teacher Recruitment Initiative**

**Philadelphia, PA** – State education leaders announced today that the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) will soon spearhead a new pilot program, Aspiring to Educate, that aims to cultivate and diversify the city’s educator pool. The pilot – which is the first of its kind in the nation - is a partnership between the state Department of Education (PDE), SDP, seven area colleges and universities, and local education and youth organizations.

“Aspiring to Educate will help Pennsylvania attract, recruit, train and retain a new generation of teachers and school leaders,” Education Secretary Pedro A. Rivera said during the announcement at the Community College of Philadelphia. “It will not only help the commonwealth address the shortage of educators and the lack of diversity in the teacher pipeline but will also provide a career pathway for students into the teaching profession.”

Since 2013, the number of people seeking teaching certification has shrunk by more than 65 percent. In addition, while Pennsylvania has more than 120,000 teachers, 96 percent are white, making the state’s educator workforce the least diverse in the country.

“Community College of Philadelphia is proud and excited to participate in the Aspiring to Educate program,” said President Dr. Donald Generals. “We look forward to collaborating with our partners in order to meet the goals of this innovative initiative. The educational community has come together to address the needs of our students and strengthen learning at all levels.”

In addition to the community college, higher education partners include Cheyney, West Chester, Temple, Drexel, Arcadia and Cabrini universities. The program is also being sponsored by the Philadelphia Youth Network and The Center for Black Educator Development.

Under the program, the SDP will identify at least 20 current juniors or seniors who excel academically and have expressed an interest in becoming teachers. The district and students

will then work with the community college and universities to develop specific plans for each student to enroll at one of the schools. Once enrolled, students will receive financial assistance for their postsecondary education through a combination of free or reduced tuition offered by the partnering institution.

The school district expects to select its first cohort of students in January. From the time they are accepted into the program, students will be mentored through the Philadelphia Youth Network and the Center for Black Educator Development, an organization founded by former Philadelphia teacher and principal Sharif El-Mekki to recruit more minority students into the teaching field.

“Research confirms that there are many benefits of students of color having teachers of color, including a decrease in disciplinary referrals and punitive discipline, improved grades and access to rigorous courses, and the ability for students of color to experience consistent high expectations and role modeling,” said El-Mekki. “Also, the role of mentorship and coaching in teacher recruitment and retention is paramount and I am excited that the Department of Education is leading this effort through the robust Aspiring to Educate program.”

Students will continue to be mentored as they progress through their teacher preparation programs so they have the supports they need to thrive. Upon graduating, students will be encouraged to return to the School District of Philadelphia and teach in the city’s most high-need areas.

Officials said they expect to expand the Aspiring to Educate program into other high-need areas of the state in the coming years.

The SDP pilot will recruit students into the program’s Youth Pathway. The program also includes a pathway for adults who have some college credits and want to become teachers and a postbaccalaureate pathway, for individuals who already have a college degree and want to pursue a teaching career.

For more information about Pennsylvania’s education policies and programs, please visit the [Department of Education’s website](#). Follow PDE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#), or [Pinterest](#).

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