

Local and Regional

Commentary

Mayor Nutter is sending the right signals on education.

Capitalize on the people of this region

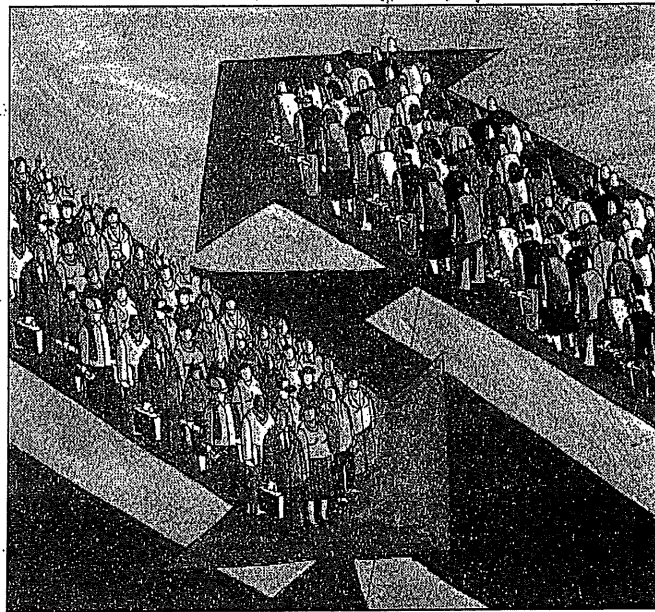
By Sallie Glickman

The number one determinant of whether or not a business will locate in a particular city is the existence of a skilled, educated workforce.

With these 24 simple words, spoken during his Jan. 7 inaugural address, Mayor Michael Nutter has set the stage for a seismic shift in the economic landscape of Philadelphia. For far too long, the economic potential of Philadelphia and the region has been compromised by a failure to adequately invest in the city's greatest asset: its people.

The human resource present in our current and potential workforce is the greatest source of untapped capital that can launch Philadelphia and the region into a prosperous future to the benefit of all citizens. Mayor Nutter should be applauded for seizing on this potential and challenging us to fully realize it.

What Mayor Nutter so eloquently expressed is this: Business knows that talent is a capital good, and that without the right people, growth is stymied. Despite limited job growth, companies are begging for qualified and educated workers. At the same time, our communities and



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families suffer from unemployment or under-employment, or — as in the case of more than one-third of Philadelphia's adults — disconnection from the labor market. The effects of this problem on our city go beyond the missed potential of a more vibrant Philadelphia. They play out through high poverty, increasing violence and unstable neighborhoods.



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As the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board's report "Tale of Two Cities" demonstrates, the reasons behind this are as complex as they are pervasive. Far too few of our adults have the educational credentials needed to succeed in our economy; far too many adults struggle under the oppressive chains of profoundly low literacy

rates; and our young people lack critical opportunities for early exposure to work experience.

There are no easy answers to these challenges, but Mayor Nutter has laid out a road map that will attack the root causes of many of these conditions and will prove transformative to Philadelphia. By making serious investments in Community College of Philadelphia, supporting the work of important initiatives such as Graduate Philadelphia, and focusing on dramatically reducing dropout rates while linking youth to meaningful work experiences, Mayor Nutter has again demonstrated his commitment to a sustained renaissance in Philadelphia.

The themes of hope and change have been ubiquitous in Philadelphia over the last week. With the programs and initiatives outlined by Mayor Nutter during his inaugural address, this hope has been transformed into confidence that Philadelphia will change for the better under his continued leadership.

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