

# NEWS



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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Pittsburgh Pioneer Celebrates 50 Years at the Forefront of Quality Special Education**

PITTSBURGH May 12, 2010 – At a special celebration on Monday, May 17, Pittsburgh Pioneer Special Education Center will celebrate 50 years of unwavering commitment to the education of children with disabilities. Pittsburgh Pioneer was dedicated on May 17, 1960 and will now rededicate itself to remaining at the forefront of service and achievement in special education.

From 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. on Monday afternoon, Pioneer students and families will gather with faculty and staff to kick-off the rededication celebration with cake, Klondike bars, dancing and other exciting activities. Veteran staff members Carole Faloon, Marsha Bookman and Patricia Waddle, each with more than 30 years of experience at Pittsburgh Pioneer, will speak to students and their families about the school as a vanguard of special education and their teaching experiences while working there.

The Pittsburgh Pioneer Special Education Center, located at 775 Dunster Street Pittsburgh 15226, provides a range of services to students who have physical disabilities, multiple disabilities and medical disabilities. Students from 5 to 21 years of age participate in a comprehensive developmental program in which best practices and state-of-the-art adaptive equipment and curricular materials are utilized. A core belief is that a commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement. Communities have a responsibility to remove the barriers that exclude disabled citizens.

In 1960, the community of Pittsburgh impressively took on that responsibility and became a national forerunner in the promotion of civil rights and education of disabled persons. After contributions from over 100 local individuals, foundations, and industries amounting to \$634,000 and an additional contribution of \$179,295 from the Board of Education, the city of Pittsburgh and PPS were able to build a facility that was not only visionary in its day but continues to be an extraordinary model of quality special education.

The creation of Pittsburgh Pioneer came at a time when little to no protections existed for the disabled, and especially not for those with multiple to severe disabilities. Its inception came an unbelievable 11 years before the PARC (Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children) Consent Decree of 1971 that guaranteed free and appropriate education for all children in Pennsylvania. It was this decree that in 1975 became the basis of the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 and that was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

And still today Pittsburgh Pioneer remains committed to excellence in special education. Members of Pittsburgh Pioneer's speech and language staff were featured on the May 11<sup>th</sup> episode of WQED's program OnQ for their use of cutting-edge resources such as Minspeak, a communicative language device. And in January 2010 the school was awarded \$100,000 from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust to assist in the creation of a sensory garden. There will be a dedication ceremony for the garden on June 15, 2010.

**Media is invited to attend this event. Photo opportunities available.**