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341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

For Immediate Release

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District Provides Usage Update for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds

Seeks to Engage School District Community on ESSER III Planning

PITTSBURGH May 11, 2021 – Superintendent Anthony Hamlet and District leaders outlined priorities for the use of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER) dispensed through the American Rescue Plan and two earlier COVID-19 related relief bills. With \$11.1 million of ESSER I funds used to purchase student and staff devices, personal protective equipment, and sanitary supplies, \$150.1 million remains through ESSER II and ESSER III to support the District’s needs exasperated by the pandemic. Tonight, the District shared an update on ESSER II funding usage and provided confirmation that PPS stakeholders will be engaged on the development of ESSER III funding priorities.

“The infusion of ESSER funds will go a long way in not only assisting us in meeting the unexpected demands of the pandemic, but also address the learning loss of students in a system-altering way,” said Superintendent Anthony Hamlet, Ed.D. “While this evening we are presenting plans for the use of ESSER II funds, ESSER III provides a distinct opportunity to engage Pittsburgh Public Schools stakeholders as we think big to make decisions that will support our students beyond this year and align to our new graduate profile, developed in partnership with our school community.”

Bolstering Current Investments through ESSER II

The COVID-19 pandemic forced unplanned budget disbursements toward technology to support becoming a 1:1 device district, 220 air purifiers and replacement filters to improve ventilation, and new communication tools, such as Talking Points, to improve two-way parent engagement, particularly with the District’s English Language Learners. Through its request through ESSER II, the District aims to utilize approximately \$50.1 million to sustain and enhance its current investments by expanding its wireless technology infrastructure and assets, improving indoor air quality, and advancing summer learning programming. Close to 3,000 students have signed up for the District’s Summer Boost program designed to stem the COVID-19 slide.

ESSER III Spurs Innovative Planning to Address Learning Loss

With approximately \$100 million earmarked for PPS through American Rescue Plan ESSER III funds, District officials outlined future investment opportunities in instructional materials, teacher and staff professional development, and external partnerships supporting families and providing

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wrap-around services to schools, including trauma informed practices and social-emotional learning.

The District will launch an extensive community engagement process next month to ensure all voices within the PPS community have the opportunity to weigh in on ESSER III priorities. Inclusive with critical stakeholder input, it is anticipated that a proposal will be presented to the Board this August for submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education in September for approval.

“Deep inequities were surfaced in all systems, including education, throughout our country and right here in Pittsburgh,” said Dr. Hamlet. “Through ESSER III, we are provided an opportunity to ‘right this ship’ and ensure all students have access to high-quality education, regardless of their zip code, skin color or socioeconomic status. It is time to move beyond any barrier that hinders getting all voices to the table. I am confident that with the input of the Pittsburgh community, we will develop a plan that puts kids first and sets our students up for success.”

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