

# NEWS



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DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING 341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Pittsburgh Pioneer Dedication to Special Education Continues with Creation of Sensory Garden**

PITTSBURGH June 9, 2010 – With the dedication of its new Sensory Garden at Pittsburgh Pioneer, the school will continue its celebration of 50 years of unwavering commitment to the education of children with disabilities. Principal Sylbia Kunst will be joined by MTR Landscape Architects and Superintendent Mark Roosevelt for the dedication to be held on June 15, 2010 from 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Pittsburgh Pioneer, located at 775 Dunster Street Pittsburgh 15226.

A testament to Pittsburgh Pioneer's ongoing commitment to excellence in special education came in January 2010 when the school was awarded \$100,000 from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust to assist in the creation of a new Sensory Garden. The garden was designed and created in partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and aims to provide an outdoor haven for students that is both fully engaging and accessible. The garden has a number of interactive features including an area with tall textured plants with strong fragrance and bold color, a hummingbird walk with feeders, swings and colorful exploration and play panels.

Pittsburgh Pioneer provides a range of services to students who have physical disabilities, multiple disabilities and extraordinary medical needs. 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 Pittsburgh community collaboratively took on that responsibility and became a national forerunner in the promotion of civil rights and education of disabled persons. After contributions from more than 100 local individuals, foundations, industries, 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 few protections existed for the disabled, and especially 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 that was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

At a special celebration on May 17<sup>th</sup>, Pittsburgh Pioneer celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Pittsburgh Pioneer was originally dedicated on May 17, 1960.

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

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For information regarding accommodations, civil rights or grievance procedures, contact the Office of Employee Relations, Pittsburgh Public Schools, 341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3516; Phone (412) 622-3691 (Voice/TTY/TDD); Fax (412) 622-7968.