

# NEWS



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## ***Board Approves New Online Academy to Open its Virtual Doors in the Fall***

PITTSBURGH, June 27, 2012---Pittsburgh Public Schools is gearing up to accept students in grades 6-9 in its new online academy. This evening, Board members voted to approve the new school, which will open its virtual doors on August 30. In 2012-13, the online school will provide an innovative option for students who live within the City and are currently enrolled in a cyber charter school. The school will eventually grow to serve students in grades 6-12, who desire an online option.

“We want you back---that’s what we’re telling families who left the District in search of an online experience. Pittsburgh Public Schools can now meet your needs,” said Superintendent Linda Lane. “Students who enroll in the online academy would not only receive a quality education, but they could be eligible for thousands of dollars in college scholarships through the Pittsburgh Promise.”

Currently, students who reside in the city and attend a cyber charter school do not qualify for Pittsburgh Promise scholarship funds.

“As the quality of and the choices for education in the city continue to rise, and with the promise of up to \$40,000 per child in college scholarships for kids who live in the City of Pittsburgh and attend Pittsburgh Public Schools, I don’t know why anyone would send their kids anywhere else,” said Saleem Ghubril, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Promise.

The online academy is committed to making students Promise-Ready. It will have the same graduation requirements as the District’s brick and mortar schools. The scope and sequence of the curriculum will mirror that of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Interested parents are asked to call the parent hotline at (412) 622-7920 for more information and to set up an appointment.

“We are striving to personalize the process. We want to meet with interested families, in person or on the phone, to tell them about our intake process,” said Mark McClinchie, Coordinator of Virtual Learning. “We’ll create a personal profile and develop an individualized learning plan for their child. Each student is unique”

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The new school is a partnership with Waterfront Learning, a trusted educational provider with a decade of cyber experience. Waterfront Learning is a turnkey solution that will provide the resources necessary to open the school for the 2012-2013 school year, such as content, instruction, operation support and hardware.

“Students set their own pace and receive the full attention of their teachers,” said McClinchie. “Instead of providing instruction to say 30 students at a time, teachers work with each student individually when they log on. The first year, Waterfront will provide its own teachers. But in year two, Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers will be trained, and in year three, our teachers will take over instruction.”

Through the online school, students will also benefit from face-to-face interactions when appropriate. As part of the District’s commitment to ensure a personalized approach, the initial one-week orientation will be held at a District site where students will learn how to use the software and start the coursework. As the school’s administrator monitors student progress, there would be for face-to-face meeting opportunities for students, who may need specific interventions. For example, if a student is missing class or falling behind with assignments, the student and his/her parents will meet with the administrator to create an intervention plan.

Unlike some cyber charter schools, Pittsburgh Public Schools’ online academy will provide students with laptops. “Our students aren’t tied to a desktop computer. They will receive a laptop with an air card for wireless Internet connections,” said McClinchie. “Some cyber charters require parents to set up their own Internet services or use a stipend from the school to offset the cost. Our online academy gives students greater accessibility to their education.”

As of June 2012, almost 800 potential Pittsburgh Public Schools students attended cyber charter schools. For more information about enrollment in Pittsburgh Public Schools online academy, parents are urged to call the PPS Parent Hotline 412-622-7920.

### **In Other News**

#### ***Board Appoints Dr. Jeannine French to Deputy Superintendent***

Upon the recommendation of Superintendent Linda Lane, the Board approved the appointment of Dr. Jeannine French as Deputy Superintendent, effective July 1, 2012. Dr. French currently serves as the District’s Chief of School Performance and is responsible for School Management, Student Services, Research Assessment and Accountability and Special Education (jointly reporting to Chief Academic Officer). Dr. French’s compensation at \$142,000, a \$4,000 increase, includes the earning potential for an annual performance increment of up to \$2,000 and an annual achievement bonus of up to \$15,000, which is the same as her current contract.

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