

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Ebony Pugh 412-622-3616

Independent Experts Present Facilities Report – *Building Excellence: Blueprint for the Future*

Recommendations for Effective Use of Facilities Reduce District's Excess Capacity by 3,000 Seats over 10 Years

PITTSBURGH, November 2, 2009 – After a 6-month planning process involving multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement, a nationally known, independent consulting firm provided the District a long-term facilities report that envisions a leaner Pittsburgh Public Schools in 10 years. According to experts from the DeJong consulting firm, by 2018-19 the District will serve approximately 4,500 less students annually and should reduce its current usage of school facilities by 1.1 million square feet. This decrease of 15.9%, from today's 6.9 million square feet to 5.8 million square feet, is commensurate with the consulting firm's projections of a 15.9 % decline in the District's student population in the next 10 years.

At the Board's Business and Finance Committee meeting this evening, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt set the stage for the DeJong presentation by assuring the Board and the public that the comprehensive facilities report is only the first step in a larger process of developing a final recommendation for Board action. He noted, "The consultants did what they were supposed to do in terms of looking at the most efficient use of our buildings and considering enrollment projections in their recommendations. The next step is for us to take their facilities perspective and add the District's additional academic and budgetary lenses." He added, "Our goal is to lay out a plan that aligns our spending on buildings with the District's long-term vision for educational excellence."

DeJong provided an overview of the planning and evaluation process, and outlined a phased plan for effectively utilizing the District's school buildings over the next 10 years. The report will serve as the basis for the District's 10-year facilities plan, a requirement of the Pennsylvania Department of Education that also advances a key priority in the District's Strategic Plan.

Based on a proven formula that DeJong uses to forecast enrollment, the District's PreK through grade 12 annual population is projected to go from 28,255 in 2008-09 to 23,736 by the 2018-19 school year. These 10-year enrollment projections have already been adjusted upward by 10% at the high school level to account for the expected positive impact of The Pittsburgh Promise® on student enrollment. When analyzing projected student enrollment, DeJong found that too many of the District's current schools would be under-enrolled based upon the optimal size for effectively operating a school.

The DeJong report recommends the eventual closing of 16 school facilities currently in use today in order to meet the targeted square footage reduction of 1.1 million by the 2018-19 school year. The proposed facility reductions would help to lower the District's current excess school capacity from approximately 10,700 empty seats to 7,700 seats over the next 10 years. The recommendations, which could impact 35 of the District's current schools and two early childhood centers, range from discontinuing a school and/or a school building to adjusting feeder pattern boundaries and changing a school's grade configurations. Attached is a chart that summarizes these facility recommendations.

-more-

Page 2 – Independent Experts Present Facility Report

Superintendent Roosevelt noted that prior reports, such as the state-mandated MGT study done in 2000, also concluded that the District had too many buildings but did not provide a comprehensive assessment of which ones were in the best condition. With the DeJong report, the District now has current data showing the conditions of its facilities overlaid against a sophisticated modeling of expected student enrollment over the next 10 years.

“Excess building capacity is consuming taxpayer dollars that otherwise could be used to improve educational opportunities for students and reduce the District’s budget deficit,” said Roosevelt. “We will combine this thorough facilities report with our own academic goals and budgetary analysis to come up with a two to three year plan for change.”

Roosevelt continued: “Any time you close a school or a facility and ask students and staff to move, it is a challenge. Because of the tremendous progress we have made over the last three years in improving our academic and financial situation, we will make this plan for change carefully, cautiously and with lots of input.”

More About the DeJong Facility Report

The Board approved hiring DeJong at its January 21, 2009 Legislative Meeting. The Ohio-based firm is nationally recognized and had done similar work in other urban districts including Grand Rapids, Michigan; Long Beach, California; Montgomery, Alabama; and Virginia Beach, Virginia over the past few years. The facility study process began with the formation of a 60-member steering committee comprised of Board members, central office staff, principals, teachers, parents, students, community representatives and a representative from City Planning and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). The process, which has been open and transparent, included one city-wide and three regional community forums, a June 22nd Board Workshop that was open to the public, and the opportunity to provide comment at the District’s regularly scheduled monthly Public Hearings. Throughout the process, information has been updated and posted to www.pittsburghbuildingexcellence.com.

The long-term facility study included a review of 76 school facilities, including 6 early childhood centers, as well as the following five closed facilities: Connelley, Knoxville, Prospect, Ridge and Schenley. Facility conditions were assessed according to a methodology that resulted in a total score called the Facility Condition Index (FCI). The FCI reflects the approximate cost of renovating a building so it would be comparable to a new building. Some District facilities received FCI scores over 100%, reflecting renovation costs much higher than building new. In general, the lower the FCI score, the better the building.

Please visit the District’s website at www.pps.k12.pa.us or call the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920 to obtain a copy of DeJong’s November 2, 2009 presentation at the Board’s Business and Finance Committee meeting. Also available are the complete DeJong Final Report – *Building Excellence: Blueprint for the Future* – along with supporting appendices and report excerpts, including a Summary of DeJong Facility Recommendations and an alphabetical listing of District buildings reviewed by DeJong with the corresponding Facility Condition Index (FCI).

###

The Pittsburgh Public School District is an equal opportunity education institution and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability in its activities, programs or employment practices as required by Title II of ADA, Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504. It is the policy of the Pittsburgh School District to make all programs, services, activities and facilities available and to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities.

For information regarding accommodations, civil rights or grievance procedures, contact the Office of Employee Relations, Pittsburgh Public Schools, 341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3516; Phone (412) 622-3691 (Voice/TTY/TDD); Fax (412) 622-7968.