

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Ebony R. Pugh (412) 622-3616

**Pittsburgh Public Schools Receives Smaller Learning Communities Grant from
Department of Education to Support New University Prep 6-12 School**

PITTSBURGH July 7 2008 – Pittsburgh Public Schools is one of 43 school districts across the country to receive funding through the Department of Education’s 2008 Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Grant Awards. Announced today, the District will receive more than \$600,000 for the next three years with the potential to increase to \$1.25 million over five years. The funding will be used to support the District’s new University Prep 6-12 school, which will open with 150 9th graders at the Millions facility this school year. The school will add more grade levels over time and to date has reached this year’s enrollment limit of 150 and now has a waiting list.

“Because learning is an intensely personal experience we are grateful for this funding that will allow us to personalize the learning environment at University Prep,” said Chief of High School Reform Derrick Lopez. “With this grant we will be able to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of all the students we plan to serve at University Prep.”

To fully implement a small, personalized learning community at University Prep, that is focused on acquiring the knowledge, skills and mindsets necessary to attend a post-secondary school, the District will use SLC funds to,

- hire a program manager to manage the school’s Parent Resource Room, compose and issue progress reports and oversee initiatives day-to-day operations throughout the grant period;
- provide ongoing professional development for new teachers in research-based math programs as part of the Johns Hopkins Talent Development High Schools Model;
- institute the development of a Personal Education Plan for each student which will map out each student’s educational trajectory; and
- coordinate multiple parent and community engagement workshops that remove the barriers that keep families and students from seeing academic success and post-secondary school as a realistic goal.

To provide additional supports for students who need them, funds will also be used to include Keys Service Corps AmeriCorps members, Master of Teaching interns and undergraduate tutors. Additionally, SLC funding will be used to send students of the school on two visits a year to local college campuses.

The Smaller Learning Communities program awards grants to support the implementation of small learning communities and activities to improve student academic achievement, such as freshman academies and personalization strategies, student advisories, family advocate systems and mentoring programs.

The creation of the new University Prep 6-12 school is a part of the District’s Year Two Plans for *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*. The public can view the plans for Year Two of *Excel.9-12: The Plan for High School Excellence* by visiting the Pittsburgh Public Schools web site at www.excel9-12.net or www.pps.k12.pa.us, visiting the Division of Communications, Room 201, or by requesting a copy by calling the Parent Hotline at (412)622-7920.

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