

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Charlene Guyer, 215-665-1920

**EDUCATING INNER-CITY CHILDREN IN A WORLD OF
VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY:
EXPERTS EXPLORE WHICH CONTEMPORARY MODELS WORK
AND HOW TO BEST IMPLEMENT THEM**

*Nationally recognized leaders to discuss “Educating Inner-City Children in the 21st Century”
at Gesu Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education on November 7 at 3 p.m. in Philadelphia*

PHILADELPHIA (October 2011) – “This generation will be in charge of our country one day, and right now too many of us are subject to deadly violence on a day-to-day basis,” writes “Kate” on the wall of the Philadelphia Youth Solutions Project website. “I am afraid that we may lose this generation if things don’t change. Someone needs to take notice!”

Pleas like this from children who feel they have been abandoned are all too common – especially for those living in urban communities facing chronic poverty and high drop-out rates. Amidst a foreboding backdrop of widespread economic fears, educational failures and continuing school and neighborhood violence, is it even possible to successfully educate inner-city children in the 21st century?

It’s not only possible – it’s essential to the health of our collective future, say several innovative leaders slated to speak at the 14th annual **Gesu Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education**. Scheduled for 3 p.m. November 7 at Gesu School, the North Philadelphia independent Catholic elementary school that has been heralded as a national model for urban education, the symposium will feature:

- **Robert J. Birdsell**, president and CEO of the Cristo Rey Network of 24 schools and a former teacher and educational leadership consultant who frequently speaks on education reform and urban school sustainability
- **Bryan H. Carter**, president and CEO of Gesu School and an accomplished community development director, corporate manager and entrepreneur whose Catholic grade school and Jesuit high school education helped him overcome the challenges of living in a single-parent urban household
- **David P. Hardy**, co-founder and CEO of Boys’ Latin of Philadelphia Charter School, where he brings decades of educational leadership experience and involvement to set high standards for student academics, achievement and character development
- **Maria Kefalas, Ph.D.**, director of the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence at Saint Joseph’s University, co-founder of the university’s Philadelphia Youth Solutions Project

initiative and a widely published sociology professor exploring the dire issues facing poor families and youth

- **Joseph Watkins** (panelist and moderator), MSNBC political analyst, founding chairman of Students First Corp and North Philadelphia pastor who has worked in government, business and broadcasting

Through the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence, Kefalas is soliciting students' input on solutions to the violence that impacts their ability to learn. Watkins, a former host of CNN's "Crossfire," founded Students First to provide support for leaders seeking education reform. The other panelists head educational models that work – from The Cristo Rey Network, which was recently honored with a Leadership Roundtable Best Practices Award, to Gesu School, where more than 90 percent of its alumni graduate high school in contrast with a much lower citywide rate, to Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School, where a full 96 percent of its first graduating class was admitted to college. At the symposium, panelists will talk about the common threads binding schools that succeed against all odds along with what must be done to help inner-city students achieve now and in the future.

Gesu School accepts students regardless of academic level or ability to pay and provides a quality, innovative education to 450 mostly non-Catholic children in grades pre-K through 8. For more information on the symposium, which is being presented by Cozen O'Connor, call 215-763-9077 or visit www.gesuschool.org/2011symposium.html.

###