

# *Progress on Planning for Use of Stimulus Funds*

Presented by Superintendent Mark Roosevelt at the  
Board's Education Committee Meeting

April 14, 2009



**Pittsburgh  
Public Schools**

**EXCELLENCE**  
FOR ALL

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*The Pathway to the Promise.*



## Passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

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- Signed on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 by President Obama as part of nation's economic recovery strategy
- Includes \$2.6 billion for PreK-12 and higher education in Pennsylvania
- Funds allocated to school districts to both sustain current programs and create new and effective ones

## ARRA invests in education

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“Because we know America can’t out-compete the world tomorrow if our children are being out-educated today, we’re making the largest investment in education in our nation’s history.”

*- President Obama about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) signed on February 17, 2009*

## \$2.2 billion for PreK-12 in PA

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Two Core Principles provided by PA Dept. of Education for use of stimulus funds

1. Accelerate reforms that will result in the greatest boost to student achievement

2. There is no time for “government as usual” – school districts should have a sense of urgency for using stimulus funds



## The federal government expects states to invest wisely in education

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"Every dollar we spend must advance reforms and improve learning. We are putting real money on the line to challenge every state to push harder and do more for its children."

*- Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education for President Obama in an April 1, 2009 press release*



# PPS can receive up to \$41.8 million\* over two years

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***Money must be used by September, 2011, and has restrictions on its use***

General stimulus dollars for “proven academic programs for students”	\$5.1 million
Improving reading and math instruction for children in poverty (Title I)	\$16.1 million
General stimulus dollars	\$13.1 million
Special education programs and services (IDEA)	\$ 7.0 million
Technology integration (Title II-D)	\$500,000

\* Stimulus amount based upon 3/31/09 updated estimate from PA Dept. of Education. The State Legislature must appropriate these funds within guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Education.



## We will use stimulus funds to sustain current programs and class sizes

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- We will preserve access to programs currently available in our schools for core academics and the related arts.
- We will continue to align school budgets to enrollment.
- We will work to maintain the average class sizes that the District has had.



## We should use new IDEA stimulus funding to improve special education

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### **We will:**

- Retain key special education teaching and support positions that otherwise would have been eliminated due to declining enrollment.
- Work to improve our capacity to serve special education students in innovative, credible and engaging programs within PPS to reduce the number of students receiving services in restrictive, private placements.



We propose additional special education efforts with new IDEA stimulus funding

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**We will:**

- Accelerate student instruction provided in resource rooms by hiring several curriculum specialists to customize our core curriculum.
- Hire additional positive behavior intervention specialists to promote safe and orderly learning environments and decrease number of students referred to emotional support programs.



We should use the majority of our stimulus funds to maximize achievement and engagement

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- We will focus on literacy.
- We will focus on the middle school years.
- We will focus on creating extended time for learning.

**AND**

- We will innovate, engaging students in new and exciting ways.

## Why should PPS focus on middle grades literacy?

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- Considerable attention and resources already have been focused on improving the literacy skills of our youngest readers.
- PPS embraced this goal in *Excellence for All* by making increased proficiency at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade a top goal.
- We have already had great success. Last year, 64% of PPS 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were proficient readers, a 31% increase in just three years.

## Despite progress shown at younger years, too many continue to fall further behind at secondary level

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- As struggling readers fall further behind through their middle school years, it is extremely difficult for them to recover by high school.
- Strong correlation exists between dropout rates and reading ability according to *Reading Next 2006*.
  - 9<sup>th</sup> graders in lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of their class are 20 more times likely to drop out than the highest-performing students.
  - Over 1/3 of all dropouts are lost in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and most of these students were already on the path to failure in the middle grades.
  - Two to four hours of daily literacy work is required to make progress with struggling readers.

## For struggling readers reaching high school, it is difficult to recover

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- Success in high school requires more than the ability to decode words.
  - More than 60% of employers rate graduates' skills in grammar, spelling and writing as only "fair" or "poor" according to the American Diploma project.
- Even PPS students who graduate from high school often require remediation in college.
  - Nationally more than ½ of all college students take remedial coursework.
  - Of students requiring remediation, less than ½ earn a Bachelor's degree and the failure rate is much higher for poor and minority students.

**We know that to be  
*Promise-Ready*  
students must  
first be *high*  
*school ready.***



# Our stimulus plan will deepen our *Pathways to the Promise* work around 9<sup>th</sup> grade readiness

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## **We will:**

- Increase the number of students arriving in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with literacy skills to be successful in high school through targeted literacy work with 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Accelerate the implementation of middle grades interventions to reach disengaged 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students by “opening them up” to academic learning.
- If funding is sufficient, we will consider extending the middle grades literacy focus to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade by developing a 9<sup>th</sup> grade “teacher excellence” core.

# Two-part plan puts more students on the *Pathway to the Promise*

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## Middle grades literacy focus

**Diagnose • Intervene • Engage • Inspire**

### **Intense Literacy Intervention**

**We will expand the capacity and the intensity of intervention for every struggling reader every day, at every school.**

### **Summer Enrichment Program**

**All students in grades 6-8 participate in a summer program that combines literacy exercises with fun, engaging, choice-driven activities.**

## Intense literacy interventions will maximize high school readiness

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### Our efforts will include the following:

- A new diagnostic tool to help pinpoint *why* a child is a struggling reader.
- The purchase of a program for intervention strategies for readers who are struggling the most.
- Building in intervention and enrichment time into every middle grade student's schedule.
- Redesigning the special education delivery model.
- Increasing teacher effectiveness.



## Summer enrichment extends learning, engaging students through new experiences

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- All PPS middle grades students can participate in 2010 and 2011.
- Mornings consist of targeted literacy activities.
- Afternoons offer choice-based exercises ranging from debate to juggling, drama to fencing.
- Includes trips to universities, possible overnights, and partnerships with local providers.
- Connects to the academic year and continues throughout year on Saturdays and after school.

And this utilization of funds also addresses student *engagement*

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- Students experience ***doing something hard well.***
- Students learn the skills they need to communicate their interest and passion.
- Students have a reason to ***want*** to become a better reader.
- Students will ***believe*** they can be Promise-Ready and succeed in high school and in college or trade school.



# New literacy intervention program will increase high school readiness

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## **We will:**

- Improve teacher effectiveness and instructional quality to advance skills of struggling readers.
- Ensure that intervention is deeper and more engaging.
- Creatively use time, content, and capacity to help students catch up and keep up.
- Monitor and analyze student achievement results to continuously improve our efforts.



## Our actions must meet the stimulus obligation to act urgently

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- We are moving to hire a team of people to lead implementation.
- We are engaging community stakeholders in solidifying the vision for these programs.
- We believe that this use of funds fulfills our obligation to the federal government, to the state, to taxpayers, and, most importantly, to our students.



Our spending must be focused,  
transparent and results-oriented

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## **We must have:**

- A cohesive, integrated plan with a highly focused use of funds to advance student achievement.
- The discipline to ensure that sufficient dollars are allocated for the initiatives that will have the greatest impact on students.
- A plan that provides for some sustainable impact despite expiration of stimulus funds in 2011.
- The capacity to implement very well, publicly track/report our stimulus expenditures, and show quantifiable results.