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Philadelphia Awarded Multi-Million, Multi-Year Promise Neighborhood Grant

PHILADELPHIA – This morning at Morton McMichael Elementary School, Drexel University President John Fry, Mayor Jim Kenney, Superintendent Dr. William Hite, community members and area elected officials officially announced that the community surrounding Drexel University in West Philadelphia has won the 2016 Promise Neighborhoods Program Implementation Grant Competition. Drexel University was the lead applicant of the grant, on which the City of Philadelphia, The School District of Philadelphia and several other area groups and nonprofits also partnered.

Out of 72 applicants, Philadelphia is only one of six awardees of the U.S. Department of Education grant, which provides up to \$30 million over five years per locality. The \$6 million award that was announced for Philadelphia provides the first year of funding for an effort projected to last five years. Seventy-six million dollars in matching funds have also been secured from the City and area non-profits over the next five years, which include the William Penn and Lenfest Foundations.

In a [press release](#) announcing the winners on Tuesday afternoon, the U.S. Department of Education described the Promise Neighborhoods program as federal support for “innovative strategies that bring together public and private partners to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Promise Neighborhoods grantees provide comprehensive education, health, safety, and family support services to children and families in high-poverty neighborhoods.”

The grant will provide enrichment for families living in the Promise Neighborhood and for: Belmont Charter (K-4); Locke Elementary (K-8); Morton McMichael Elementary (K-8); Martha Washington Elementary (K-8); Samuel Powel Elementary (K-4); SLA Middle School (5-8) and West Philadelphia High School (9-12).

Over the next five years, the partners will focus on a broad “cradle to career” approach, with initiatives that expand early literacy and early science efforts in local child care and pre-K programs; enhance K-12 instruction in these seven schools; empower parents to advocate for

their children's learning; and improve access to education and job training for young adults and all residents in the Promise Neighborhood.

In addition to helping improve the quality of teaching and learning in the schools, the project will provide needed behavioral and trauma-informed supports to the schools and across the communities, addressing some of the critical challenges facing families in poverty.

As the lead agency, Drexel will help coordinate the initiative and share its expertise across all aspects of the program. Through such resources as the School of Education, the Dornsife School of Public Health, and the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, Drexel will collaborate with community and school partners, and develop and maintain the data system needed to ensure tracking and accountability.

"This grant reflects a broad and deep collaboration across this West Philadelphia neighborhood and I'm so proud that Drexel has played a role," said Drexel President John Fry. "The overarching goal is to ensure that every child born in the Promise Zone has what he or she needs to be successful in the innovation economy that is growing right before their eyes in their own backyard."

"The promise of stronger schools leads to stronger neighborhoods and this multi-million dollar, multi-year Promise Neighborhood Grant will have a transformational impact on seven public schools, and nearly 3,000 students annually in West Philadelphia, for years to come. This grant supports the District's work of creating great schools close to where all children live," said School District of Philadelphia Superintendent Dr. William Hite.

"From elementary, middle and high schools to a charter school and neighborhood schools, to schools in our turnaround and innovation networks, I am proud that these seven schools represent nearly every type of school in the District. These added investments promote a reengineered cradle-to-career pipeline and will also focus on increasing student attendance, improving student performance, and using a trauma informed approach to provide added support to children and families," added Hite.

The City of Philadelphia has been engaged in the Promise Zone since it launched three years ago. Mayor Kenney spoke of how this award and the City's one-to-one funding match would allow his administration to step up past efforts.

"In addition to supporting the larger goals for this Promise Neighborhood, the City will be particularly focused on increasing access to quality early childhood education, expanding literacy strategies, increasing enrollment in out of school time supports for students K-12th, and also increasing college and career readiness," said the Mayor. "Over the next five years, the City will direct \$30 million to this area, through the Free Library, Rebuild, community schools, the Police Explorer program, pre-K and numerous other programs. In fact, we already have 42 new, free, high-quality pre-K seats opening up here this fall."

The Promise Neighborhood mirrors the boundaries of the West Philadelphia Promise Zone, and stretches from the Schuylkill River to 48th Street, and from Girard Avenue to Sansom Street.

While this area has been a Promise Zone since 2013, this designation has not come with additional federal funding until the announcement of this grant.

The Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships will continue to serve as a hub for Drexel's work in partnership with its neighbors. Graduate students from the School of Education and Dornsife School for Public Health will be actively engaged in the implementation and evaluation of the project. The project opens a multitude of possibilities for partnerships with faculty and students across the University.

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