

For Immediate Release

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Gains on 11 of 14 State Exams Show More Students Are on the Pathway to the Promise

PITTSBURGH, August 10, 2011 –Preliminary results on the 2011 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) show more District students are on track to Promise-Readiness as gains in reading and mathematics proficiency increased on 11 of 14 tests. The number of students performing at the *advanced* level increased on 10 of 14 tests, while the number of students performing *below basic* decreased on 13 of 14 PSSA tests. Superintendent Linda S. Lane shared the District's 2011 student achievement results with District principals, staff and community members earlier this morning at the Pittsburgh Professional Development Center located in the Greenway facility.

“Our goal is to get students Promise-Ready and prepared for success after graduation,” said Superintendent Lane. “We know that significant progress doesn’t happen overnight. While today’s results show we are on the right course, we also know that the only way more of our students will become Promise-Ready is if we remain committed to our work to ensure that an effective teacher is in every classroom, every day.”

Over the past four years, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced increased on all 14 PSSA exams. While evidence indicates that current reforms are working, the District remains committed to making adjustments based on data.

Since introducing the Excellence for All reform agenda in 2006, the District put into place the core elements for raising student achievement, which include the following:

- A new rigorous curriculum;
- A nationally recognized system to train, support, evaluate and reward principals;
- An aggressive, comprehensive and ongoing professional development for all instructional personnel;
- The use of diagnostic assessment to get help to students quickly; and,
- Instructional coaches in every school to deepen the work.

Since 2009 additional strategies put in place to support core initiatives and increase student achievement, include:

- The K-11 literacy Response to Instruction and Intervention (Rtii) model that includes 30 minutes of literacy intervention and enrichment daily in every K-5, K-8 and 6-8 school;
- Diagnostic and summative assessments to complement the District K-2 reading program;
- Two periods of mathematics daily for every student;
- A focus on algebraic skills throughout grades K-8; and,
- The Research-Based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE) designed to grow and develop students by continuously advancing the professional practice of teachers.

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Dr. Lane reviewed a presentation that included preliminary District-level PSSA results by grade level and spotlighted schools that represented progress on District priorities. The PSSA measures individual student growth and determines the level to which students reach Pennsylvania reading and mathematics standards in grades 3 – 8 and 11. PSSA results in mathematics and reading are used to determine a district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The District will be releasing information about its AYP status when that information becomes available from the State.

Reading Proficiency

Reading proficiency gains continue as the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced increased on 6 of 7 tests. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in reading for the combined grades 3-8 and 11 grew to 60.5% in 2011 from 56.6% in 2010 and 51.4% in 2007. The percentage of students performing at the advanced level in reading grew to 25.6% in 2011, up from 19.2% in 2007.

All tested grades saw a decrease in the percent of students scoring *below basic* as the percentage declined from 25.9% in 2007 to 19.7% in 2011. As performance at the high school level continues to be a challenge, the District saw its largest gains to date as reading proficiency at the 11th Grade increased 5 points (10%) from 2010 and 13.8 points (24%) from 2007.

Other reading proficiency gains include:

- At 3rd Grade, District students had a gain of 3.5 points (6%) from 2010, which means students have improved 4.1 points (7%) since 2007.
- At 4th Grade, District students had a gain of 4.1 points (7%) from 2010, which means students have improved 8.4 points (16%) since 2007.
- At 5th Grade, District students had a gain of 8.5 points (18%) from 2010, which means students have improved 13.7 points (33%) since 2007.
- At 7th Grade, District students had a gain of 7.9 points (14%) from 2010, which means students have improved 14.2 points (28%) since 2007.
- At 8th Grade, District students had a gain of .7 points (1%) from 2010, which means students have improved 13.8 points (40%) since 2007.

Mathematics Proficiency

District students continue to make gains in mathematics proficiency as an increase in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced for the combined grades 3-8 and 11 grew to 66% in 2011, up from 62.3% in 2010 and 55.4% in 2007. The percentage of students with below basic test scores continued to decline overall from 25.0% in 2007 to 16.6% in 2011. Additionally, the District saw its greatest gains in mathematics proficiency at the 7th grade level with 69.2% of students scoring proficient, increasing 8.5 points from 2010 to 20.6 points since 2007, for an overall 42% gain. Additional gains in mathematics include:

- At 4th Grade, District students had a gain of 6.1 points (9%) from 2010, which means students have improved 14.1 points (22%) since 2007.
- At 5th Grade, District students had a gain of 4.9 points (8%) from 2010, which means students have improved 8.3 points (14%) since 2007.
- At 8th Grade, District students had a gain of 5.3 points (9%) from 2010, which means students have improved 13.2 points (26%) since 2007.
- At 11th Grade, District students had a gain of 3.2 points (8%) from 2010 and .7 points (2%) since 2007.

Disparity Between African-American and White Students Narrowed on All 14 State Exams since 2007

The disparity between African American and White students in Reading and Mathematics narrowed steadily at all grade levels over the past four years while achievement for both groups rose.

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Since 2007, reading achievement for both African-American and White students increased in all 7 of the 7 grades tested and the disparity was reduced in all 7 as well. During the same period, mathematics achievement for both African-American and White students increased in 6 of the 7 grades tested and the disparity was reduced in all 7 grades tested. Although the disparity has narrowed while achievement has increased for both groups, progress must be accelerated. The District has made improving African-American student performance and eliminating the academic disparity between African-American and White students a priority.

Science and Writing Results Provided

Although Science and Writing PSSA exams are not used to determine a District progress towards AYP, Superintendent Lane shared student results on the exams this morning. Students fared well on the PSSA writing test, which for Grade 11 is a State graduation requirement. Writing proficiency in the 11th Grade increased 6.1 points (8%) from 2010 to 78.8%. Students additionally saw increases in writing proficiency in Grade 5 from 45.4 points (12%) from 2010 and 13.3 points (36%) since 2007. Grade 8 writing proficiency increased .9 points (1%) from 2010 and 3.1 points (5%) since 2007.

State results on the 2010 science PSSA varied greatly by grade, with 4th grade performance the highest and 11th grade performance the lowest. District performance on the 2011 science PSSA showed a similar trend.

- At Grade 4, the District had a gain of 3.9 points (6%) from 2010 with 64.5 % of students scoring proficient or advanced.
- At Grade 8, the District had a gain of 3.8 points (12%) from 2010 with 35.9% of students scoring proficient or advanced.
- At Grade 11, the District had a gain of .7 points (4%) from 2010 with 20.6% of students scoring proficient or advanced.

The District plans to provide the Board and the public with a full presentation of the 2011 PSSA results at the Board's August 15th Education Committee meeting.

For More Information

For a complete listing of District-level PSSA results by grade level and to view a video of today's press event, please use this link: <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/StudentAchievementResults> or visit the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at www.pps.k12.pa.us. You may also call the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920** or visit the Division of Communications, Room 204, Pittsburgh Public Schools Administration Building, 341 South Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.