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TSTT: Working Quietly and Effectively

A New York-based career development program that has been quietly and consistently working with school districts to address the student achievement gap and the critical shortage of teachers of color is Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers (TSTT). TSTT is a not-for-profit organization that is serious about the business of mentoring young teachers from culturally diverse and economically challenged backgrounds as early as their freshman year in high school. TSTT mentors them through an 8 year full circle program that starts in high school, continues through college and helps to place them as certified teachers in positions throughout New York and beyond. We need to preserve programs that enhance our investment in education, address the achievement gap, prevent the looming shortage of teachers of color, and will ensure a high quality teacher workforce.

TSTT was founded 15 years ago by Dr. Bettye Perkins, an educator and former IBM executive, with the goal of improving the educational opportunities for students of color with the expectation that they would not only graduate from college, but would become highly effective teachers and leaders in the communities where they grew up. Beginning in 1994 with just 7 high school students in Ossining, New York, TSTT has grown to nurture and develop more than 600 high school and college students from urban and suburban districts throughout Westchester, Rockland, and Sullivan Counties, the Bronx and the Greater Rochester area. The TSTT program provides financial support through a unique college partnership agreement with 21 colleges, which offer qualified TSTT students at least a 50% tuition scholarship for 4 years.

So far, the program is working. The national high school graduation rate for students of color is 78%. For TSTT students, the rate is 90%. The national college graduation rate is 24% for students of color, but 70% of the TSTT program participants graduate. Nationally, 33% of teachers leave the profession after 3 years, and 50% leave after 5 years. Comparatively, among teachers who have joined the profession through TSTT, a mere 7% leave after 3 years, and only 10% after 5 years.

TSTT's success is no secret. TSTT offers caring, enthusiastic personal interactions for each and every student through mentoring and intensive teacher training career development workshops, job shadowing and classroom preparation for 4 years of high school and 4 years of college – and it does not end when they become teachers. One of their first graduates was Emerly Martinez, who started as a sophomore at Ossining High School in 1995 and has now been teaching social studies there for ten years. He is offering the same support that he received to help close the achievement gap by creating one mentoring program for Latino male students and a second to prevent freshmen from falling through the cracks.

The TSTT program is intensive, with 102 graduates who are teachers and 600 in the pipeline. With 30 high school students in 4 Bronx high schools, TSTT is working to expand into high schools in every borough to recruit from the 50,000 African-American male students aged 15-17 currently in the city's school system. We can close the achievement gap, reduce the dropout rate, and enrich our schools with caring, competent and committed teachers of color. That is the promise of Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers. For more information about TSTT go to their website: www.tstt.org.