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WHYY TO LAUNCH “AMERICAN GRADUATE: LET’S MAKE IT HAPPEN” ON FEB. 1

Public Media to Tackle Dropout Crisis with New Programming and Public Engagement Initiatives

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 1, 2012 — WHYY today launches a scholarship program to train 80 teachers to better engage students through the use of multimedia productions. The first phase of a major initiative to address the dropout crisis, the scholarship program is part of a series of broadcast, online and community activities in support of “American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen,” a national public media initiative funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to help the Delaware Valley and other communities across America address the high school dropout crisis.

WHYY will also hold six meetings with teachers and others invested in area schools, operate a summer camp for students, produce a WHYY-FM and NewsWorks.org series on the dropout crisis and develop a virtual social studies lesson. WHYY is one of more than 60 public media and television stations across the country that is working directly with their communities to address the crisis. WHYY and “American Graduate” project partners have developed a blend of media across several platforms designed to raise public awareness and offer solutions to increase Philadelphia’s and the entire Delaware Valley’s high school graduation rates.

“Education has always been at the center of public broadcasting,” said Bill Marrazzo, WHYY president and CEO. “That’s why we are proud to be a part of this important national initiative and honored to work with the local community to make sure the region’s students stay in school and graduate.”

In Philadelphia, only 57 percent of students graduated in 2010, according to Philadelphia-based Youth United for Change. The estimated economic impact of students’ failure to earn a diploma is staggering.

“Every year, 1 million of our nation’s young people make the life-altering decision to drop out of school, resulting in severe consequences for their future and our country,” said Patricia Harrison, president and CEO of CPB. “Through the ‘American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen’ initiative, America’s public radio and television stations — locally owned and operated — are engaging local nonprofit partners, business leaders, parents and teachers to help young people stay on the path to a high school diploma.”

The Philadelphia public media provider’s commitment to the initiative will kick off Feb. 1, the first day applications will be accepted for teacher training workshops at WHYY.org/education/americangraduate.html. Scholarships will be offered to 80 teachers to learn how to better engage students through the use of multimedia production techniques in the classroom. WHYY’s Dorrance H. Hamilton Public Media Commons will offer a course titled Visual Storytelling Basics for the Classroom for educators.

As part of “American Graduate,” WHYY will hold six civic-dialogue meetings Feb. 8 to 27 in which teachers, school administrators, parents and students will discuss the forces that support and inhibit educational progress and propose solutions to support student progress.

WHYY will also oversee three additional “American Graduate” components. It will operate a summer camp that will be held at WHYY’s Hamilton Commons to engage at-risk youths in multimedia production and inspire them to tell their own stories and struggles on the road to graduation. It will partner with the *Philadelphia Public School Notebook* to produce a series on the dropout crisis that will be broadcast on WHYY-FM and NewsWorks.org. Finally, WHYY will offer students a virtual social studies experience via Spotlight Project, in collaboration with WNET, the creators of the Mission US online game.

Following are the “American Graduate” project partners: Philadelphia Youth Network/Project U Turn, Philadelphia Education Fund, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter’s Office of Education, Delaware Valley Minority Student Achievement Consortium, *Philadelphia Public School Notebook* and The Penn Project for Civic Engagement.

About “American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen” The public media initiative, [American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen](#), is helping communities across America identify and implement solutions to address the high school dropout crisis. Supported by the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB), the multi-year campaign is designed to raise awareness and dialogue through national and local multiplatform programming. Targeting communities with highest dropout rates, the initiative also increases local engagement and action through collaborations and partnerships, and increases student engagement through teacher professional development and classroom curricula. Public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – reach 99% of the country over the air, have built models for successful intervention in early learning, and have deep connections in the communities they serve. Nearly 300 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate and CPB is partnering with America’s Promise Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Visit American Graduate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [AmericanGraduate.org](#).

About [WHYY](#): WHYY is Greater Philadelphia’s leading public media provider, serving southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and all of Delaware. WHYY reaches and engages about 1 million television viewers and 410,000 radio listeners a week and 90,000 unique website visitors a month. [The Dorrance H. Hamilton Public Media Commons](#) teaches community members to express themselves through digital media. Hamilton Commons puts state-of-the-art equipment into the hands of teens, teachers, senior citizens and WHYY members as they learn audio and video production, shooting and lighting techniques, sound recording and digital editing.

About [CPB](#): The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government’s investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,300 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services.