

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Pittsburgh Public Schools Announces Creation of High School Reform Task Force**

PITTSBURGH July 25, 2006 –Today Superintendent Mark Roosevelt announced the creation of the Pittsburgh Public Schools High School Reform Task Force. (Please see list of members on page two.) The High School Reform Task Force, which consists of leaders of both secondary and higher education, foundations and businesses, experts in workforce development, parents, and members of the community will carefully examine these principles and determine how best to implement an action plan for high school reform within the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The Task Force has been created to evaluate and reinvent Pittsburgh’s high schools as part of the District’s *Excellence for All* reform plan, which provides a roadmap for improving the academic performance of all students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

In an effort to make necessary educational reforms and improve the rate of Pittsburgh Public Schools graduates, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt commissioned a recent RAND Corporation study that revealed 64 percent of the district’s high school students graduate. One of key measures in the *Excellence for All* reform plan is to increase the graduation rate by 10 percentage points by the end of the 2008-2009 school year.

“Developing a comprehensive high school reform plan will be one of our most critical initiatives in the coming year,” said Roosevelt. “With the changes in the economy, we must improve the academic rigor and preparation of our high school students so they have the best opportunity to succeed in the workforce and higher education.” Superintendent Roosevelt is expected to present a comprehensive plan for high school reform to the Board by April 2007.

A central principle of *Excellence for All* is that all children can learn at high levels, regardless of their age, experience, or background. The Task Force is charged with the creation and realization of a reform initiative that supports this standard and prepares Pittsburgh’s high school students for the promise of post-secondary education and career and technical employment. Their evaluation will be guided by the following six core principles identified as necessary for transforming high schools by the National High School Alliance:

- Personalized learning environment
- Academic engagement of all students
- Empowered educators
- Accountable leaders
- Engaged communities and youth
- Integrated system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment supports.

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The Task Force will be led by Jan Ripper, Principal on Special Assignment for high school reform and Dr. Lynn Spampinato, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability. It will meet for the next six months to extensively study best practices from national experts on high school reform and receive input on workforce development issues from local and national corporate leaders, economists and job-force training experts. Task Force members will also visit nationally recognized high-performing high schools in urban systems throughout the country and determine which of the best practices studied are right for the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The work of the High School Reform Task Force is being funded through a grant of \$255,000 from The Fund in Excellence in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, a new fund established by the local foundation community to support the Superintendent's district reform agenda.

To kick off this effort, the High School Reform Task Force will host **Remaking Our Schools: The Future Perfect**, featuring nationally acclaimed educator Dr. Willard R. Daggett, President of the International Center for Leadership in Education. Local community, government, and education leaders have been invited to attend this in-depth discussion of the essential elements districts can use to drive critical reform initiatives. This invitation-only event will take place August 17, 2006 from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the O'Reilly Theater located at 621 Penn Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh.

### Current Members of the High School Reform Task Force

- **Dara Ware Allen** - Executive Director, YouthWorks, Inc.
- **Seppy Basili** - Senior Vice President, Kaplan K12 Learning Services
- **Dr. Charles Blocksidge** - Vice President of Organizational Development/Frieda G. Shapira Center for Learning, Community College of Allegheny County
- **Susan Brownlee** - Executive Director, The Grable Foundation
- **Honorable Kevin E. Cooper** - Pittsburgh District Judge
- **Joseph Dominic** – Director, Education Program, The Heinz Endowments
- **George Gensure** - Executive Board Member and Staff Member, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers
- **Dr. Cecilia Griffin Golden** - Chief Executive Officer, YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh
- **Ruth Howze** – PPS Parent Representative
- **Rufus Jordan** – Executive Board Member and Staff Member, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers
- **Jeffrey Laurenson** – PPS High School Teacher, Brashear High School
- **Dr. Alan Lesgold** – Dean, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh
- **David J. Malone** - President and CEO, Gateway Financial; Chairman of PA Workforce Investment Board
- **Dr. Indira Nair** - Vice Provost for Education, Carnegie Mellon University
- **Ronald D. Painter** - Chief Executive Officer, Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board
- **Jeanne Pearlman** - Senior Program Officer for Education and the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation
- **Gregory K. Peaslee** - Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Construction and Property Management, UPMC
- **Douglas Silinski** - PPS Parent Representative
- **Linda Serody** - PPS Parent Representative
- **Gregory R. Spencer** – President and CEO, Randall Enterprises, LLC; Former Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, Equitable Resources, Inc.
- **Michael T. Thorson** - Former Principal of Creative And Performing Arts (CAPA) High School
- **Doris Carson Williams** – President, African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania
- **Yolanda C. Wilkins** – PPS Arlington Academy (ALA) Teacher; Former PPS High School Teacher

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