

Heinz Endowments' Education Program: Guiding Principles

As it begins to implement its new grant-making plan, the Endowments will be engaging with potential grantees, other funders, and the general public to ensure clarity about the program's rationale for moving ahead with an aggressive agenda on eradicating inequities in educational opportunity based on race and economic status in Allegheny County's school systems.

To begin that communication effort, the foundation has developed a list of belief statements and convictions, which are the underpinnings of the Education Program's new goals and strategies. In the next several years, the grant making will be continually measured against these guiding principles to improve effectiveness and shorten the timeline for success.

Guiding Principles

- We believe that equitable access to world-class learning experiences in and outside of traditional school settings is the essential element for preparing all children in southwestern Pennsylvania for future excellence in higher education and careers.
- We believe that education for African American students should be a vehicle by which children are affirmed in their heritage, identity, achievement and creativity. The content taught and materials used should be culturally responsive¹ and teachers and administrators recruited to work with African American students should reflect students' culture and/or be trained in effective culturally responsive pedagogies.
- We believe that a teacher's effectiveness has more impact on a student's ability to learn and achieve than any other factor in the classroom. Effective teachers are key to efforts directed toward eliminating education-equity deficits. They must be placed in our region's struggling schools where they are needed most. The job of training, supporting, assessing, compensating and hiring effective teachers is the joint responsibility of schools of education, school districts, educators, school boards and teacher unions.
- We believe that all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, ability or socio-economic status should have access to quality educational options and not be subjected to one-size-fits-all programs. This should be the norm in a public school

¹ As defined by *Cultural Responsiveness, Racial Identity and Academic Success: A Review of Literature* by Mary Stone Hanley and George W. Noblit, commissioned by the Heinz Endowments

system, a public charter school, an alternative learning environment, a faith-based institution or a private school.

- We believe that charter schools have special flexibility to provide educational opportunities to students who have been denied access to them in other settings. They are public school systems and deserve appropriate funding. To succeed, charters must be respected and affirmed by their authorizing districts. They must have realistic accountability measures from state and local authorities, and they must be able to acquire and maintain appropriate facilities.
- We believe that parents, community members and youth must all be engaged as equal partners and decision makers in the efforts to reform public education at individual schools and within larger school districts. The community's voice is a key determiner in how well schools are providing the best educational opportunities to *all* students.
- We believe that technology is more than a tool for learning. It is also a strategy that should provoke higher intellectual expectations and innovations in traditional classroom settings. It also should test teachers' assumptions and instructional practices, and enhance *all* students' abilities to communicate, create, collaborate, think and engage civically within the context of a global continuum.
- We believe in sustained coordination and collaboration of efforts with our internal and external foundation colleagues. As part of that interaction, we will use rigorous, appropriate methods to assess our grant making. These are essential to achieving greater efficacy in systemic reform and the myriad challenges and issues in schools and communities that affect the quality of public education available to African American students and those in poverty.