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For Immediate Release

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### **Board Appoints Chief to Lead New Office of High School Reform**

PITTSBURGH July 25, 2007 – At the Legislative Meeting this evening, the Board of Education for the Pittsburgh Public Schools approved the appointment of Derrick L. Lopez, J.D. to the position of Chief of High School Reform. The newly formed Office of High School Reform will increase the District’s capacity to execute the five year plan outlined in the District’s *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*. As the Chief of High School Reform, Mr. Lopez will direct the restructuring of the District’s high schools.

“High School Reform, as part of Excellence for All, is a top priority for the District. Pittsburgh Public Schools needs a creative and strategic thinker to lead us in this next key phase,” stated Roosevelt. “Derek Lopez has done in his high school what we want to do in the District.”

High School Reform is also one of the five priorities for Year 3 of the Superintendent’s contract. According to the Superintendent’s Year 3 priorities approved by the Board this evening, the Superintendent must present to the Board by May, 2008 a comprehensive plan for Career and Technical education, open by September, 2008 the Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy, establish a plan for opening at least one “university partnership” high school in September, 2009 and secure funding for Year One of the Pittsburgh Promise scholarships.

#### **Background on Mr. Derrick L. Lopez, J.D.**

Mr. Lopez, a licensed member of the State Bar of Michigan and Principal of Berkley High School located in Berkley Michigan, brings to the District extensive experience as an administrator, organizational director and teacher. Within his eight years of experience as a principal, Mr. Lopez has worked in urban and suburban districts with students from different socio-economical, racial ethnicities and religious backgrounds. This experience lends to his understanding of what it means to put forth a system that works so that all children are successful.

Mr. Lopez became Principal at Berkley High School with its 1,300 students in 2004. Committed to continuous improvement and growth, Mr. Lopez implemented a Professional Learning Community. Teacher and staff leadership were fostered by devoting staff meetings to professional development, modifying the academic calendar and incorporating common planning periods for the development of curriculum and assessments. Mr. Lopez additionally changed the role of the school’s counselors from just scheduling classes to developing meaningful relationships with students by implementing the Comprehensive Model of High School Counseling. During his tenure as Principal to the 800 students at the Highland Park Community High School located in Michigan, Mr. Lopez initiated the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy. The Academy was an orientation for the transition of freshmen students into their high school experience.

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“I’m excited about the possibility of working in an environment that is dedicated to the success of all children. Mark Roosevelt has identified those priorities in his *Excellence for All Plan*.” Stated Mr. Lopez, “I will miss most the daily interactions with the kids and staff at the high school, but I will relish my new role and the work that I must do at a different level touching a broader number of students and teachers.”

Mr. Lopez, a native of Tennessee, received his Bachelor of Arts in English from Dartmouth College located in Hanover, New Hampshire in 1987. In 1991 he graduated Juris Doctor cum laude from Cornell Law School located in Ithaca, New York. He received his Masters of Arts in Educational Administration from Marygrove College, Michigan in 2002. Mr. Lopez is currently a Doctor of Philosophy Candidate, Education Policy at Michigan State University.

Mr. Lopez will be relocating to Pittsburgh with his wife Lisa and his three children: Adaiyah 10, Nehemiah 8 and Micah 6. He will begin his new position August 1, 2007.

### **Office of High School Reform**

In addition to the appointment of Mr. Lopez as the Chief of High School reform the Board appointed Ms. Julia A. Stewart, Ph.D., Executive Director of Career and Technical Education. Ms. Stewart will oversee, manage and lead the development, design and implementation of a coordinated system for the District’s career and technical education program.

Currently as Director of Technology Education and Special Projects with the McKeesport Area School District, Dr. Stewart coordinates the educational programs for a comprehensive high school/technology center with enrollment of 1,500 students. During her 10 years with the McKeesport Area School District, Dr. Stewart coordinated the development and implementation of special projects funded through state, federal and private funding, which provided several million dollars in grant funds to supplement the district’s budget.

Dr. Stewart, a native of Pittsburgh, earned her Bachelor of Arts in Education, Masters of Education with an emphasis on Education Administration & Policy Studies and her Doctorate of Education all from the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Stewart will begin her new position on August 22, 2007.

At last month’s Legislative Meeting the Board approved the appointment of Samuel Franklin as Project Manager, Science and Technology High School. As the Project Manager, Mr. Franklin will manage the integrated plan to design and open an innovative new science and technology themed high school. The school is expected to be phased in beginning with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2008-2009 school year.

Additionally, the Board approved the addition of two part-time consultants to work with the High School Reform Team. Ms. Judith Hallinen, Director, Leonard Gelfand Center for Service Learning and Outreach, Carnegie Mellon and Ms. Michele Cheyne, Coordinator of Professional Development, University of Pittsburgh, will work with the District to coordinate partnerships with the Universities in the development of the science and technology high school. Each will co-chair the Science and Technology Steering Committee’s work, develop recommendations for the new school and develop a detailed plan of action, timeline and budget.

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### **Christopher M. Berdnik Appointed Pittsburgh Public Schools Chief Financial Officer**

The Board approved the appointment of Mr. Christopher M. Berdnik to the position of Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Recently the District's Executive Director of Finance and Assistant Secretary, Mr. Berdnik began his career in the District in June 1995. Appointed the Acting Director of Finance in 1999 and Director of Finance and Assistant Secretary in 2001, Mr. Berdnik has been responsible for the supervision of more than 36 employees in the District's Accounting, Accounts Payable, Fixed Assets, Investment, Payroll and Purchasing offices. While under the direction of Mr. Berdnik, the Finance Division received 10 commendations in the MGT of America's "Performance Study of the Administrative Operations and Expenditures of the Pittsburgh School District," released by the Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. Additionally among several awards of distinction the Finance Division was awarded the 2006 Governor's Award for Safety Excellence, the 2006 Pennsylvania Self-Insurers' Association Award of Excellence and the 2006 Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) Award of Achievement.

As CFO, Mr. Berdnik will be responsible for providing financial leadership to all functional areas of the District. He will be responsible for the accuracy and presentation of all public financial disclosures representing the current and proposed financial activities of the District. The CFO reports directly to the Superintendent and is one of seven members of the Superintendent's Executive Cabinet.

From 1994 to 1999, Mr. Berdnik served as a Budget and Disbursement Assistant (1994-1997), Senior Accountant (1997-1998) and Finance Supervisor (1998-1999). Mr. Berdnik received his Bachelor of Philosophy in 1993 from Saint Vincent College and his Master of Science in Public Policy and Management from the Carnegie Mellon University, H. John Heinz School of Public Policy and Management.

Mr. Berdnik will begin his role as the District's Chief Financial Officer effective immediately.

### **Jerri Lippert, Ph.D, Appointed Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development**

As a result of the retirement of Dr. Richard Gutkind, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Jerri Lippert was named Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development. Dr. Lippert will assume all of Dr. Gutkind's former responsibilities.

### **Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8 Principal Appointed Executive Director of the District's K-8 Schools**

The Board approved the appointment of Ms. Jeannine French, Ph.D. the new Executive Director of Management K-8. Dr. French, currently Principal at Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8, will be responsible for the supervision of the District's 14 K-8 schools, which does not include the District's five K-8 Accelerated Learning Academies. The Executive Director of K-8 Schools reports directly to the District's Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Assessment and Accountability. Dr. French will begin her new position on July 30, 2007.

Mr. Edward Littlehale, currently Vice-Principal of Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8, will serve as the school's Acting Principal beginning July 30, 2007.

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