

For Immediate Release

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Board Authorizes Acceptance of \$40 Million Grant to Support District's Plan for Empowering Effective Teachers in Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh Public Schools is one of only four districts nationwide to be considered for funding by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

PITTSBURGH, November 18, 2009 – At a Special Legislative Meeting this evening, the Board overwhelmingly voted to accept a \$40 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with eight votes in favor and one abstention, to support the implementation of work detailed in the District's **Empowering Effective Teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools** plan.

“This is a huge win for Pittsburgh,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. “We know that excellent teachers matter. With the right skills, knowledge, support and inspiration, teachers can help students reach achievement levels that lead to college success or workforce certification. This funding will enable us to take that next step in our efforts to maximize teacher effectiveness and improve student achievement.”

“This outstanding grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation represents an important next step for our schools, our teachers, and our students. We now have a unique opportunity to advance our teachers as professionals, improve the teaching and learning environment in every school and dramatically improve student achievement so that our students are Promise-Ready,” said Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers President John Tarka.

In April 2009, Pittsburgh Public Schools was among a select group of school districts nationwide invited to submit a proposal by July 31, 2009 to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for consideration for the Foundation's Intensive Partnership for Effective Teaching program. The Board of Education at its April 29, 2009 Legislative Meeting authorized the District to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accept support in the form of technical assistance for the development of the proposal.

The planning process for the development of the proposal was done in collaboration with the leadership of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. The District also had significant community input through surveys sent to teachers and principals, briefings with Pittsburgh Public Schools Board Members, sessions with an internal advisory group of teachers and principals and an external advisory group of civic and community leaders.

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Together the District and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers crafted the plan based upon this bold vision:

We commit that with robust, enduring district support and mutual accountability, Pittsburgh's teachers will be empowered as effective leaders to do whatever it takes to foster a culture of striving, resilience, and college-readiness so that over 80 percent of all students complete a post-secondary degree or workforce certification.

The plan, which will reward highly effective teachers with career opportunities and increased compensation, identifies the following three strategic priorities to improve student outcomes:

1. Increase the number of highly-effective teachers;
2. Increase the exposure of high-needs students to highly-effective teachers; and
3. Ensure that all teachers work in learning environments that support their ability to be highly effective.

“This is a historic moment for the Pittsburgh Public Schools,” said Theresa Colaizzi, Board President. “All the work we have done over the past four years has laid the groundwork for us to aggressively pursue our work to maximize teacher effectiveness. Because of everything we have accomplished together we now have the support of the world's largest foundation as we strive to dramatically improve the life prospects of Pittsburgh's children.”

The **Empowering Effective Teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools** plan will be phased over more than five years to align with the grant operating period of November 19, 2009 to June 30, 2016. In addition to the \$40 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the District will fund the plan by capturing internal cost savings and pursuing both private and public external funding sources.

Tonight the Board also authorized The Pittsburgh Foundation to serve as the District's Fiscal Agent for the \$40 million grant. In this role, the Pittsburgh Foundation will maintain and retain financial records and disburse grant funds to or on behalf of the District.

Board President Colaizzi, Superintendent Roosevelt and Mary Wilson, Vice President for Finance and Administration at The Pittsburgh Foundation signed the grant agreement this evening. Execution of the grant is not final until it is signed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It is expected that the grant agreement will be fully executed on November 19th when the Gates Foundation is scheduled to hold a media briefing to announce significant grants to support bold and groundbreaking plans to improve teacher effectiveness in several communities around the country.

Communication Critical Component of Plan

In addition to the vote on the acceptance of the \$40 million grant, the Board of Directors also approved a second grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for \$60,000 to support the public announcement and launch activities for the plan. This grant is in addition to the \$40 million grant to support to launch the plan.

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“This additional funding provides an important opportunity to get all of our employees excited about and focused on the critical work ahead of us,” said Mr. Roosevelt. “We are blessed to have so much support from so many local foundations and businesses, as well as the community-wide commitment of the Pittsburgh Promise®, and we are going to use this additional funding to build on that community support as we implement this plan.”

As part of its launch effort, the District will host a reception for all of its employees. This reception will carry forward the excitement of today's \$40 million grant announcement and also builds upon the District's special professional development event held this past January. This event brought together District staff and community leaders to thank Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers for their dedication and commitment to Pittsburgh students.

The District recognizes the importance of parents, families and the community to success of this plan, and to advancing academic achievement for all students. To create awareness among Pittsburgh parents and families, District employees and the community at large, the District will send a brochure that highlights the importance of this initiative to the future success of the students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

To learn more about the District's plan, please visit www.empoweringpittsburghteachers.com or call the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920.

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