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Pittsburgh Public Schools Releases 2006 PSSA Information

Gains Seen in 8th Grade Reading and Continued Growth Evident in 5th Grade

PITTSBURGH August 18, 2006 – Today the Pennsylvania Department of Education released the 2006 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results. “Our numbers show the same level of slow improvement we have been experiencing,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. “It’s clear we need to accelerate achievement and we’re confident that our *Excellence for All* plan will do that.”

The PSSA measures individual student growth and determines the level to which school programs enable students to reach Pennsylvania proficiency standards in reading and math. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a district’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status is determined by its PSSA scores for schools, the percentage of children who participated in the PSSA exams, the graduation rates for high schools, and the percentage of students’ daily attendance at schools.

PSSA math results show that the proficiency of Pittsburgh Public Schools students has improved from 46% to 54% from 2005 to 2006. The District saw continued growth in 5th grade math scores with 58% of 5th grade students proficient or advanced in mathematics, up 3% from 2005. Reading proficiency has improved slightly increasing from 49% in 2005 to 51% in 2006. The strongest gains are seen in 8th grade with 58% of 8th grade students reading at a proficient or advanced level, up 9% from 2005. *(Note that 2006 was the first year for testing for proficiency in 3rd grade. The 2006 PSSA information includes 3rd grade proficiency levels for the first time.)*

African-American students’ math proficiency has improved from 33% in 2005 to 41% in 2006. The reading proficiency for African-American students increased from a rate of 34% in 2005 to 39% in 2006.

The District recognizes that although there has been improvement, overall gains are not enough to meet No Child Left Behind mandates. The District’s *Excellence for All* reform plan, addresses this by providing a roadmap for improving the academic performance of all students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. It sets ambitious targets for the District and strategies for achieving the m.

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2006 AYP Status

The State has yet to release the Academic Achievement Report which will identify the District's AYP Status. However based on preliminary data, the District predicts that its status will change from School Improvement II to Corrective Action I because it will not meet all of its AYP targets for a fourth consecutive year. Preliminary data suggest that the District made 65 of 82 AYP targets in 2006. It appears that Pittsburgh Public Schools had 53 of its schools make AYP for 2006, 4 more schools than in 2005. Attendance rates seem to grow with students in 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades reaching a participation target of 95%.

Districts in Corrective Action 1 must take at least one of the following steps to address the problem: changes in staff or curriculum, lengthening school day or year, or another corrective action. The Pittsburgh Public Schools has initiated the following strategies prior to the start of the 2006-2007 school year to improve the academic performance of all Pittsburgh students:

- Closed 22 schools and transferred students to either high performing schools or schools with greatly enhanced educational programs.
- Increased the number of K-8 Schools from 7 in 2005-2006 to 19 for the 2006-2007 school year. All 7 K-8 Schools made AYP in 2006.
- Developed eight new Accelerated Learning Academies with extended day and extended year programming.
- Implemented systematic curriculum and assessment.
- Formed comprehensive professional development plan
- Announced the formation of the High School Reform Task Force created to evaluate and reinvent Pittsburgh's high schools.

Highlight of the District's 2006 PSSA

Mathematics

- 54% Proficient
- 41% African-American students proficient
- 72% White students proficient

Reading

- 51% Proficient
- 58% of all 8th grade students were either proficient or advanced in reading, a 9% increase from 2005
- 39% African-American students proficient
- 69% White students proficient

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