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District Considers Alternative Education Model for Students with Chronic Behavioral Challenges

PITTSBURGH, January 8, 2007 – At its Education Committee Meeting this evening, the Board of Education considered further information about a proposal to create a 400-student alternative education school to meet the needs of students with chronic behavioral challenges.

Superintendent Mark Roosevelt sees this new alternative education model as a critical component of the District's high school reform initiative. "We recognize that our high schools have a large number of students whose needs are not being met and that they could benefit by more personalized programming," said Roosevelt. "The CEP program is one example where we will be able to provide personalized interventions for our most behaviorally challenged students."

The Board initially received information at a June 6th Education Committee Meeting about Community Education Partners (CEP), an education company that works in partnership with public schools and their communities to help chronically disruptive students in grades 6 through 12 get back on track.

Tonight the District and CEP representatives provided the Board with a proposal to renovate the closed Clayton Elementary School on the Northside so that the new program could be launched at the start of the 2007-08 school year. To meet this timeframe, the Board is expected to vote this month on entering into an agreement with CEP.

Clayton Elementary was selected from among the District's available facilities as best able to accommodate the "school within a school" design needs of the CEP program. Clayton Elementary would be renovated to have four gender-specific Learning Communities, each functioning as an individual 108-student school with four classrooms and a central Commons area. A team of on-site professionals would provide intensive support services for students and families, including anger management, crisis intervention and mental health interventions that help students deal with their aggressive behavior toward peers and adults. The District, in collaboration with CEP, would establish the criteria and process for school principals to recommend students for the CEP program. Students typically stay in the CEP program for 12 to 18 months before returning to their home school.

The District anticipates funding the CEP program through a combination of State and District monies. The District intends to apply for State funding available for alternative education demonstration projects. The final CEP per pupil cost is estimated at \$8,000 annually not including transportation costs.

The District will continue to operate its Student Achievement Center, which provides short-term educational services to students who violate the District's Code of Conduct, including violations for weapons, drugs or fighting.

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