

public citizens for children + youth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement by Donna Cooper on Dissolving the SRC

The Mayor's call for the School Reform Commission to dissolve and begin a responsible process for a smooth transition to a locally appointed school board is yet another example of the Mayor's unwavering belief in public education and the role it plays in ensuring a healthy future for every child and a prosperous future for our city and our region.

Given the critical importance that our schools play in our city's success, PCCY calls on Philadelphia's political, civic, religious and business leaders as well as education advocates to unite behind a set of criteria that ensures that the Mayor appointments nine individuals who add value to the talented leadership at the District. Collectively the new local school board must have an unwavering commitment to public school excellence and provide expertise in administrative and legal fields, educational policy, family service and system operations.

The most effective school boards in America enable talented superintendents and their academic and system leaders to succeed in their jobs of educating our children. To that end, a newly appointed board must see themselves as part of the solution providing skillful oversight that will accelerate the deployment of what is working and shed what is not.

The Mayor explained that his decision was made after "two years of careful consideration and research, 98 school visits, and conversations with 158 school principals, countless parents, teachers and business leaders." We concur that there is tremendous room for improvement. We echo his sentiment that, "We can create a school district that is more collaborative, more financially stable, more accountable to Philadelphians, and, as a result, a school district where our students' progress is accelerated."

The Mayor's leadership has already enabled thousands of children to start school ready to learn through PHL pre-K and expanded the capacity of the schools to boost the share of children with strong early literacy skills by his active support of the citywide READ by 4th Campaign. His Community Schools initiative has creatively mobilized city resources and private sector partners to meet the needs of students and families. These measures

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demonstrate that the Mayor has a deep and substantive understanding of the real challenges facing our public schools and employs a practical approach to work with the Superintendent and school board to ensure this positive momentum continues.

We remain hopeful that the Mayor's intentions for a locally appointed school board will be met by a strong public response for altruistic leadership that, as always, puts the interests of students first.

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