

For Immediate Release

Contact: Ebony Pugh 412- 622-3616

District Eliminates Teacher Academy

PITTSBURGH, June 1, 2011— Superintendent Linda S. Lane announced today that the District will halt its plan to open a teacher academy residency program. The Superintendent cited the District's financial challenges and the stipulations in the teachers' union contract as the reasons why it was necessary to eliminate the program.

Scheduled to begin in five weeks, the Teacher Academy was a key initiative of the District and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) *Empowering Effective Teachers* plan to ensure an effective teacher in every classroom, every day. New teachers, selected through a highly competitive process, would have spent as much as a full school year as "Academy Residents", working side-by-side with some of the most effective teachers in the District to prepare for success in a full-time teaching position.

Under the District's current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), however, teacher layoffs are based solely on seniority. Having the least seniority, Academy Residents would be among the most vulnerable as the District faces closing schools and cutting programs in order to dramatically reduce expenses.

"We have tried to come up with a plan that protects the investment of time and resources we have committed to transforming how the District recruits, selects and trains our teacher workforce. Without agreement from the PFT, and with the specter of teacher layoffs on the horizon, we cannot provide assurances that our investment in new teachers trained through the Academy would not be lost," said Superintendent Lane.

Continued Lane, "The District remains committed to our goal of impacting student achievement through the empowerment of our teachers. But without progress to resolve this issue, I am forced to make a decision that cancels that plan. We simply cannot afford to invest in placing residents in the Teacher Academy when we cannot ensure their security as part of our workforce."

The Teacher Academy was designed to ensure that all new teachers were prepared to meet the diverse needs of District students. Teams of new and experienced teachers were to work together to bring energy and high expectations to each child's classroom.

In August 2010, the Board approved the two sites for the Teacher Academy; Pittsburgh Brashear and Pittsburgh King. Offers had been extended for 38 resident positions in the Teacher Academy for the 2011-12 school year. Forty-two experienced District teachers had been selected to serve as Clinical Resident Instructors (CRIs). Representing some of the District's most effective teachers, CRIs were to train and mentor Residents in the teacher academy program. Both opportunities will be the subject of discussion next week between the District and the PFT when the parties are scheduled to meet to determine next steps resulting from the cancellation of the academy.

-more-

Page 2 – District Eliminate Teacher Academy

The District intends to continue its collaborative efforts with the PFT to move forward with the implementation of the Empowering Effective Teachers Plan. A group of Promise-Readiness Corps teachers will be in place at five District high schools for the start of the 2011-12 school year. These teachers will follow students from 9th to 10th grade to ensure students arrive to the 11th grade prepared for post-secondary success. Additionally, the District's Reward and Recognition program will continue offer opportunities for teachers to earn additional compensation based upon student achievement gains.

This difficult decision to eliminate the Academy is part of an ongoing effort to address what has been a significant shift in the District's fiscal outlook. Pittsburgh Public Schools has held the line on spending in recent years. But decreases in revenue, combined with at least \$34.1 million in cuts proposed for the District in the Governor's budget, have resulted in a projected operating deficit of \$68 million for 2012.

"While this is a major bump in the road, we knew when we coauthored the *Empowering Effective Teachers* plan with the PFT that the road to reform would be difficult. We are going to continue to work together to figure out a way to advance our work in light of our fiscal realities," said Lane.

A 10% cut in Administrative budgets, the Board's 75% reduction of the 2011 Capital Budget spending plan, and the creation of an internal team to examine all opportunities for spending reductions have been part of recent moves orchestrated by Dr. Lane to attain fiscal health and sustainability while preserving core programs and the reform agenda, and working to accelerate academic achievement.

The public can learn more about the District's fiscal challenges and potential solutions by visiting the District's website at <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/CitySchoolsFiscalChallenges>. The public can provide input on solutions by completing a quick online form located on the City Schools Fiscal Challenges web page or via email at citieschoolsfiscalchallenges@pghboe.net.

The public can additionally provide solutions by attending A+ Schools upcoming meeting **City School Budget: A Community Discussion on Setting Priorities** Follow-Up Meeting. The meeting taking place from 5:30 – 8 PM on Monday, June 27th will provide community members an opportunity to weigh-in on upcoming budget reductions. The meeting will be held at the Pittsburgh Federations of Teachers building located at S. 19th Street on the South Side. Community can also fill out an online survey by visiting the A+ Schools website at www.apluschools.org/budget.

#