

For Immediate Release

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Superintendent Roosevelt Releases Comprehensive Reform Agenda

Establishes Strategic Priorities and Ambitious Milestones for Advancing Academic Excellence for All Students

PITTSBURGH, May 12, 2006 – At a press conference today, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt released a four-year roadmap that outlines the priority areas of focus for improving the academic performance of all students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Based on the vision of *Excellence for All*, the Superintendent's reform agenda aims to move all children forward across all levels of achievement. This is a significant step beyond the federal and state No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, which focus primarily on getting students to proficiency by 2014.

Reinforcing the belief that all children can learn at high levels, Superintendent Roosevelt described an ambitious plan with measurable objectives not only for moving every student toward proficiency, but also for increasing the number of children at the highest levels of achievement. "When setting our objectives, we wanted to be realistic yet aspirational. We recognize that we must change the hearts and minds of everyone – kids, parents, teachers, central office staff and the entire Pittsburgh community – so we share in a common belief that every child can achieve excellence," said Superintendent Roosevelt.

Setting High Expectations and Measurable Objectives for All Students

Noting the importance of literacy as the primary building block for all learning, the Superintendent intends to increase the percentage of students proficient in reading by the end of the 3rd grade from 49% to 80% in four years.

Another important measure that the reform agenda addresses is the high school graduation rate. Roosevelt commented, "Since we know how relentlessly cruel this economy is on kids who do not graduate high school, we need to significantly reduce our high school drop out rate by 10 percentage points." In June, the District plans to launch its high school reform initiative and will release an in-depth study by RAND on its graduation and drop-out rates.

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Additionally, the plan calls for increasing participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses from the 2004-05 school year to 2008-09 as follows:

- The number of students taking AP exams will double from 318 to 636;
- The number of African-American students taking AP courses will quadruple from 37 to 148;
- The number of students scoring 3-5 on AP exams will increase by 50% from 336 to 504.

Several charts were shown that demonstrated the gains anticipated at every level of achievement for all students at grades 5, 8 and 11 in both reading and math based on increasing PSSA scores from 2004-05 to 2008-09.

At the same time the District expects to improve the achievement of all students, it also intends to accelerate the learning of children who have been historically short-changed by the education system. The reform agenda targets incremental gains of five percentage points per year for African-American students compared to other peers.

Board Chair of the Education Committee Thomas Sumpter noted, “Raising the achievement level of all students is paramount, and that is what the District must be held accountable for.”

Establishing a Foundation for Success

The District already is making progress on its five “foundations for success” outlined in the reform agenda, which include:

1. “Right-Size” the district to improve finances, optimize the use of facilities and expand academic opportunity. “Flatten” the central office organization and create a service-oriented culture that delivers equitable services to students and schools.
2. Develop and deliver rigorous and aligned curricula, periodic assessments, data-driven instruction and ongoing intensive professional development.
3. Recruit, train, evaluate and support principals and hold them accountable for academic achievement.
4. Mobilize all available resources to provide a safe learning and working environment for all students and employees.
5. Build partnerships with families and the broader Pittsburgh community to advance the academic achievement and character development of **all** students.

On February 28th, the Board approved the Superintendent’s Right-Sizing Plan, which saves the District \$10.3 million in net operating costs per year. Under the Right-Sizing Plan, the District will close 22 schools, create five new early childhood education centers and reconstitute eight schools into new Accelerated Learning Academies.

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At its March 22nd Legislative meeting, the Board approved the District's Academic Renewal Plan, which results in a General Fund savings of \$1.4 million in 2006, and \$2.8 million annually beginning in 2007. In the Academic Renewal Plan, the Office of Instruction, Accountability and Assessment was restructured to flatten the organizational structure and tighten school management. In addition, 188 central office positions were eliminated and resources were redeployed by creating 101 positions for curriculum coaches at the schools.

Also in March, the Board agreed to contract with Kaplan K-12 Learning Services for the development of a single, district-wide curriculum. A recent report completed by the Council of the Great City Schools noted that the District would be unable to accelerate student achievement with its current curriculum, low expectations about the potential for student achievement, and lack of urgency at every level of the organization for improving academic performance for all.

In April, the Board approved the District's recommendation to create the Pittsburgh Leadership Academy, an instructional leadership program for principals and assistant principals targeted toward developing a high performance learning system for all students.

Aligning Key Strategies and Actions to District Goals

The reform agenda further details the major strategies which align to each of the following five District goals that the Board adopted earlier this year in March:

1. Maximum academic achievement of all students;
2. A safe and orderly environment for all students and employees;
3. Efficient and effective support operations for all students, families, teachers and administrators;
4. Efficient and equitable distribution of resources to address the needs of all students, to the maximum extent feasible; and,
5. Improved public confidence and strong parent/community engagement.

The public can review the District Reform Agenda by visiting the Pittsburgh Public Schools Website at www.pps.k12.pa.us, stopping by the Division of Communications - Room 117, or by requesting a copy by calling the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920.

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