

Education Secretary Praises Foundation

In area visit, Riley calls teacher program a model for success

By Lanning Taliaferro, Staff Writer, Gannett Newspapers

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Former US Secretary of Education, Richard Riley congratulates first year TSTT college student, Mario Saurez.

U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley praised a Westchester County-based education foundation last night, calling for more initiatives like it across the country to link secondary schools and colleges.

Riley said the foundation and its biggest program, Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers, would be models for a collaborative project, High Hopes for College, that he and President Clinton have asked Congress to fund.

"The key is partnership," he said. "Things that work well in this country generally are partnerships."

Riley was the keynote speaker at the Learning Foundation of Putnam-Northern Westchester's annual leadership awards program at the Armonk headquarters of the investment company, MBIA Inc.

The gala honored 10 colleges involved in Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers. The program provides minority high school students who are interested in becoming teachers with academic support, mentors, internships and help with college admissions.

Through participating colleges, the program also offers 50 percent scholarships to the students in return for a pledge to teach locally for at least a year.

"Quality minority teachers - that's a national need," he said. "We're going to need two million teachers over the next 10 years. They're going to have to be quality teachers who can teach in a diverse classroom using high technology ... These people were very perceptive to pick this up."

Honored last night were Fordham University in the Bronx; the College of New Rochelle; Gordon College in Wenham, Mass.; Iona College in New Rochelle; Manhattanville College in Purchase; Marist College in Poughkeepsie; Marymount College in Tarrytown; Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry; Pace University in New York City and Pleasantville; and Texas College in Tyler, Texas.

Riley said the foundation's other work bringing business leaders and educators together to discuss education issues and the work force, was essential to building strong, successful schools.

Francie Heller, president of MBIA Municipal Investors Service Corp. and head of the Learning Foundation's board, said she was thrilled by Riley's visit.

Heller and Riley hail from the same hometown - Greenville, S.C.

Among the guests at last night's dinner were students graduating this spring from Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers.

Ossining High School senior Chad Cherry, who will be attending the University of Maryland this fall, said he had benefited from the advice, the support and the job opportunities he had gotten from the program.

"This really helped me focus on what I'm going to do after college," said Cherry, who plans a double major in political science and secondary education.

The Learning Foundation, a regional nonprofit group, started up in 1987 to find alternative funding to promote educational opportunities for the 45,000 students in 18 local school districts and the Putnam-Northern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services.