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Contact: Charlene Guyer, 215-665-1920

GESU SCHOOL TAKES CENTER STAGE IN THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON EDUCATION REFORM

After hosting a recent schools tour by a bipartisan group of national figures, Philadelphia will welcome distinguished leaders to Gesu's Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education on Nov. 2 at 3 p.m.

PHILADELPHIA (October 2009) – When the U.S. Secretary of Education and Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools have a meeting of the minds with nationally known leaders from opposite ends of the political spectrum as they did in a recent tour of city schools, it bodes well for reaching consensus on true education reform.

But after years of experiments, resounding successes and abject failures, the debate rages on: “Faith-based schools...charter schools...Renaissance schools...magnet schools...Is there one answer?”

That complex topic will take center stage **November 2** at 3 p.m. at the 12th annual **Gesu Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education**. Hosted by Gesu School, the North Philadelphia independent Catholic elementary school that has been heralded as a national model for urban education, the symposium will take place at the school (17th & Thompson Streets) and feature the following notable panelists:

- **Benjamin W. Rayer**, associate superintendent and chief charter, partnerships and new schools officer for the School District of Philadelphia
- **John J. DiIulio, Jr., Ph.D.**, a Gesu trustee, University of Pennsylvania professor and first director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives who has co-authored a national study on the troubling lack of support for high-achieving, low-income students
- **Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Ph.D.**, president of Bryn Mawr College
- The **Honorable Bruce W. Kauffman**, a former Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice who recently retired from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
- **Christine S. Beck**, president and CEO of Gesu School and a long-time advocate for inner-city youth

“These professionals and scholars each have a unique perspective on which elements contribute to effective schools no matter what administrative form they might take,” says Gesu Board Chair **Winston J. Churchill**, who will moderate the symposium. “As our city’s and nation’s education leaders recently expressed, there are many ways to tackle education reform and produce great schools where children can succeed – the chief common denominator being to replicate what works.”

Rayer, the former president and chief operating officer of Mastery Charter Schools, manages 100 schools enrolling more than 50,000 students for the School District of Philadelphia. He has served as director of The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, where he currently teaches courses focused on leadership development, finance and operations of urban public school systems, and as a senior consultant providing capital funding advice and management consulting services to governmental entities and school districts throughout the country. A graduate of Cornell University who holds a master’s degree in government

administration from the University of Pennsylvania, he has taught fifth grade in the Long Beach Unified School District and worked for an international consumer lending corporation.

DiIulio is Penn's Frederic Fox Leadership Professor and head of the Fox Leadership Program. The author of more than a dozen books, he holds a doctorate in political science from Harvard University and has founded nationally recognized programs to reduce youth violence, promote literacy, and mentor the children of prisoners. The former Princeton University professor and research center director has been deeply involved in myriad efforts to save, support and strengthen schools that serve low-income children and families.

McAuliffe served in academic leadership roles at Georgetown University, Emory University and the University of Toronto, where she earned her doctorate, prior to becoming Bryn Mawr College's eighth president in 2008. An internationally known scholar of Islamic studies, she has published numerous articles and books, earned several prestigious fellowships and been elected to the American Philosophical Society and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Beck has been an integral force at Gesu, where she served for many years on the Board of Trustees before becoming president. Under her leadership, teachers, staff and volunteers have worked together to create a climate where exceptional students excel and struggling students succeed against all odds. She has overseen numerous fundraising and capital campaigns and the development of such innovative programs as technology partnerships, distinguished speaker series and arts education initiatives. Over several decades she has received numerous prestigious awards and held volunteer leadership positions in such nonprofit organizations as the National Junior Tennis League, Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education (AAYTE), United States Tennis Association and Queens University of Charlotte, her alma mater. She holds a master's degree from Bryn Mawr College and serves on the boards of Saint Joseph's Preparatory School and Arthur Ashe Learning Center, Inc., as well as the advisory board of AAYTE.

Kauffman served as chair of the Dilworth Paxson law firm before becoming a Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice in 1980. He was an adjunct professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a federal district judge for 11 years before retiring in July of this year. A graduate of Penn and the Yale University School of Law, he is a member of the American Law Institute, a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, and co-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Elliott Greenleaf law firm.

Churchill, managing general partner of SCP Partners, was instrumental in garnering the support needed to keep Gesu open as an independent Catholic school when the Gesu parish closed in 1993. For many years he has been heavily involved with the school, co-chairing campaigns and spearheading development of new programs. A Yale Law School graduate and former Rhodes Scholar, Churchill is board chair of the Young Scholars Charter School, a trustee of Immaculata University and American Friends of New College in Oxford, England, and a former trustee of Georgetown University and his alma mater, Fordham University.

Gesu serves 460 mostly non-Catholic children in grades pre-K through 8. Without selective admission, the school strives to provide a quality, innovative education for its neighbor children and empower them to

break the cycle of poverty and violence. In a neighborhood where only 34 percent of adults over 25 hold a high school diploma, more than 90 percent of Gesu alumni graduate high school, and many go on to college.

For more information on the symposium, which is sponsored by Cozen O'Connor, Leonard & Susan Klehr and SCP Partners, call 215-763-9077 or visit www.geschool.org/2009symposium.htm.

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