



For Immediate Release

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Dr. Kathleen Shaw Named Executive Director Of Research for Action

*PA Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education
Assumes Leadership of Education Research Nonprofit*

Philadelphia – Dr. Kate Shaw, Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education in the Pennsylvania Department of Education will become the new executive director of Research for Action (RFA), a Philadelphia education research nonprofit known for its high quality research on urban school reform, especially reform efforts in Philadelphia. RFA’s board president, Irv Ackelsberg, notes, “Dr. Shaw’s background in both research and policy development, her proven leadership talents and her passion for quality public education make her an ideal fit for RFA. We are confident that the organization will be in good hands going forward and that the extraordinary legacy being left by our founding principals will be honored and built upon.”

Dr. Shaw was appointed to her current position of Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education in January 2007 after having served briefly as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Education. As Deputy, Dr. Shaw is primarily responsible for developing and implementing policy designed to increase the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education throughout the state, and to strengthen the K-16 educational pipeline. Prior to her current position, Dr. Shaw was a faculty member at Temple University for ten years in the Urban Education Program of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and also served as chair of that department. Her scholarship has focused on issues of access and equity in higher education, especially for disadvantaged populations.

“I am excited about the opportunity to join Research for Action, an organization that is highly respected and one that has contributed so much to improving urban education in a significant way,” says Dr. Shaw. “I look forward to building on that work. I believe that my experience and interest in both research and policy is a strong combination for the organization, and that my interest in expanding access to college will add another dimension to RFA’s focus on improving educational opportunities for our urban youth.” Dr. Shaw will assume her new position effective December 1, 2009.

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Dr. Shaw added that, "I am grateful for the opportunity to have served in the administration of a Governor with such an unwavering commitment to public education. While I enjoyed my time in Harrisburg, I am excited about returning to work in Philadelphia, a city that offers both great promise and challenge." Dr. Shaw is a resident of West Chester, PA. where she lives with her husband and daughter, John and Anna Noakes.

Current RFA co-directors and founders, Jolley Bruce Christman and Eva Gold agree that Dr. Shaw is the right person for RFA. "I was delighted with the board's selection of Kate to continue RFA's leadership," notes Dr. Christman. "She is someone who understands RFA's commitment to equity in education." Dr. Gold commented that, "The board knows that connecting research to public education's many stakeholders is important to putting good policy into practice, and we are thrilled that, in Kate, they found someone who shares a commitment to using research to build a strong network of support for our public schools."

Eva Gold will shift from playing a leadership role to becoming a Senior Research Fellow and Jolley Bruce Christman will be retiring from RFA. Gold and Christman founded the organization in 1992 and have provided leadership and direction since then. Over the years, RFA has received funding from several local and national foundations in support of their research, including the William Penn Foundation, the Samuel S. Fels Fund, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Philadelphia Foundation, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Annenberg Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, Surdna Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Donors' Education Collaborative of New York City, and others.

RFA has received accolades for its 18 years of research and evaluation in Philadelphia and other urban districts and communities nationwide. It has also been recognized for its multi-year study, *Learning from Philadelphia's School Reform*, of Philadelphia's complex and radical 2002 school reform, which has provided important reports since on such topics as teacher quality, civic engagement in school reform, privatization of school management, and the use of data by school staff to improve instruction. These policy studies and evaluations have helped to inform decisions by the School Reform Commission and Philadelphia's CEOs. They have also provided Philadelphia's citizens with independent and credible information about the state of public education in the city.

The Research for Action Board of Directors conducted a broad search seeking talented professionals to serve as executive director. The board was helped in this effort by Leadership Recruiters of Wynnewood, PA. According to board member and search committee co-chair, Germaine Ingram, "The board, with the support of staff members and external friends, undertook a search process that reflected the characteristics we value in RFA---rigor, thoughtfulness, coherence, and transparency. The selection of Dr. Shaw is the best evidence that the process served us superbly well."

Research for Action's Board of Directors is planning a celebration on October 27th to honor the contribution of its cofounders and welcome its new executive director.

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