

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Academic Progress Continues as District Students See Gains on 10 of 14 State Exams**

### ***Rate of Progress Greatest in Middle Grades Where District's Work has Been in Place the Longest***

PITTSBURGH, August 16, 2010 – Results on the 2010 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) show District students made gains in Reading and Mathematics proficiency on 10 of 14 exams, with gains of more than two percentage points on 8 of 14 exams. Furthermore, students showed progress moving to the advanced level on 10 of 14 exams, with gains of three or more percentage points on 6 of 14 exams. The greatest gains in student achievement were made in the middle grades (6-8) where students achieved increases in proficiency at each of the grade levels on each of the two exams – Reading and Mathematics.

Superintendent Mark Roosevelt highlighted the middle grades progress as he shared the District's 2010 student achievement results with District staff and community members earlier this morning at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12. Roosevelt presented the District's student achievement results through a one- and three-year lens.

As one year of data is insufficient to evaluate a teacher's performance, the District's student achievement results will also be evaluated annually on three years of data consistent with the three-year lens that will be used to evaluate teacher performance as outlined in the District's *Empowering Effective Teachers* plan.

After achieving AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) for the first time in the District's history last year, the District did not see quite the same rate of progress this year. In order to achieve AYP the District would have had to make all of the targets in both Mathematics and Reading in at least one of the grade spans 3-5, 6-8 or 9-12. In 2010, the District met all 18 of the targets in Mathematics in both the 3-5 and 6-8 grade spans. Unfortunately, the District met all but one of the 18 targets in Reading in both the 3-5 and 6-8 grade spans. At both grade spans the only group where the District did not meet the reading target was with students with an Individualized Education Program plan (special education). Although the District just missed making AYP, the number of schools that made AYP significantly increased this year -- 72% or 43 out of 60 schools made AYP this year.

"Although we are disappointed that the District just missed making AYP, we are very pleased that considerably more of our schools did make it," said Roosevelt. "The progress we are seeing, particularly in grades 6 – 8, confirms that bold, aggressive change is necessary in order to improve student achievement. We must do even more to accelerate our commitment to making dramatic changes at the high school level."

### **Aggressive Changes Taken in Middle Grades are Showing Strong Results**

Over the past three years, the largest gains in Reading and Mathematics proficiency have been seen in grades 6-8 where the District's reform has been most aggressive. Since 2006 the District has;

- Closed six large failing comprehensive middle schools and provided enhanced educational opportunities for effected students;
- Expanded the number of K-8 schools from 7 to 17 to mitigate student transitions in order to provide continuity in learning; and
- Launched a rigorous new core curriculum initially in grades 6-8 where three years of this work has provided time to increase effectiveness.

Results seen in grades 6-8 indicate these changes are improving student achievement. Over the past three years, 10 schools, all K-8s, have shown the greatest improvement in middle grade students scoring *proficient* or *advanced* in Reading. Eight of the District's K-8 schools were among the top ten schools that demonstrated the greatest improvement in Mathematics proficiency in grades 6-8.

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### **Reading Proficiency**

- At 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain of 7 points (15.1%) from 2009, which means students have improved 7.1 points (15.3%) since 2007.
- At 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain of 3.9 points (7.2%) from 2009, which means students have improved 7.4 points (14.7%) since 2007.
- At 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain of 2.7 points (3.9%) from 2009, which means students have improved 13.7 points (24.4%) since 2007.

### **Mathematics Proficiency**

- At 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain of 5.1 points (8.3%) from 2009, which means students have improved 9.5 points (16.7%) since 2007.
- At 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain 1.9 points (3.1%) from 2009, which means students have improved 13.6. points (27.9%) since 2007.
- At 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, District students had a gain of 2.5 points (4.3%) from 2009, which means students have improved 8.4 points (16.2%) since 2007.

### ***Disparity Between African-American and White Students Narrowed on 12 of 14 State Exams***

Because a disproportionate number of the District's African-American students are not achieving at grade level, the District has made a priority of improving African-American student performance and eliminating the academic disparity between African-American and White students. Since 2007, the District has made progress in reducing the disparity on 12 of 14 PSSA exams, with the most progress seen once again in grades 6-8 for both Reading and Mathematics.

Over the past three years the disparity in Reading was reduced on 6 of 7 exams in all tested grades, with increases in achievement for both African American and White students on 5 exams. The largest decrease in the Reading disparity of 43.2% was seen in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, where both African American and White students have seen significant gains in Reading proficiency. In Mathematics, the disparity was reduced on 6 of 7 exams since 2007. Achievement for both African-American and White students increased on 4 of 7 Mathematics exams. Of these 4 exams the largest decrease in the disparity was seen in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade with a reduction of 27.1%.

### ***Third Year of Progress Seen in District's Accelerated Learning Academies***

Since 2007, the District's Accelerated Learning Academies (ALAs) posted increases in *proficiency* 2 times greater than the remainder of the District in Reading and 1.7 times greater in Mathematics. Additionally, students in the ALAs posted increases in *advanced* 1.6 times greater than the remainder of the District in Reading and 1.3 times greater in Mathematics.

This year students in the ALAs posted increases in *proficiency* 2.1 times greater than the remainder of the District in Reading and 1.7 times greater in Mathematics. Additionally, students in the ALAs posted increases in *advanced* 1.2 times than the remainder of the District in Reading and Mathematics.

Designed to increase and accelerate student achievement, the ALAs was a part of the major reforms the District made in 2006 when it closed 22 schools to address student achievement and the District's excess capacity.

### ***Gains Seen in Grades 3-5***

From last year to this year the greatest gains in achievement in grades 3-5 was in Mathematics. Over the past three years, the District has seen modest gains in Reading and Mathematics proficiency among students in grades 3-5. This year, Mathematics proficiency in Grade 3 increased 3.5 points (5.0%) from 2009 and 6.8 points (10.1) since 2007. Mathematics proficiency in Grade 4 increased 1.5 points (2.1%), with an 8.1 points (12.7%) increase over three years. Since 2007, Mathematics proficiency in Grade 5 increased 3.1 points (5.3%), with a decrease of 2.1 points (3.3%) seen this year.

Fourth grade reading proficiency increased 1.3 points (2.3%) from 2009 and 4.5 points (8.5%) since 2007. Since 2007, the percentage of Grade 4 students Reading at the advanced level has increased 4.9 points (27.2%). Reading proficiency in Grade 3 has increased 0.7 points (1.2%) since 2007, with a 1.9 points (3.1%) decrease in 2010. The percentage of Grade 3 students Reading at the advanced level has increased 4.2 points (28.8%) since 2007, with an increase of 1.4 points (8%) seen this year. Although there was a 4.6 point (8.9%) decrease in Reading proficiency this year, since 2007 student Reading proficiency in Grade 5 has increased 5.1 points (12.1%).

“We’re disappointed that Reading student proficiency in third grade reading has plateaued at 60%. We remain committed to our goal of reaching at least 80% proficiency by the end of third grade,” said Roosevelt.

### ***High School Results Remain Stalled and Confirm the Need for Dramatic Change***

Confirming the need for dramatic change at the high school level, 2010 PSSA high school results remain stalled with a 2.4 point increase in Reading from 2009 and a 0.3 point decrease in Mathematics proficiency for students in grade 11, which is the only grade where students take the PSSA exams in high school.

Students did show some progress moving to the advanced level in both Reading and Mathematics.

- In Reading, the percentage of 11th grade students at the advanced level increase 13.8% (3.2 points) from 2009 to 2010, with a 28.7% increase (5.9 points) over three years;
- In Mathematics, the percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students at the advanced level increased 36.3% (6.1 points) from 2009 to 2010, with a 4.3 23.2% (4.3 points) increase over three years.

### **Schools Led by Graduates of the District’s Principal Leadership Program Show Substantial Progress**

For the second year in a row, schools led by principals who graduated from the Pittsburgh Emerging Leadership Academy (PELA) program showed promising results. After just one year, six schools led by PELA principals saw increases twice as high in Reading and 1.6 times higher in Mathematics compared to schools led by non-PELA principals. Four District schools led by PELA trained principals for 2 years displayed performance gains 1.6 times larger in Reading and nearly 2 times larger in Mathematics.

One of the District’s major reform efforts, PELA is a component of the District’s Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence (PULSE) accountability system to recruit, train, support, evaluate and compensate principals. The PELA program provides a corps of highly skilled administrators prepared to meet the District’s needs. For the 2009-10 school year PELA graduates led the following schools: Pittsburgh Allerdice High School, Pittsburgh Arsenal K-5, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12, Pittsburgh Langley High School, Pittsburgh Morrow K-5, Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8, Pittsburgh Rooney 6-8 and Pittsburgh West Liberty K-5 and Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School.

For the upcoming 2010-11 school year, an additional four PELA graduates will take the lead as principals at Pittsburgh Arlington K-8, Pittsburgh Faison Primary, Pittsburgh Lincoln K-8 and Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5. Two PELA graduates have been placed as Principals on Special Assignment at Pittsburgh Brashear and Pittsburgh King K-8 for the 2010-11 school year.

The District plans to provide the Board and the public with a full presentation of the 2010 PSSA results at the Board’s August 17<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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.

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