

NEWS

**PITTSBURGH
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING
341 S. BELLEFIELD AVE.
PITTSBURGH., PA 15213

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Ebony Pugh 412-622-3616
Lisa Fischetti 412-622-3603

Pittsburgh Public Schools Hosts 9th Grade Nation Kick Off Event

PITTSBURGH September 18, 2007– Today over 2,300 9th grade students of the Pittsburgh Public Schools gathered at Heinz Field for a kick off event celebrating the start of the 9th *Grade Nation*. The 9th *Grade Nation* symbolizes how all members of the Class of 2011 are beginning an exciting and important phase of life – High School.

“You, the Class of 2011, will make new history. By dreaming big and working hard, you like the Steelers Organization, can be successful and a part of Pittsburgh’s proud tradition,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

Pittsburgh Steelers Head Coach Mike Tomlin encouraged students to get good grades in school, model good behavior and stand out from the crowd.

“Be Bold. When you do it right it doesn’t have to be a secret,” said Tomlin. “Make the right decisions, show inner strength and maybe you can help somebody else to do right.”

Students from the District’s 10 high schools shared a sense of community, ate lunch together and were treated to guest appearances by Pittsburgh Steelers Hines Ward and Charlie Batch, who both lead the students as they cheered, “9th Grade Nation, Be the Change.”

9th Grade Nation

In April, the District unveiled *Excel.9-12, the Plan for High School Excellence* a multi-year plan focused on the redesign and restructure of the District’s high schools and improvement of student achievement at the high school level. The 9th Grade Nation, as part of the District’s *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*, is designed to provide students a culture of high expectations coupled with meaningful relationships and caring adults.

“The graduating Class of 2011 will be the first class to experience the full effects of our high school reform efforts,” said Derrick Lopez, Chief of High School Reform. “This class will work hard to achieve academic excellence and simultaneously reach new and limitless possibilities guided by their own creativity and ingenuity.”

In August, students of the 9th *Grade Nation* participated in a week long summer orientation program that provided an opportunity for all incoming high school freshmen to interact with their classmates of the graduating class of 2011, have some fun, learn about high school life and discuss graduating plans for the future. Nearly 900 members of the 9th Grade Nation participated in a variety of activities both on and off their respective school campuses. Each of the 10 high schools traveled to Camp Guyasutta where students participated in trust-building activities and learned not only a little about themselves, but a lot about each other.

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Parents of new 9th grade students received information about their child's high school curriculum, graduation requirements and program offerings. Also in August, the Pittsburgh Public Schools 9th *Grade Nation* was featured in the national education magazine, Education Week.

Civics: Be the Change

Civics: Be the Change – As part of helping to create a 9th Grade Nation, this new 9th grade course will focus on young people beginning a journey of civic awareness, empowerment, and engagement. The city of Pittsburgh will be the lens through which District students will examine civic values, as well as a laboratory for investigating enduring civic issues in this new required 9th grade course. Students will participate in rigorous project-based activities including, investigating a challenge faced by the City of Pittsburgh, designing a report and presenting possible solutions at a city-wide PPS Youth Roundtable event for the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce and assisting local government officials on ways that Pittsburgh can thrive in the global economy. In addition, through Student Voices, a nationally recognized program, students will investigate local government, policy issues and political campaigns.

Public Feedback or More Information

The public can obtain further information about the 9th *Grade Nation* by calling the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920**, visiting the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at www.pps.k12.pa.us or stopping by the Division of Communications at Room 201 in the Administrative Building in Oakland. Public feedback can be provided to the Superintendent via email to superintendentoffice@pghboe.net or via mail.

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