

# Recent grads tutor student teachers

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**T**HEY SAT in the cool library of Edison High School, a sea of earnest, mostly white, suburban faces, all student teachers itching to get into a classroom to challenge and mold students' young, pliant minds.

But one recent high-schooler had some words of advice that sent shadows skittering over a few of those faces.

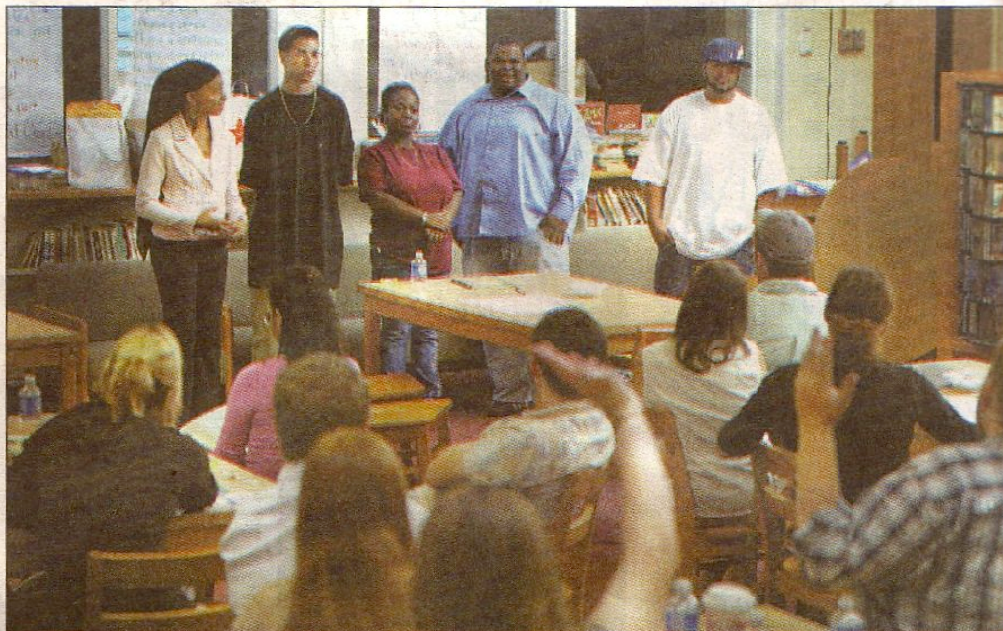
"Do not show fear," advised "Fresh," an 18-year-old graduate who prefers to use only his rapper name. "Kids are like sharks. We smell the fear, and we will attack."

Fresh and four other recent Philadelphia public-school graduates talked yesterday with prospective teachers about what it takes to connect with city-toughened teens. Their talk was part of a three-day "Pipeline to the Future" professional-development series intended to prepare rookie teachers for the harsh realities of urban schools.

The teens all were subjects of a feature-length documentary by filmmaker Ben Herold, who chronicled the last two years of six high-schoolers' lives. "First Person" will be released late next summer.

Once considered the most promising in their classes as members of Temple University's Young Scholars program, Herold's six subjects ended their two-year stints in front of his camera this summer in vastly different places.

One is a confessed murderer in jail for the next 20 to 40 years for killing his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend. Another dropped out of



ALEJANDRO A. ALVAREZ/Daily News

**Former Philadelphia high-school students give advice to prospective teachers.**

school to pursue a military career, but then quit that too. A third is pregnant at 18 and facing single motherhood. Despite such obstacles, all but the imprisoned teen plan to go to college.

Herold said he was struck during filming by their shared struggle with poverty and how it affected their studies and futures.

"Students' lives involve a lot more than what you see in the classroom, and that impacts what they're able to do," Herold said. "Their resilience has just been amazing to me."

Student teachers watched a 15-minute clip of the film yesterday and got to grill the students about their difficulties juggling home life, the street and school.

Prospective teacher Joshua Mushrock, 26, said fear is a common reaction among rookies.

"You are scared because, who are you to stand up in front of people and tell them what to do? So you go in there shouting to get control," Mushrock said. "Whenever you have teachers shouting, that's because they're afraid."

Recalling recent stints as a substitute teacher in Philadelphia and Norristown schools, prospective teacher Alain Dupiton, 33, wanted the teens' tips on thwarting misbehavior.

"The kids do what they want: they cuss you out; they tell you off; they basically act a fool," Dupiton said. "How can I deal with that?"

The students stressed that the respect teachers give or withhold from students often can make the difference between an orderly classroom and chaos.

But their disagreement on how teachers should show respect means prospective teachers are likely to encounter at least a few sharks circling classrooms this fall.

Fresh suggested that rookie teachers who encounter misbehaving students sneaking out for a cigarette break to allow rule-breaking conditionally. "You could say: 'OK, go smoke your blunt, but then come back and do your work.'"

That scenario prompted some eye-rolling from several peers.

"That is sick!" Shalisa Ousley, 18, said, shaking her head. "Teachers should put their foot down and demand what they want."

Cue the eye-rolling from Fresh's side of the debate. ★



DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News

## Vallas gets new contract

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Three School Reform Commission members said yesterday that progress was being made in numerous areas, that Philadelphia schoolchildren are learning, and so Paul Vallas should be retained as chief

executive of city schools to continue the job.

The two other reformers said that there hadn't been nearly enough progress and that chaos and a revolving-door syndrome characterized the school district's upper-management ranks. Thus, they reasoned, Vallas should be sent packing.

See **VALLAS** Page 26

**Paul Vallas gets 10% raise.**