Welcome to our 21st Annual Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education. As a pioneer in urban education, Gesu School is constantly focused on identifying new ways to better serve our students, while remaining committed to sharing these key learnings and supporting the hard work and creativity of educators. Our symposium has become a time-honored tradition for these purposes.

We hope that you find today’s discussion impactful and that our work here generates new ideas to inspire our invaluable teachers and benefit children across the nation.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan Carter | President and CEO, Gesu School
Gesu School embraces the Jesuit ideal of cura personalis—care of the whole person—and the IHM belief that every child can learn, providing resources to build a variety of academic and personal skills across a range of ability levels.

In a city where approximately 65 percent of public high school students graduate from high school in four years, 90 percent of Gesu alumni graduate high school on time, and of those graduates, 86 percent go on to college or post-secondary education. Many of our graduates attend top college preparatory, independent, Catholic, charter, and magnet high schools.

Gesu School’s primary service area includes the three poorest zip codes in the City of Philadelphia. Tuition covers only a fraction of our costs. Critical financial support from outside donors provides our students with a top-notch education and the support they need to succeed.

To learn how you can make an impact on Gesu School students or support events such as the symposium, contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077 or development@gesuschool.org.

Everyday Heroes: Unveiling the Power of Educators

Steve Pemberton

Steve Pemberton’s triumphant life journey, now a major motion picture, is about defying the seemingly insurmountable odds of the path of the unchosen. A Chance in the World, drawn from his critically acclaimed memoir of the same title, recounts how Steve was orphaned into foster care, then abandoned and betrayed by the very individuals entrusted with his care. Yet these challenges only fueled his desire to become a man of resilience, determination, and vision. Steve went on to find success as a trail-blazing corporate executive, enlightened people leader, visionary youth advocate, and acclaimed speaker devoted to inspiring and helping others. Committed to giving back, Steve timed the nationwide premiere of the film during National Foster Care Awareness month, hoping to raise awareness for children at risk in the child welfare system, especially those aging out of foster care.

Armed with a warrior spirit and a servant’s heart, Steve has made equality, access, and opportunity pillars of both his professional and personal life. He currently serves as Chief Human Resources Officer for Globeforce, a leading provider of social recognition and continuous performance development solutions. Prior to that he served as Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion and Global Chief Diversity Officer at Walgreens Boots Alliance, the first global pharmacy-led, health and wellbeing enterprise in the world. He was the first person in Walgreens’ 100 plus year history to hold the position of Chief Diversity Officer, and under his leadership the company reached record levels of performance in areas of representation, retention, employee engagement, and supplier diversity.

In his personal life, Steve is a passionate champion for disadvantaged youth, serving on several boards including United States Business Leadership Network and UCAN. He established The Pemberton Fund for the Future at The Home for Little Wanderers to provide help and guidance to children aging out of foster care. Steve’s achievements have earned him national recognition, including the prestigious Horizon Award by the United States Congress, presented to individuals in the private sector who have contributed to expanding opportunities for all Americans.

Father Thorne is a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, who was ordained in 1998. A native of North Philadelphia, he has served as a pastor, an administrator, and educator. He has earned degrees in philosophy, theology, and education. Presently, he serves as Pastor of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in North Philadelphia and Chaplain at Neumann University, where he is also a faculty member. As an advocate for diversity, Father Thorne is the convener of THE INITIATIVE, a network of African American educators dedicated to leadership in urban schools. He is the author of “Walk Like You Have Somewhere To Go”: A Literature Review of the Academic, Social, and Cultural Needs of African American Adolescent Males in Urban Schools, published in CATALYST, Spring 2016.

Father Thorne is blessed to serve on Gesu School’s Board of Directors, where he is also a mentor to the 8th grade young men. In 2016, he was awarded the Gesu Spirit Medal.

Past Symposia

2017 Our Kids Are Not Broken: Empowering Traumatized Youth
2016 Cultural Responsiveness in the Urban Classroom
2015 Tragedies and Current Events: Helping Students Understand What They See, Read, and Hear in the News
2014 The Journey through an Independent School
2013 The Hidden Power of Character
2012 Financing Futures: The Funding Challenges Facing Inner-City Catholic Schools
2011 Educating Inner-City Children in the 21st Century
2010 Closing the College Gap: What Can Universities, Schools, and Communities Do?
2008 Transforming Inner-City Education: Lessons in Leadership
2007 Inner-City Education: What’s Old? What’s New? What’s Next?
2006 Transforming Inner-City Education: Can an Early Start Change the Outcome?
2005 How Colleges and Universities Can Partner with Faith-Based Communities to Serve Urban Children in Need
2004 Transforming Inner-City Education: Lessons from the Entrepreneurs
2003 Educational Reform: What’s Next?
2002 Children Learning Amid Stress
2001 Research and Roadblocks to Developing Young Readers
1999 The Urban Child in Peril: Can Literacy Change the Outcome?
1998 Do Faith and Vouchers Mix?
1997 Inner-City Education: Are Faith-Based Schools an Answer?

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