

For Immediate Release

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Board Action Moves Forward Superintendent's Plan to Increase Opportunities for Job-Embedded Professional Development and Teacher Support

Increases Number of Student Half Days from Two to Eight for Upcoming School Year

Creates Academic Coach Role to Deepen Content-Specific PD

PITTSBURGH January 25, 2017 – This evening, the Board approved key actions by Superintendent Hamlet to increase opportunities for job-embedded professional development (PD) and support. Changes include a new 2017-18 District Calendar, creating more time for PD through the addition of six half days for students, and streamlining the current teacher career ladder role into content-specific coach. The adopted 2017 General Fund Budget included increases to PD support. The approvals follow a Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) report, which noted 33 findings and recommendations specifically related to professional development within PPS.

“Over the course of my Listening Tour, I heard the need for consistent, high-quality, content-specific professional development and the value teachers place in peer-to-peer learning opportunities,” said Dr. Hamlet. “Through embedding these half days in the District’s current calendar, we can augment our training for teachers and school-based staff.”

2017-18 Calendar Increases Number of Student Half Days from Two to Eight

The District’s calendar included three full days for district-wide professional development and two half days for school-based PD. The CGCS report noted the three district-wide professional development days are “a low number compared to many urban districts and not enough to build capacity.” The 2017-18 calendar will add six half days that will serve a dual purpose at the District and school-based levels.

Below is a listing of the eight Fridays that will be half days for students. Families can expect information next month about the new calendar.

- Friday, September 15, 2017
- Friday, October 13, 2017
- Friday, November 17, 2017
- Friday, December 8, 2017
- Friday, February 2, 2018
- Friday, February 23, 2018
- Friday, March 2, 2018
- Friday, March 23, 2018

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Shifts to Career Ladder Roles

In addition to adding time for teacher PD, the Board approved the Superintendent's suggested changes to the District's Career Ladder structure. Two new positions - Literacy Academic Coach and Math Academic Coach – will shift the District's current Instructional Teacher Leaders 2, streamlining the role from three responsibilities – teacher, coach and evaluative observer – to a full-time content-specific coach, a recommendation noted in the CGCS report. The transition will increase opportunities for modeling and co-teaching and allow for more content-specific training during the school day. The new roles will remain a Career Ladder promotional opportunity for teachers.

“Simply exposing teachers to theory does not result in changes to instructional practice,” said Dr. Hamlet. “Offering teachers time to practice and provide feedback during training is better, but the strongest method for improving practice is coaching teachers in the classroom. This matches the Council of Great City Schools report on the importance of job-embedded PD, and more importantly, matches what I heard from teachers.”

Board Action Ensures Safe and Supportive School Environment for All Students

In other business, the Board approved a resolution that affirms the District's commitment to a safe and supportive school environment for all students, regardless of immigration status. While District policy and state and federal laws provide that a child's enrollment in public school may not be conditioned on the child's immigration status, tonight's resolution is a proactive move by the Board regarding the protection of any undocumented students and using the Fourth Amendment to protect the personnel records of students and staff.

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