

# Pittsburgh Public Schools Proposed Magnet Process

February 2009



# Legally: Why a New Process?

- The Supreme Court ruling stated that it is unconstitutional to use individual racial classifications for student assignment
- The District's current admissions process for magnet programs uses individual race classifications which is not in line with the Supreme Court ruling



# Solicitor's Advice

- The District must revise the admissions criteria of its magnet schools and programs in light of the United States Supreme Court's recent decision and other relevant case law in time for implementation for the **October 2009 Magnet Registration** period for the 2010-11 school year.



# Internally: Why a New Process?

- The current policy:
  - Is Unknown or unclear to many key stakeholders;
    - Schools, Administrators, parents and even students are unclear as to what is approved policy and what was at the discretion of a given program (i.e. only the International Studies and Science and Technology Academy have board approved specific entry policies)
  - Was applied inconsistently across the City;
    - Schools often applied standards that were not in line with Board approved policies
  - Can be overly complicated for parents and families to understand;
    - Preferences were different at different schools, and so complex that it was overwhelming to make sense of how to pick what is best in many cases
  - Sometimes not admitting students equitably;
    - Using 50% African American/50% other races in a district that now has more than 50% African American students was in some cases hindering AA students chances of being admitted to a given program



## September 2008, the Board...

- Authorized the development of an admissions protocol that is consistent with federal and state law and uses race-neutral alternatives in the admissions process while still preventing minority group isolation
- Directed the District to work with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) to develop a legal admissions process which will reduce, eliminate or prevent minority group isolation



# Desired Outcomes of a New Process

- Improve District's legal position by showing the District's work to revise our current magnet program goals and admissions process.
- Provide for the legal aspects to be incorporated along with any educational revisions that may be forthcoming from the magnet audit in time for the October 2009 Magnet Registration Period for the 2010-11 school year
- Ensure we have a race-neutral process that also produces a diverse student body in our magnet programs

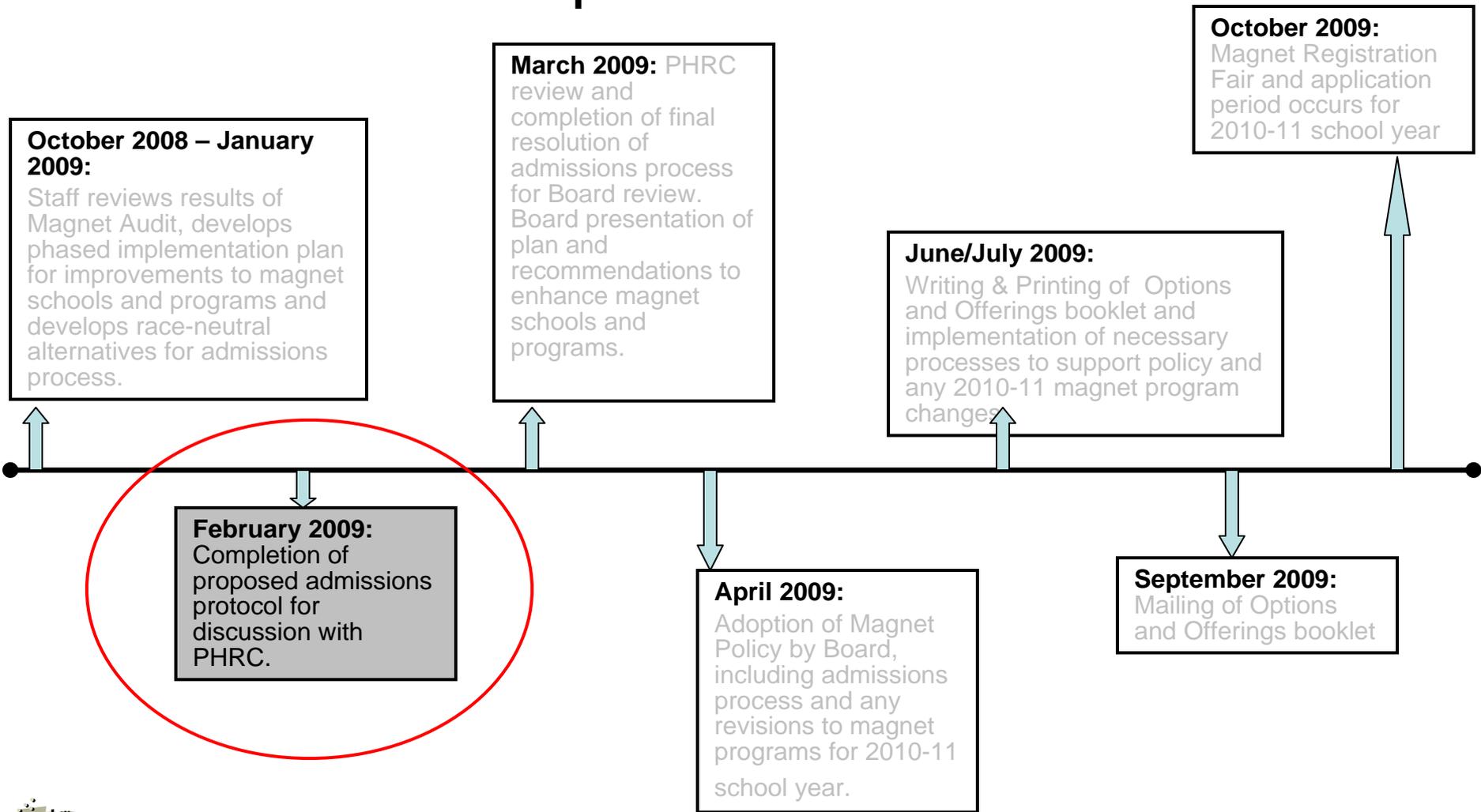


# We Have Engaged Stakeholders to Come up with Our Recommendation

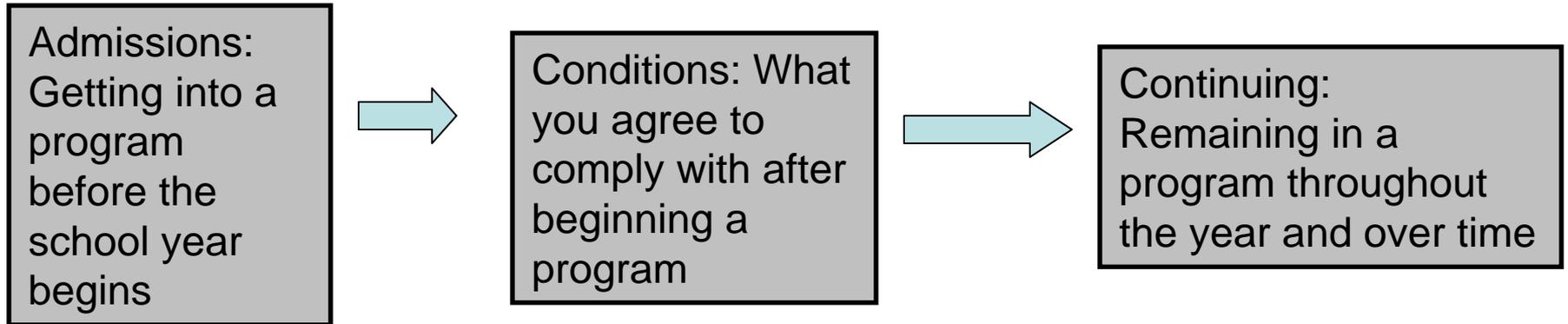
- Solicitors office via Ira Weiss and Jocelyn Kramer
- PHRC through Jocelyn Kramer
- NAACP, A+ Schools and Urban League through individual meetings
- Families through the magnet applicant survey
- Reviewed findings and recommendations from the Magnet Audit from the fall of 2008
- Administrators through small group meetings
- District representatives from student services who have managed this process for many years
- Reviewed the outcomes of the Science & Technology weighted lottery this year



# Proposed Timeline



# There are 3 Crucial Pieces in the Magnet Process



# Admissions



# Science and Technology Academy 6-12 Process, Approved by Board in June of 2008

- Preference Given First to **Program Continuity from grade 8 to grade 9 only**
- Weighted Lottery, 1 chance each for:
  - Application
  - Proficiency on most recent PSSA Math and Reading tests.
  - Eligible for free or reduced lunch
  - Top 50% of their grade in their school on their most recent PSSA Math test
  - 90% or better attendance in the previous academic year.
  - Attended Lincoln or Carmalt K-8 since these schools have science and technology focused curriculums. (9th grade admissions only)



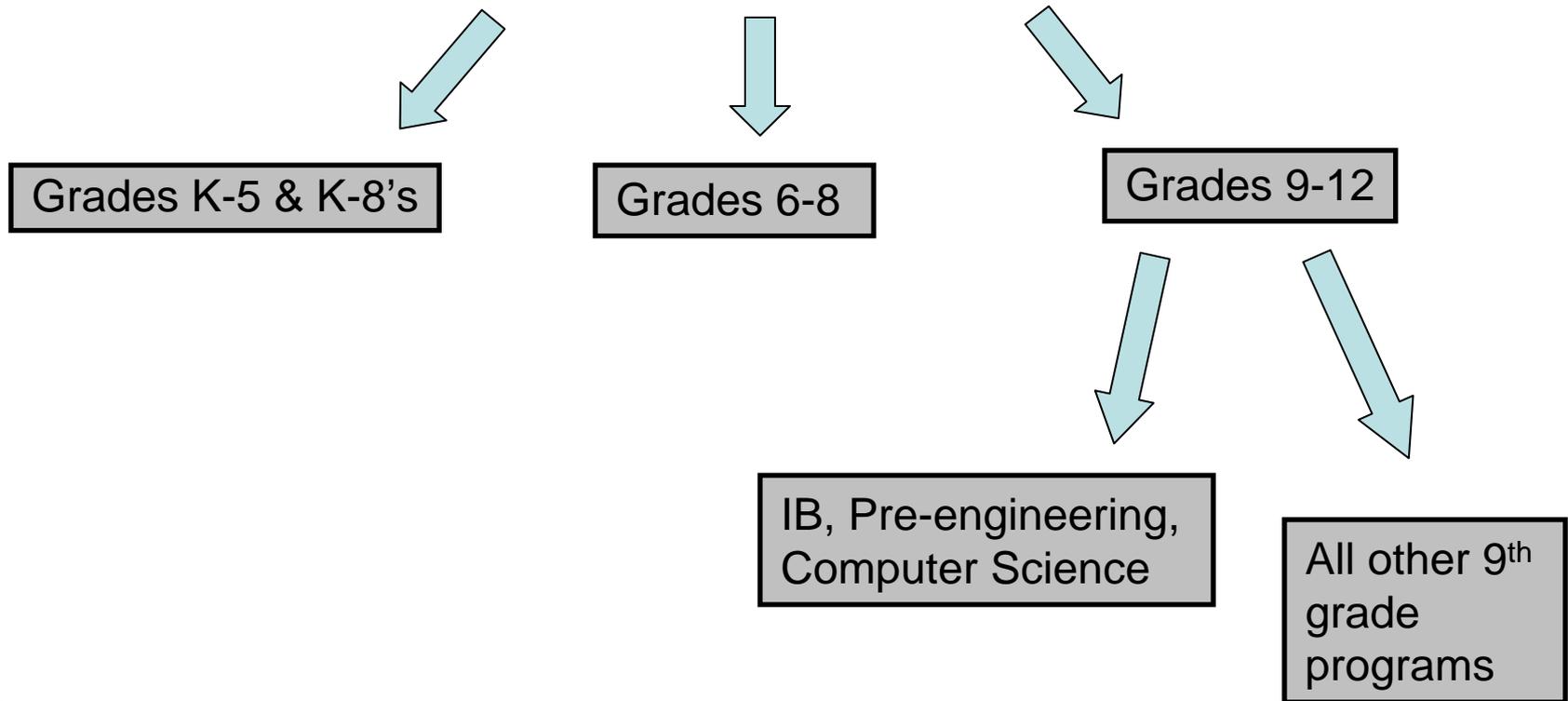
# CAPA

- Grades 6-8
  - Arts Audition using a School Management Approved Rubric
    - Creative Writing uses a writing sample
    - Performing Arts use an audition
  - Essay written specific to the art form to which students are applying
  - Letter of recommendation specific to the art form
- Grades 9-12
  - Rising 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are have met the following conditions are automatically accepted:
    - 3.5 QPA in arts form
    - 3.0 QPA overall
    - Attended CAPA 6-8 continuously
    - Continuing in same art form
- Additional spaces are filled using:
  - Arts Audition using a School Management Approved Rubric
    - Literary Arts uses a writing sample
    - Performing Arts use an audition
  - Letter of recommendation specific to the art form
  - Essay written specific to the art form to which students are applying



# Weighted Lottery for Remaining Over Subscribed Magnet Programs

Different Weights Apply at Different Grade Levels



# Preference vs. Weight

- We define a *preference* as a condition that immediately moves a student to the top of the list for admission
- We define a *weight* as a criteria that will increase a student's chances of being admitted—but does not automatically place the student any higher on an admission list or automatically grant them admission



# Grades K-5 & K-8

- Preference Given First to **Siblings\***
- **One Chance is Given For Each of the Following**
  - Application
  - Geography
  - Free & Reduced Lunch
  - Attending a Pre-K program in the building to which they are applying for K

\* Twins are accepted as 1 child

\*\* In the case that siblings apply for a school in the same year, but are not twins, and one is accepted and the other waitlisted, the child on the waitlist will be automatically admitted



## Grades 6-8

- Preference Given First to **Program Continuity from grade 5 (Traditional, International Studies)**
- **One Chance is Given For Each of the Following:**
  - Application
  - Geography
  - Sibling\*
  - Free & Reduced Lunch
  - PPS Attendance 95%+ in most recent year\*\*\*

\* Twins are accepted as 1 child

\*\* In the case that siblings apply for a school in the same year, but are not twins, and one is accepted and the other waitlisted, the child on the waitlist will be automatically admitted

\*\*\* Unexcused absences      Magnet Process 2009-10



# Grade 9-12, Pre-Engineering, International Baccalaureate, Computer Science

- Pre-Requisites
  - At least basic in both reading and math on 7<sup>th</sup> grade PSSA, with portfolio submission in lieu of this for students with documented special needs and exceptionalities and English Language Learners (ELL)
- Preference Given First to **Program Continuity from grade 8** with a 2.5 GPA in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (IB only)
  - One Chance is Given For Each of the Following:
    - Application
    - Geography
    - Sibling
    - Free & Reduced Lunch
    - Have PPS attendance 95%+ in previous year\*\*\*
    - Have received no 4-10 day suspensions in previous year

\*\*\* Unexcused absences



# Grades 9-12, All additional 9<sup>th</sup> grade Programs

- Preference Given First to **Program Continuity from grade 8 (Traditional)**
- One Chance is Given For Each of the Following:
  - Application
  - Geography
  - Sibling
  - Free & Reduced Lunch
  - Have PPS attendance 95%+ in previous year\*\*\*
  - Have received no 4-10 day suspension in previous year

\*\*\* Unexcused absences

Magnet Process 2009-10



# Conditions of Acceptance



# International Baccalaureate, Pre-Engineering and Computer Science

- Additional Conditions to attend once accepted for 9<sup>th</sup> grade
  - If you are not proficient in either reading or math, student must attend summer school in those areas (using 7<sup>th</sup> grade scores)
  - IB students must have prior language experience or enter into entry language



# All Additional High School Programs

- Additional Conditions to attend once accepted for 9<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Must attend summer school if below basic in reading or math or both in the areas (using 7<sup>th</sup> grade scores)
  - Each school will create a “Conditions” document that will be given to students and must:
    - Communicated clearly to students before they enroll, in the Options and Offerings Guide and on the website
    - Be approved by the Superintendent
    - Where required, approved through the Board (e.g. uniforms)



# Remaining in a Magnet Program



# Remaining in a Magnet Program

- Elementary
  - 90%\* attendance
- Middle
  - 90%\* attendance
  - No more than one 4-10+ day suspension per year
  - 2.0 GPA (C Average)
- High
  - 95%\* attendance
  - 2.0 GPA
  - No more than one 4-10+ day suspension per year

*\* Defined using unexcused absences in alignment with state reporting*



# New Consistent Process for Rescinding Magnet Status

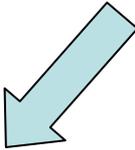
## Semester Break

A list is sent to each school with list of students who have not met any criteria for remaining in a program

**Letters are sent home** certified mail for each student on these lists with date and time for guardian conferences that will occur on report card days

**On report card** days a **contract is set up for students** that outlines the steps they will take to meet the areas where they are struggling—these forms are copied and sent to Executive Directors

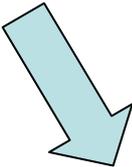
**End of Academic Year**— Students receive either:



A letter saying they are **now meeting the requirements** and can continue in the program



A letter saying a child **has made progress towards these goals** and may stay in the program one more semester to work towards goals



A letter saying a child **has made insufficient progress towards these goals** and is being removed from the program



# Next Steps

- **Feb. 20:**
  - Feedback from Cabinet
- **Feb. 23-27:**
  - Feedback from PHRC, A+ and other community groups
- **March 2:**
  - Feedback from Board at Education Committee
- **March & April**
  - EFA Parent Meeting, March
  - Public Hearings, March 16 and April 27
  - Public Roundtables to gain feedback, date TBA
- **April 29:**
  - Board Vote
- **May:**
  - Production of Magnet Guide & FAQ for Communications

