

**For Immediate Release**

Contacts: Ebony Pugh 412-622-3616  
Pat Kennedy 412-622-3922

## **District Surpasses Statewide Achievement Gains Over Six Years**

PITTSBURGH, August 14, 2008 – The news from the Pennsylvania Department of Education is good—student achievement has increased in every subject at all grade levels and for all ethnic, racial and economic groups of students since 2002. The news for Pittsburgh Public Schools is even better—the District’s rate of progress has exceeded the state’s rate of progress in nearly every area.

In a release today, the Department of Education tracked statewide gains in student achievement between 2002 and 2008 in reading and mathematics for grades 5, 8, and 11. When comparing the same data over the same period of time, Pittsburgh Public Schools outpaced the statewide gains in the following areas:

### Mathematics

- At Grade 5, the District had a gain of 24 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 20 percentage points.
- At Grade 8, the District had a gain of 27 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 18 percentage points.
- At Grade 11, the District had a gain of 13 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 6 percentage points.

### Reading

- At Grade 5, the District had a gain of 7 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 4 percentage points.
- At Grade 8, the District had a gain of 27 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 19 percentage points.
- At Grade 11, the District’s progress was about even with statewide progress—with District progress at 5 percentage points and statewide progress at 6 percentage points.

The most significant advancements for the District between 2002 and 2008 were in Grade 8 mathematics and reading, where the progress of District students outpaced the progress of students across the state by 9 percentage points in mathematics and 8 percentage points in reading. “Gains like this bode well for assuring that students are better prepared for the challenges of high school and can take advantage of Pittsburgh Promise scholarships to pursue education beyond high school,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

### **Gains from 2007 to 2008 Exceed State Gains**

When comparing state data with District data from 2007 to 2008, the District exceeded statewide gains in 10 of 14 areas tested, in most cases doubling the gains of the state. The District outpaced statewide progress in grades 3, 4, 7 and 8 in reading, and in Grades 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 11 in mathematics.

**MORE**

## ACHIEVEMENT GAINS ADD 1

### **District Increases Percentage of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Targets Met**

Over the past three years, the District increased the percentage of AYP targets met even as the number of targets increased. The number of targets is based on the number of student subgroups. In 2008, the District met 83 of 96 or 86.5% of AYP targets according to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. District targets continue to increase because unlike many rural and suburban districts, urban districts have diverse student populations, resulting in a higher number of student subgroups. Under NCLB, subgroups are designated by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, Individual Education Plan (IEP) and English Language Learner status. A subgroup is identified once there are 40 or more students that meet the definition of a subgroup.

For a district to make AYP, it must meet all targets on each of three standards—high school graduation, test participation and academic performance. Pittsburgh Public Schools met its targets for two of the three components of AYP—high school graduation and test participation. To meet the targets for the third component of AYP—academic performance—the District must have at least 63% of its students score proficient or advanced in reading and at least 56% score proficient or advanced in mathematics on PSSA exams. In order to meet the performance targets at least one grade band must meet reading and mathematics targets for all students and all subgroups.

Grade bands consist of grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. The District missed making AYP by a very small margin, meeting all reading and mathematics targets except in one subgroup in grade band 6-8. The District missed the target for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) in grades 6-8 despite the progress made by students with IEPs across all grade levels, including grades 6-8.

Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education indicates that the District will remain in Corrective Action II. “The District did not make AYP, however the data shows us that our students have made substantial gains and that the District is on the right track,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

Over the past two years, the District put into place the core elements for raising student achievement, which include the following:

- A new rigorous curriculum;
- A nationally recognized system to train, support, evaluate and reward principals;
- An aggressive, comprehensive and ongoing professional development for all instructional personnel;
- The use of diagnostic assessment to get help to students quickly; and,
- Instructional coaches in every school to deepen the work.

### **Maintaining Momentum in Meeting School AYP**

Although NCLB raised the bar in 2008 requiring districts and schools to have at least 63% of its students score proficient or advanced in reading (compared with 54% last year) and at least 56% score proficient or advanced in mathematics (compared with 45% last year), the District’s schools maintained momentum.

This year, 25 District schools made AYP. This is the same number of schools that made AYP last year. Another 10 schools missed making AYP by one performance target. The number of targets individual schools need to make AYP vary from 13 to 21 based on the number of subgroups in that particular school.

“A school can have a great year and not make AYP. We feel confident that the student achievement data we’re getting indicates we’re on the right track,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. “We can also see in this data those areas where we must deepen our work so that all students are achieving at greater levels.”

### **For More Information**

For more information, please visit the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at [www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us), 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.

###