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For Immediate Release

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Board Provided Full Report of District's 2007 PSSA and AYP Performance

Results Further Highlight Need for High School Reform

PITTSBURGH, September 10, 2007 – The Board was presented a full report at tonight's Education Committee Meeting on the Pittsburgh Public Schools 2007 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results. The District saw strong gains in reading proficiency and none of its K-5, K-8 or middle schools received anything beyond a warning status in results related to AYP. The report did highlight the need for reform of the District's high schools.

The PSSA measures individual student growth and determines the level to which school programs enable students to reach Pennsylvania proficiency standards in reading and math. PSSA scores are used to determine a district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

"Most school districts in reform experience a dip in student achievement before seeing gains," said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. "We are making progress and actually have seen a second consecutive year of gains in the benchmark years – grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 combined."

District Shows Strong Gains in PSSA Scores and Making Progress in AYP

PSSA

The District saw an increase of 48.9% in 2005 to 53.3% in 2007 in student reading proficiency for the combined grades of 3, 5, 8 and 11 from, for an overall gain of 9%. The percentage of students with below basic test scores continued to decline overall from 30.9% in 2005 to 26.4% in 2007, representing an overall decrease of 15%. Additionally the District saw its greatest gains in reading proficiency at the 3rd grade level, increasing from 49.1% in 2005 to 59.0% in 2007, for an overall 20% gain. More encouraging is the 14% increase in 3rd grade reading proficiency in just the past year, which grew from 51.6% in 2006 to 59.0% in 2007.

Overall PSSA mathematics results for the combined grades of 3, 5, 8 and 11 saw an increase in proficiency from 51.9% in 2005 to 55.7% in 2007, for an overall gain of 7%. The percentage of students with below basic test scores continued to decline overall from 27.6% in 2005 to 23.2% in 2007, representing an overall decrease of 16%.

AYP

The District is also making progress in its results related to AYP. For 2007, the District met 78 of 96 targets (81%) as compared with 65 of 82 (79%) in 2006 and 50 of 69 (72%) in 2005. The District had 25 schools meet AYP targets and 27 schools that are in warning status for 2007. None of the District's K-5, K-8 or middle schools received an AYP status beyond Warning.

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The District met its targets for two of the three standards required by the State – high school graduation and test participation. The District showed continued growth on the third standard – academic performance, but did not meet its overall academic performance targets for reading and mathematics. The District must meet targets in all three standards in order to make AYP.

Highlights Need for High School Reform

Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh Perry High School were designated as Making Progress. However, they must make AYP the upcoming school year in order to be removed from the School Improvement category.

“Nine out of our 10 high schools are in some level of School Improvement emphasizing the critical need for the expeditious implementation of the District’s high school reform plan,” stated Superintendent Roosevelt.

In April the District unveiled *Excel.9-12, the Plan for High School Excellence* a multi-year plan focused on the redesign and restructure of the District’s high schools and improvement of student achievement at the high school level.

School Choice

According to NCLB, the District must offer students in a school in School Improvement the choice to transfer to another District school, which is not in School Improvement. However, this year the District has no high schools available as NCLB Receiving Schools. Pittsburgh CAPA High School, the only high school to make AYP, as a magnet school has special admittance requirements. Students interested in attending Pittsburgh CAPA must apply in person at the school during general magnet registration November 5-16, 2007. Students may also submit application to City Charter High School for consideration based on the school’s admittance criteria.

SES Tutoring Services

Students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch at - Pittsburgh Carrick High School, Pittsburgh Schenley High School, Pittsburgh Oliver High School, Pittsburgh Peabody High School, Pittsburgh Perry High School and Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School – are eligible to participate in Supplementary Educational Services (SES) at no charge. Interested parents/families should contact Tamiya Larkin at (412) 622-3727 for more information.

SES is a free tutoring service provided after school, on weekends or during the summer by Pennsylvania Department of Education approved providers. The District will host two SES Provider Fairs so that parents can meet and ask questions of approved SES providers. The first will take place October 2, 2007 from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. at Pittsburgh Oliver High School, located at 2323 Brighton Road, Pittsburgh PA 15212. The second will take place October 6, 2007 from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. at Pittsburgh Frick 6-8, located in the heart of Oakland at 107 Thackeray Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Understanding District Subgroups

While many subgroups met performance targets, the District did not have a grade span that met all targets in both Reading and Math. The District must achieve all targets for its subgroups in both Reading and Math for at least one grade span (Grades 3-5, 6-8 or 11).

The Commonwealth has defined various subgroup categories that count for AYP, based upon student demographics. A subgroup is identified once there are 40 or more students that meet the definition of the subgroup. Under NCLB subgroups are designated by race, socioeconomic class and Individual Education Plans (IEP) status. Because of its diverse student population and the addition of grades 4, 6 and 7 in the State’s AYP calculations this year, the District saw more measurable subgroups than the prior year, when only grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 were taken into account.

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"Our *Excellence for All* plan sets ambitious goals for addressing the achievement gap found in our subgroups," said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. "We will continue to make progress towards these goals and will not be satisfied until all students achieve excellence."

For 2007, six schools with IEP subgroups made AYP, including Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5, Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5, Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK-8, Pittsburgh Greenfield K-8, Pittsburgh Frick 6-8, and Pittsburgh Classical 6-8. One high school, Pittsburgh Oliver, had an IEP subgroup and did not make AYP. Nineteen schools that are in warning for 2007 had an IEP subgroup, including 15 new schools.

An increase in reading achievement was seen for both African-American and White students from 2005 to 2007. An achievement disparity still persists with relatively no change over the same period. The 2007 PSSA data indicate a gap of 33.7 percentage points in reading proficiency for the combined grades of 3, 5, 8 and 11. A smaller disparity was seen in grade 3 reading scores. Although math achievement for grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 is slightly higher over the past two years the achievement gap has opened slightly.

Dr. Robert P. Strauss, professor with the Carnegie Mellon, H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management, provided perspective on the racial achievement gap in the Pittsburgh Public Schools at this evening's Education Committee Meeting. The full presentation can be found on the District's website at www.pps.k12.pa.us.

Corrective Action II Status

This year, the Pittsburgh Public Schools moves into Corrective Action II Status because it did not meet all of its AYP targets for a fifth consecutive year among all its subgroups for both reading and mathematics within one grade span.

The State must take at least one of several predefined corrective actions to assist Districts that have not made AYP after four consecutive years. This could include deferring programmatic funds or reducing administrative funds, implementing new curriculum, replacing staff, appointing a trustee to administer the District in place of the superintendent and school board, establishing alternative arrangements for supervision of certain schools, and abolishing or restructuring the district.

Moving Forward to Improve Results

For the 2007-08 school year, the District is offering additional professional development for principals, coaches and teachers on analyzing assessment data and using it to improve student results.

"Our goal is to help schools analyze their assessment data so that they can identify areas of concern for students in general as well as individual students," explained Dr. Poncelet, Chief of Research, Assessment and Accountability.

Pittsburgh Public Schools staff is developing a district-wide formative and summative assessment system that focuses on using assessment data to inform instructional decisions and improve student achievement. Formative assessments, such as 4Sight tests, will provide the District data that allows teachers to evaluate their students during the learning cycle prior to summative assessments such as the PSSA exams.

"PSSA exams test what a student has learned," stated Dr. Poncelet. "Tests, such as 4Sight, will help teachers evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses throughout the year."

For More Information

For more information, please visit the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at www.pps.k12.pa.us, call the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920** or visit the Division of Communications, Room 204, Pittsburgh Public Schools Administration Building, 341 South Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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