



Children's Literacy Initiative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Verizon Contribution Will Create Another Philadelphia Kindergarten Model Classroom to Increase Student Literacy Achievement

Model Classrooms Established by Children's Literacy Initiative Showcase the Effectiveness of High-Impact Reading and Writing Instruction and Students Excel

Philadelphia, PA -- December 4, 2008 -- Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI), a Philadelphia-based nonprofit that provides professional development for teachers, will help create another Model Classroom in a public school kindergarten early next year thanks to a \$25,000 contribution from Verizon's 'Check Into Literacy' program.

Gale Y. Given, president of Verizon Pennsylvania presented the check to Linda Katz, co-founder and Executive Director of Children's Literacy Initiative, during a visit with Mayor Michael Nutter and School District of Philadelphia Superintendent Dr. Arlene C. Ackerman to CLI Kindergarten and First Grade Model Classrooms at the George Washington Elementary School in South Philadelphia. Together with the School District of Philadelphia, Children's Literacy Initiative has been establishing Model Classrooms in kindergartens and first grades to improve student literacy achievement and serve as demonstrations of high-impact reading and writing instruction.

The group observed children in each of the kindergarten and first grade Model Classrooms participating in lessons to develop and enrich their reading and writing skills. The teachers have been receiving professional development from Children's Literacy Initiative for several years, which is evident in their students' increased level of literacy skills and their passion for writing and their joy in reading. These classrooms are among the 34 Model Classrooms in 19 district schools that CLI has established in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia.

Mayor Nutter has remarked that the work of Children’s Literacy Initiative in improving literacy in Philadelphia classrooms is “critical [to] how we make Philadelphia the knowledge-based population we want to have.”

“I would like to thank Verizon for such a generous donation to the Children’s Literacy Initiative,” School District of Philadelphia Superintendent Dr. Arlene C. Ackerman said. “This type of corporate commitment to education is at the heart of the District’s Core Beliefs that children come first and that it takes the entire community to ensure the success of its public schools.”

Model Classroom teachers participate in a program of intensive professional development that includes training and one-on-one coaching in the best instructional practices for early literacy development. They also receive large collections of high-quality children’s books and other material resources needed to transform the classroom learning environment. Key to the effectiveness of the Children’s Literacy Initiative Model Classroom program, is the impact on other teachers. A visit to a Model Classroom raises expectations of what is possible for students just like theirs – key to changing beliefs about what children from low-income neighborhoods can achieve.

Furthermore, Model Classrooms are unique in that the benefit does not end with one classroom. The teacher becomes a model of exemplary practice – a leader and resource that other teachers can visit and learn from. Model Classroom teachers are “teacher-leaders” who coach and mentor colleagues, creating grade-level learning communities in which to share best practices in early reading instruction. They work to standardize practice on their grade-level, ensuring that the school can weather inevitable teacher turnover. Most importantly, teacher-leaders expand the impact of their Model Classroom to raise the literacy achievement of all students on their grade-level.

The School District of Philadelphia’s Office of Early Childhood Education has taken new kindergarten teachers to visit these Model Classrooms as part of their orientation. The classrooms are also excellent sites for new teacher preparation: colleges of education at Montclair State University, Penn State, Rutgers, and University of Pennsylvania place student teachers in Children’s Literacy Initiative classrooms for their practica.

Says Linda Katz, “The good news is that low literacy is a problem we can solve. We’re not searching for a solution, we’ve already developed one. Our Model Classroom program is a proven and scalable project design that improves student literacy achievement and can address our city’s literacy crisis. We’ve already improved reading scores in classrooms here and throughout the country.”

“Verizon’s goal is to help people achieve the skills they need to live, learn and work in the 21st Century. We focus on preparing children to be successful; enabling teachers, parents and caregivers to help children learn; and educating adults so they are prepared to achieve their goals and contribute to their communities,” said Gale Y. Given, president of Verizon Pennsylvania. “We are happy to partner with the Children’s Literacy Initiative to provide faculty with

instructional skills and offer students the best environment in which to learn.” Ms. Given also said, “Verizon customers who participate in the ‘Check Into Literacy’ program have shown how much they care about the people in our communities, and we applaud them for it.”

About Verizon’s ‘Check Into Literacy’ program:

The ‘Check Into Literacy’ initiative allows Verizon landline phone customers to check a box on their monthly bills to make a \$1-a-month, tax-deductible donation to support literacy.

About Children’s Literacy Initiative: Since 1997, Children’s Literacy Initiative, a nonprofit organization, has been working to close the gap in reading achievement between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. The organization has established more than 70 Model Classrooms in various low-income school districts, from Chicago to Boston to Atlanta, including 34 together with the School District of Philadelphia. These school partnerships consistently help more children develop literacy skills at or above grade level.

For more information, visit the Children’s Literacy Initiative website CLIontheweb.org.

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