

NEWS



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For Immediate Release

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New Teacher Academy to Transform Teacher Training to Better Meet Student Needs

District Recommends Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh King K-8 For New Teacher Academy Sites

PITTSBURGH, PA, July 19, 2010 – At the Board’s Education Committee meeting tonight, Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Mark Roosevelt unveiled a proposal to locate the District’s two new Teacher Academy sites at Pittsburgh Brashear 9-12 and Pittsburgh King K-8 for the 2011-12 school year.

The proposed Teacher Academy is a cornerstone of the District and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) **Empowering Effective Teachers** plan, recently funded with a \$40 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Teacher Academy will ensure that all new District teachers are prepared to meet the diverse needs of Pittsburgh’s students, and that experienced teachers will have the opportunity to continuously improve their practice.

“We know that excellent teachers matter. They get kids to far better places,” said Superintendent Roosevelt. “The Teacher Academy is another step on our path to building a culture of teaching excellence that will move students to higher levels of achievement and enable them to take advantage of The Pittsburgh Promise®.”

The Teacher Academy is part of a District-wide effort to:

1. Increase the number of highly effective teachers;
2. Increase the exposure of high-need students to highly-effective teachers; and
3. Ensure that the learning environment supports the ability of teachers to be highly-effective.

At The Teacher Academy, teams of new and experienced teachers will work side-by-side to bring enthusiasm, energy and high expectations to each child’s classroom. By design, The Teacher Academy will reinforce a school culture that fosters a life-long appreciation of learning for teachers and students alike, with the goal of ensuring that all students are taught everyday and in every class by an effective teacher.

The Teacher Academy Model

“We know that teachers learn best when they see and experience successful teaching practices. Empowering effective teachers means empowering teachers to learn their craft from one another,” said Roosevelt. “The Teacher Academy is designed to provide new and experienced teachers with access to these types of learning experiences that benefit both teachers and students.”

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The Teacher Academy will include four main programs:

- 1) **Enhanced Induction for New Teachers** - All new teachers will receive three weeks of training during the summer and at least 10 days of induction training during the year.
- 2) **A New Teacher Residency Program** - New core content teachers will complete a 13-month residency program at The Teacher Academy prior to placement in the classroom as teacher of record.
- 3) **An Alternative Certification Pathway** - Opportunities will be available for career changers and recent graduates to pursue alternative certification in Math, Science and/or Special Education.
- 4) **An Experienced Teacher Immersion Program** - Experienced teachers will have the opportunity to visit The Teacher Academy for up to six weeks to spend time sharing and improving teacher practices.

“This new model is the way we are going to bring new teachers into the District as well as provide customized professional development targeted at improving teacher effectiveness aligned to RISE for all of our experienced teachers,” said Dr. Jerri Lippert, the District’s Chief Academic Officer.

At The Teacher Academy, new and experienced teachers will come to enhance their instructional practices and deepen their ability to build relationships with students and engage them in learning. Teachers will take part in rich experiential learning and have opportunities to participate in customized professional development seminars and courses while working in classrooms with teacher mentors called Clinical Resident Instructors (CRIs).

The Teacher Academy model will radically change the way new teachers are inducted into District schools. To empower, support, and prepare novice teachers to meet the diverse needs of urban students and to be successful in the classroom, core subject teachers new to the district will now complete a year-long residency program at one of the Academy sites. The Teacher Academy experience will include rigorous evaluation linked to performance standards. Upon successful completion of the residency program, only effective teachers will be eligible to become a teacher of record in a District classroom.

The Teacher Academy will also provide personalized professional development for current and experienced teachers aligned to the District’s new teacher evaluation system, RISE. Experienced teachers will benefit from extended opportunities to engage in stimulating professional development that addresses their specific needs, interests and goals based on RISE. These teachers will have the opportunity to participate in The Teacher Academy program for up to six weeks to spend time focused on improving and collaborating on their teaching practices.

Pittsburgh Brashear and Pittsburgh King K-8 Right Choice for New Teacher Academy

In order to identify the best possible sites for the new Teacher Academy, the District identified several criteria to guide the site selection process including status of student achievement, an adequate school population and student cohort size, a high needs school with a large population eligible for free and reduced lunch, academic disparities within the school or District, a suitable facility that does not require significant capital investment, eligibility for funding under the U.S. Department of Education’s new accountability standards and an academic program that supports the Academy model.

An Academy Design Team, made up of District staff and PFT members, was responsible for considering the options for possible locations. After thoroughly reviewing all available high school and lower grades locations, the District's recommendation of **Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh King K-8** will enable teachers to reach a significant population of high-needs students to dramatically improve their performance.

With more than 500 students, Pittsburgh King K-8 is the optimal size for the K-8 Academy. Additionally, approximately 89% of students at Pittsburgh King K-8 are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Additionally, PSSA data, including 2009-10 preliminary data, show that Pittsburgh King K-8 has not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Pittsburgh King's student population is more than 80% African American.

Pittsburgh Brashear High School, with more than 1,100 students, is the ideal size for the 9-12 Academy, and has the largest number of students (720) eligible for free and reduced lunch. Additionally, PSSA data, including 2009-10 preliminary data, show that Pittsburgh Brashear High School has not met AYP. Pittsburgh Brashear has 423 African American students, the 3rd highest total of African American students in the District's secondary schools.

Both schools are eligible to apply for competitive federal grants, including Race To The Top and School Improvement Grant funding. This will provide an opportunity to raise additional funds to support implementation of The Teacher Academy.

"We are aligning ourselves to vigorously compete for federal funding opportunities," added Superintendent Roosevelt. "If we are successful we will be able to bring substantial federal resources to bear at these schools with the goal of significantly improving student achievement."

Neither school will require significant capital improvements to support The Teacher Academy model beyond funding already committed.

Next Steps

The District expects to bring forward a formal recommendation to locate The Teacher Academy at Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh King K-8 for Board consideration in August 2010. The public is invited to submit written comments about The Teacher Academy via the Public Input link at www.empoweringpittsburghteachers.net.

The Board's regular monthly public hearing also provides an opportunity for public commentary to the Board of Directors on the proposed recommendations. The next regular Public Hearing will be held at 6:00 PM (note new Public Hearing starting time) on August 23rd, 2010 in Conference Room A, first floor of the Board of Education's Administration Building located at 341 S. Bellefield Avenue in Oakland. Anyone wishing to speak at the public hearing must register with the Office of Superintendent of Schools by calling 412-622-3600 from August 16th until August 23rd at 12:00 PM.

To learn more about the **Empowering Effective Teachers** work or The Teacher Academy recommendations please visit www.empoweringpittsburghteachers.net.

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