



# UNIVERSAL FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Universal Alcorn • Universal Audenried • Universal Bluford  
Universal Creighton • Universal Daroff • Universal Institute • Universal Vare

January 26, 2021

Dear Universal Families,

Universal Family of Schools is proud to join education providers across the U.S. in celebration of National School Choice Week! While we participate each January, this year carries a greater significance because of recent national events coupled with challenges we face here at home.

Before the passage of Pennsylvania's charter school law, financially challenged urban families had no remedy if their children's school was underperforming. The charter school law was enacted to provide educational equity for families regardless of their zip code or financial status. Education is one of today's most critical civil rights issues. There is no question that children who lack access to a high-quality school are less likely to live lives full of achievement.

On January 6, a mob tried to overthrow the election and stamp out Joe Biden's promises that were set to become policy during his presidency. The mob's actions constituted an attack on freedoms that we hold dear as Americans. Had democracy not prevailed, the will of millions of voters would have been nullified, and we would have failed as a nation. It is understandable that in the moment, many parents wanted to shield our babies' eyes from watching hatred rise. However, the better lesson is that freedom is fragile, and in America, some would exploit that fact to their wrongful gain. And so, we must teach our children to become civic-minded when they are young, as each generation is charged to protect and defend the next.

A home, a school district acting its own interests tried to usurp freedom from our families. Under the School District of Philadelphia's control, Bluford and Daroff were persistently dangerous and failing schools. Each gained a stellar reputation after Universal became their management company. Today, both schools are high-quality learning institutions and beacons within the community that offer hope and promise to families seeking to improve their quality of life. Now that Universal has restored and empowered these schools, the District wants to bring them back into its budget despite the tremendous cost that doing so will inflict on our community.

Last month, 100 families, scholars, educators, and community activists rose against this injustice by sharing their stories through written word and selfie-videos. I was touched to see such an outpouring of support. It can be said of Universal, "Promises made. Promises Kept."

This National School Choice Week, I ask you to stand with our scholars for justice and equity against the District's incredibly biased attempt to take control of our schools. I want to challenge those who have not yet shared their stories to do so. Contact Principal Gary-Nelson and Dr. Ruffin to learn how you can contribute. We are in the fight of our lives, but we will prevail if we work together. Just as in the recent presidential election, *every participant truly counts*.

Yours truly,

Dr. Penny Nixon  
Superintendent/CEO