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# What a great story



Mike Nichols, back row center, started volunteering in Pittsburgh Public Schools 17 years ago and he is still going strong. Nichols reads to students at seven schools, including this kindergarten class at Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5. **Story, Page 13.** PHOTO: JASON COHN

## Keeping the Promise District has students on the right Pathways

Not long ago, three young men asked The Pittsburgh Promise Executive Director Saleem Ghubril a question: "Are you (The Promise) for real?"

The more than 800 scholarship recipients from the Class of 2008 are the living answer to that question.

The Pittsburgh Promise is the community's commitment to helping students and their families plan, prepare and pay for education after high school, and it's

already beginning to live up to its name thanks to gifts from UPMC, Buhl Foundation, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Massey Charitable Trust, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers.

The District's goal is to make sure that all students are Promise-ready, and that students understand what it will take to get

See PROMISE Page 14



Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8 science teacher Arlene Tamewitz helps sixth-grader Jaimie Bambragh with a question.



# Achieving *Excellence for All* in Pittsburgh Schools



**Mark Roosevelt**

People who spend time in our schools hear a regular refrain: “Dream Big” and “Work Hard.” We have large ambitions for our students: We want to be sure that our students are “Promise-Ready,” meaning not only on course to graduate from high school but also prepared to take advantage of a Pittsburgh Promise scholarship. So, from very

early on we also want to be sure students understand what it will take to get there.

Pittsburgh is an inspiring place. Its greatness was built on the dreams and hard work of many people. The folks who built Pittsburgh didn’t hold back or hedge their bets. They did not make excuses or shirk their duty to do their work at a high level. They went for it all the time and all the way. That is what high-performing organizations such as the Pittsburgh Steelers do every day of the week and every week of the year. And that’s what all of us need to do at PPS.

We tell our students to “Dream Big” and “Work Hard,” and we know we have to offer them all the help they need to perform at their best. Through The Pittsburgh Promise, the community has placed a big bet on us. Through many commitments of both time and dollars,

they are showing that they believe in our students and their ability to contribute to Pittsburgh’s renewal.

It is true that we will need our students to contribute to building the “new Pittsburgh.” In the past “muscle” combined with hard work and talent to build our City primarily through manufacturing. This time our world-class health care institutions, our universities and our technology centers will be at the center of the City’s revitalization, and these organizations need a well-prepared and educated work force if they are to succeed.

For the past three years, we have been busy laying the foundation for improved student achievement through the goals and objectives established in our *Excellence for All* plan, including designing a rigorous new core curriculum; stronger emphasis on professional development and school leadership; expanded early childhood offerings; and extensive use of data to improve student learning. The significant increases we have seen in student achievement, as well as other improvements in behavior and attendance, show us that our efforts are beginning to make a difference.

Like almost all school districts we know that high school presents our greatest challenge. Through *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*, we are well on our way to redesigning how we offer high school to our

students. Three new 6-12 schools will open in the fall: a Science & Technology Academy, a 6-12 IB school (IB existed only at the high school in the past), and the 6-12 performing arts school that combines the middle and high school programs that existed in separate sites. Pittsburgh Millionaires, our University Preparatory School, will expand from ninth grade only to serve grades 6-10 next year and will complete its expansion to 6-12 in 2011.

A new delivery model for career and technical education is also being developed so that these programs are responsive to the changing career paths students face, support the development of the necessary skills, and provide the kind of training that will give students the opportunity to compete successfully in the job market.

Even when school districts are high-functioning, it is unfortunately the case that a number of students will still not reach reasonable standards for high school graduation and Promise readiness. That is why we are developing *Pathways to the Promise* to provide additional supports for struggling students at key points in their schooling. *Pathways* is designed to better monitor and communicate student progress at important learning transitions such as

kindergarten, third, sixth and ninth grades. Families will receive regular updates about where students stand and what families can do to provide extra support at home. And students who show clear signs of veering off course will be

offered individual mentoring as well as opportunities for academic acceleration.

One emerging area of focus is the development of a research-based system for maximizing teacher effectiveness. The District and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers are working together to develop a research-based evaluation system for teachers that will recognize exemplary

work and support the growth and practice of all teachers as they strive to bring out the best in each child that our District is privileged to serve.

All of the efforts I’ve highlighted here, and the many more that have gone unmentioned, come together to support our ultimate goal of academic success for every student and the achievement of our vision of *Excellence for All*.

I hope you enjoy our latest issue of *The Pittsburgh Educator*.

Mark Roosevelt is Superintendent of Schools in Pittsburgh.

“For the past three years, we have been busy laying the foundation for improved student achievement through the goals and objectives established in our *Excellence for All* plan.”

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## BOARD VIEW

Members of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education were asked to share their thoughts in response to the following question:

**What do you feel is a promise that you want to make to PPS students, staff and the community that reinforces the District’s mission and our commitment to getting children Promise-Ready?**

### Heather Arnet, District 2



I promise that as a Board we will continue to challenge ourselves, our staff, and our community to listen to one another and treat each other always with respect. If we can model active listening, collaborative leadership, and respectful disagreements, then our students will learn from our example how to be dynamic group thinkers and decision makers in their own lives.

### Mark Brentley Sr., District 8



As a Board member, I promise to continue to encourage Board members and the administration to find a way to “practice what we preach.” We have to find a way to turn *Excellence for All* into Equity for All. Presently, all communities and all students are not treated equally and, as a Board member, I would encourage the administration and my colleagues to set high expectations for all students. We must find a way to get 100 percent community buy-in before moving forward on any initiative.

### Theresa Colaizzi, District 5



I promise to support the Board’s commitment to educate all children to their highest level of academic achievement in a safe and orderly learning environment to ensure that all of our students graduate and are “Promise-Ready.”

### Jean Fink, District 7



I will support and encourage the highest academic standards to help all of our students succeed.

### Sherry Hazuda, District 6



I promise to attend meetings and to be prepared. I will try to be diligent in making decisions based on the Goals, Commitments and Core Beliefs that we agreed on. I have no power as an individual; but I respect my peers and the synergy that we create when we work together. I promise to work faithfully for the benefit of our children.

### William Isler, District 4



If we are going to achieve the District’s *Excellence For All* agenda, and specifically our commitment to having all children “Promise-Ready,” my promise is to work with the administration and staff to support their efforts in the schools and classrooms. To parents: We must work with you and keep you informed of our efforts to improve academic achievement for your children. For the community: We will be fiscally accountable with your tax dollars as we continue to provide a high quality education for the children of Pittsburgh. And to the students: From Pre-K through graduation, we will strive to provide an education that will not only make you “Promise-Ready,” but ready for the future you choose.

### Floyd McCrea, District 9



My promise is to remain committed to stay the course. We started down a path that gives parents and students the resources for a quality education that will result

in an opportunity for Promise money to attend college and set the stage for the best the future can bring.

### Thomas Sumpter, District 3



We want to ensure that all children reach their full academic potential in a safe learning environment. Attention must be given to early childhood programs. All students, parents, and staff must be supported and their needs must be met. Public engagement must be improved. If we promise to focus on the above, we will get our children “Promise-Ready.”

### Randall Taylor, District 1



I believe that the most important promise that a Board member can make is to support only policies that will further the academic and social success of our students. This is done by being assured that every policy, contract, and new hire is done truly in the best interest of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and our students.

# Changes are in store for 2009-10 year

The start of the new school year will bring new learning opportunities for some students in grades 6-12 in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

In the Hill District, Pittsburgh Millions 6-12 (formerly known as University Prep 6-12), which opened this year with ninth grade only, will become a grade 6-10 school in the fall.

A Summer Bridge Program is being planned in partnership with Hill House Association and the University of Pittsburgh to support the transition of students who are new to the school. The school will complete its expansion to a 6-12 school in 2011.

Derrick Lopez, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools, explained that the 6-12 model eventually will be in place at three other schools: the International Baccalaureate school, the Science and Technology Academy and the merger of Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA6-8 and Pittsburgh CAPA High School. All four will be open by this fall.

Lopez said the 6-12 educational model will place more emphasis on the sixth-grade year, a critical one for students. Research shows there are four indicators in sixth grade that a student might eventually drop out: failing English, failing math, less than 80 percent attendance, and unsatisfactory conduct.

"Sixth grade is where you need intensive support and intervention," Lopez said.

As part of the District's Pathways to the Promise goal to better monitor and communicate student progress at key learning transitions, information will be shared with families of sixth-graders in all schools about each student's academic progress in reading and mathematics as well as attendance and citizenship.

## New IB school to open in the fall

Pittsburgh Public Schools has been offering an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at Pittsburgh Schenley High School since the early 1980s. Four years ago, the District started the certification procedure for its Middle Years IB Programme at Pittsburgh Frick 6-9, a process that is in its final stages this year, said Cate Reed, Project Manager in Strategic Initiatives for PPS.

Starting this fall, the programs at Pittsburgh Frick and Pittsburgh Schenley will both be housed at the Reizenstein facility. The school, which will utilize the IB approach to teaching and learning throughout grades 6-12, will go through the District's official naming process in the fall. It will start out with grades 6-10 next year and add one grade in each of the following years, becoming a 6-12 school in 2011.

The IB school will follow the District's magnet acceptance process, with preference given to those who have completed the K-5 International Studies program at Pittsburgh Fulton, Pittsburgh Liberty, Pittsburgh Linden, Pittsburgh Manchester, Pittsburgh Northview or Pittsburgh Phillips, and a lottery held for the remaining spaces. Students can also apply when they begin ninth grade.

## Sci-Tech set to welcome first class

More than 400 students chose the new Science & Technology Academy as their first choice in this year's magnet lottery, filling the school's 250 spots, according to Sam Franklin, Project Manager for the new school. The Academy will open in August as a grade 6-9 school and add one grade in each of the following three years.

A weighted lottery was held to determine admission. Students who met certain criteria — academic achievement, test scores, attendance, income — could have their names in the lottery up to five times. Fifty percent of the students admitted are African-American, 41 percent white and nine percent Asian, Hispanic, Native American or multi-racial; 64 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. There were approximately 500 applicants for 30 teaching and staff positions, Principal Dan Lentz said.

# ALAs achieve



From left, Leasia Smith, Jordan Nichols and Korionna Devaughn are hard at work at Pittsburgh Murray PreK-8.

## Accelerated Learning Academies to build on early successes

By RICH FAHEY

Recent results show that the Accelerated Learning Academy model is doing what it was intended to do: improve student achievement through a structured program that includes more instructional time while providing ongoing professional development and preparation time for teachers.

As part of the District's *Excellence for All* plan, eight ALAs were created in 2006 to establish high expectations, structured routines and high standards for all students.

But even successful programs often require tweaking, and adjustments to the calendar and school day show that positive accomplishments alone don't equate to satisfaction with the status quo.

"While we are pleased with the growth in student achievement we have seen in the ALAs, as with any new program, we monitor and adjust based on information that we gather," said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

The school day for students in the ALAs will be shortened by 16 minutes next fall, without losing instruction time, and the school year shortened by two days at the end of the school year, so that the last day of school coincides with the end of the school year for other students. Teachers will maintain an eight-hour workday, gaining 20 minutes at the end of the day for professional preparation.

The Pittsburgh Board of Education approved the changes in January 2009 after input from parents, teachers and principals.

Students who attend ALAs will be in school for 7 hours and 10 minutes daily, which means they will continue to receive 20 additional minutes of instructional time compared with non-ALA schools. The 16-minute reduction in the school day will not affect instruction time, since it is being taken from time

initially set aside to establish the school's culture of rituals and routines. The amount of time students spend in homeroom has been reduced as well as time they use for transition between periods.

"We wouldn't do this if we were losing instruction time," said Christiana Otuwa, Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools and ALAs.

Otuwa stressed that ALA students will continue to have eight extra days of instruction at the beginning of the school year.

"Those days help students catch up and get acclimated to the program."

The ALAs have seen significant gains in student achievement. On the 2007-08 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams, both ALA and non-ALA students showed gains in the number of students rated proficient or above, but students attending ALAs achieved percentage point increases in *proficiency* or above at a rate 2.5 times greater than the District overall in reading and 1.4 times greater in mathematics.

Additionally, students in ALAs

posted a 3.1 percentage point increase in the number of students judged *advanced* in reading and a 5.4 percentage point increase in advanced mathematics over last year. ALA students also reduced the percentage of students judged below basic at a rate three times higher than the District overall in reading and 1.8 times greater in mathematics.

Otuwa said the ALAs continue to enjoy strong support. Of the 166 parents interviewed in a telephone survey by an independent research firm, 82 percent said the ALAs have had a positive impact on their child's progress, 83 percent felt that the rituals and routines were effective and 87 percent noticed increased communications to parents.



Teacher Kathryn Smith works with Orlando James.





Ta'niah Edwards Upshaw and DaVaughanta Barber enjoy the kindergarten registration activities at Pittsburgh Northview.



## Time to register for kindergarten

By PAUL HALLORAN

Freddy says, the time to register for kindergarten is now. That would be Freddy the frog, the official mascot of kindergarten registration. You may have seen his smiling, green face on one of 400 posters placed in schools and other buildings around the city. He is also featured on postcards mailed to families citywide with children age 3-5.

Kindergarten registration for 2009-10 started Feb. 9 and Pittsburgh Public Schools marked the occasion with a weeklong series of events intended to encourage parents to register their children early. Any child who will be 5 years of age by Sept. 1 of this year is eligible for kindergarten, which is an all-day program in PPS. Every student is assigned to a neighborhood school based on his or her address.

The February registration week was a big success. More than 350 families registered a child for kindergarten, with 35 percent being families new to PPS and the others having a student in the District's early childhood program.

Five schools registered a full kindergarten class of 20-25 during the week: Pittsburgh Brookline K-8, Pittsburgh Colfax K-8, Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8, Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5 and Pittsburgh Spring Hill K-5.

Thus far, more than 800 students have registered for kindergarten for the 2009-2010 school year either in a magnet program or at their neighborhood school. This year, there are approximately 2,100 students in kindergarten in the PPS.

In past years, families had to register for kindergarten at individual schools. During the special registration week in February, they also had the option of signing up at the PPS Administration Building in Oakland. That will also be the case

during the second special registration week planned for April 20-24, according to Marni Pastor, a Project Manager in the Office of Strategic Initiatives who is coordinating the expanded kindergarten registration activities.

A number of community partners have been working alongside schools as they welcome families who come to register children during the two special kindergarten registration weeks. Among the partners are Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and Beginning with Books. Special events were held at Pittsburgh Northview PreK-5 and Pittsburgh Weil PreK-8 during the week of Feb. 9-13 in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Office of Childhood Development. Pittsburgh Weil

registered 16 students and 13 signed up at Pittsburgh Northview.

As part of the special registration week April 20-24, all K-5 and K-8 schools will host a kindergarten night on April 21 from 6-7:30 p.m. at the school. The event offers a fun opportunity for students and families to tour schools and meet staff.

Every child who registers for kindergarten receives a complimentary copy of the book "Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten," thanks to a grant awarded to Beginning with

Books by the Heinz Endowments.

There are also plans to create Pittsburgh Promise Class of 2022 T-shirts for students entering kindergarten in the fall.

To register for kindergarten, a student must have proof of residence, all required immunizations and a birth certificate or other approved proof of birth (if new to the District). Families can find additional details on documents required for kindergarten registration and how to register on the District's Web site, [www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us), or by calling the Parent Hotline, 412-622-7920.



Rayquan Smith befriends a visiting turtle.

## Learning takes no vacation in Pittsburgh

By PAUL HALLORAN

In Pittsburgh Public Schools, learning takes no vacations.

In keeping with that belief, PPS has a variety of summer school offerings geared to help students of all ages and abilities to maintain and improve their skills and proficiencies.

Regional Extended Learning Camps for students in grades K-8 will be held at 13 sites across the city – nine full-day and four half-day.

While the camps are geared toward students scoring *basic* and *below basic* on the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) and 4Sight exams, all students who are looking to improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics are welcome to attend, said principal on special assignment Kerry Francis, who coordinates the District's summer activities. Teacher recommendations, other test scores throughout the academic year and/or a parent request are the basis for a student's participation.

The camps run from June 22 to July 17. The day starts at 8 a.m. and runs to either noon (half-day) or 3 p.m. (full). Breakfast and lunch are served, and transportation is provided for students who attend their assigned regional site. Students may request an alternative site, but transportation must be provided by the family. Special-education teachers will be on site to provide support for students with disabilities, but Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are not implemented.

Reading and math are taught in the morning at all camps and music, art and science in the afternoon at full-day sites, said Francis, a former special education teacher and Acting Principal who worked at the summer learning camps in past years. "The kids really enjoy it. They like coming."

Other summer programs include: high school summer school at Pittsburgh Brashear and Pittsburgh Peabody for students in grades 9-12; special education Extended School Year and transition programs at various locations for students with disabilities; and early intervention and early childhood programs at multiple sites.

The high school summer program, which runs from 7:35 a.m. to 2:35 p.m. from July 1-29, is for students who need to make up credits, complete graduation requirements or want to avoid scheduling conflicts in the coming year.

Underclassmen pay \$50 per half-credit for make-up courses, while there is no charge for seniors who have not met graduation proficiency requirements. Students also may sign up to receive credit in advance of the regular school year for one of three one-semester courses: Health Education, Personal Fitness or SAT Preparation.

The City Connections and Start on Success (SOS) programs also conduct special summer activities from July 1-29 for students involved in these programs during the school year. Participation is based on teacher recommendations.

From June 22 through July 17, the Early Childhood Summer Transition Program will offer basic reading readiness, mathematics, science and art instruction for students currently enrolled in Early Childhood classes who will move on to kindergarten in the fall. In addition, the Early Intervention Summer Program for preschool-age children with special needs is held three days a week from 9 to 11:45 a.m., from July 1 through August 6.

Summer school registration is now open and applications are available through the schools or by calling the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920.



# National treasure

## Enhancements made to 9th Grade Nation program

9th Grade Nation, the Pittsburgh Public Schools program that works to provide a smooth transition for students as they enter high school, has been well received by students, teachers, parents and the community. But making a good impression doesn't mean it's time to stop moving, according to Nancy Kodman, Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives.

Kodman said the District wants to engage students more throughout the ninth-grade year, so several enhancements to 9th Grade Nation have been undertaken or are in the planning stages during this second year.

As an addition to Civics: Be the Change, a required full-year, ninth-grade Civics course, students visited the Heinz History Center to view the exhibit "Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation" that covers 250 years of inventions and ideas in the city.

A Buhl Foundation grant to the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera also provided for the CLO to perform the popular play "The Incredibly Innovative Innovators of Pittsburgh" at every high school in January and February.

The 9th Grade Nation In-School Roundtables, which were held near the end of the school year last year, were scheduled earlier in this school year. The Roundtables give all ninth-graders the chance to discuss problems and issues in their home communities with

community leaders and come up with action steps students can take to address the problems. The late date of last year's events made it impossible for students to follow up on their proposed plans.

The District is partnering with Greater Pittsburgh Student Voices to stage the Roundtables. This year, the action steps determined by the students will lead to service-learning projects, which are funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy, founded by Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, the first lady of Pennsylvania.

According to Anita Ravi, Social Studies Curriculum Consultant to Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Roundtables will culminate in the District's first 9th Grade Nation Civics Summit in May. In the morning, students from different schools will be grouped according to the topic of their projects, and they will present their results to their peers. Violence, teen pregnancy and the environment are among the popular topics, Ravi said.

In the afternoon, students will work on a mini-service project which will be coordinated by the Pittsburgh Young Leaders Academy – a student leadership program run in partnership with the United Way.

Kodman said a survey conducted last year showed that students loved the Civics course because it is hands-on and relevant to current events. The curriculum was revised this year based on feedback from teachers, she added.

“  
(Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives) Nancy Kodman said the District wants to engage students more throughout the ninth-grade year.”



Pittsburgh Perry ninth-grader Terri Boyle displays the book she is reading with the school's 9th Grade Nation Book Club. Top photo, Chelsey Howard reads aloud.

Another significant change to the 9th Grade Nation program is the timing of transition activities for incoming ninth-graders. For the first two years, these activities were held in the summer and attendance was less than 40 percent. For 2009-10, the transition program will be incorporated into the regular school calendar, giving all students and their families the opportunity to participate.

On Sept. 2, the evening before the first day of school, there will be a 9th Grade Nation Pittsburgh Promise Family Orientation at all schools from 6-8 p.m. On Sept. 3, all ninth-graders will participate in their school's transition activities during the school day.

9th  
Grade  
Nation  
Be the Change!

## PYLA helps students reach their potential

The Pittsburgh Young Leaders Academy (PYLA) is an initiative of Pittsburgh Cares in partnership with the United Way of Allegheny County and Pittsburgh Public Schools. The leadership program for ninth-graders is offered at five high schools: Pittsburgh Brashear, Pittsburgh Carrick, Pittsburgh Langley, Pittsburgh Oliver and Pittsburgh Peabody.

PYLA equips participating students with the training necessary to problem-solve and motivate their peers to take action through service-learning projects. PYLA student participants are engaged twice a week in interactive leadership training that includes meeting with community leaders, completing community-service projects and going on educational and fun field trips throughout the city.

"PYLA is an opportunity for students' voices to be heard and for them to explore and challenge their potential," said Holly McGraw, PYLA Director.

The program kicked off in the five high schools the week of Jan. 26 and will run through June. There are approximately 100 students participating.

"The PYLA program provides enormous opportunities for ninth-grade students," said Pittsburgh Peabody Guidance Counselor Curisha Felder, a Pittsburgh Cares Change Leader. "Students appear to be stimulated by the activities PYLA promotes."

"I joined PYLA because I want to change my community," said Pittsburgh Peabody ninth-grader Shevon Allen. "We have fun and talk about problems and what we can do about them. Volunteering is important because we are the future leaders of the community."

Founded in 1992, Pittsburgh Cares is a nonprofit organization committed to increasing community engagement through volunteerism and enhancing the impact of other nonprofits in the region. Pittsburgh Cares coordinates four key programs: Community Connections, Youth Engaged in Service, Campus Cares and Business Cares.



## STUDENT AMBASSADORS

# Citizen of the world

BY RICH FAHEY

An important part of education includes becoming aware that we are not only citizens of the United States, but also citizens of the world.

The World Affairs Council's Global Travel Scholars program offers high school students the chance to travel overseas not only to learn what makes us different, but also what binds us together. Eight area high school students selected by the World Affairs Council (WAC) of Pittsburgh spent part of last summer participating in The Experiment in International Living, an opportunity that sends approximately 1,100 students overseas each summer.

Tracy Massengill, a senior at Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School, journeyed to

## Massengill experiences French culture first-hand

France for four weeks last summer to participate in The Experiment's Festival of Theater program. She had been studying French for several years when she made the trip, and is continuing her French studies this year.

Massengill spent two weeks in Paris and two weeks in the countryside city of Avignon living with a host family. During that time, she was able to test her conversational French while immersing herself in the culture — food, theater,

architecture, museums. She enjoyed several boat rides that showed her the best of Paris and Avignon, which are both located on rivers — the Seine and the Rhone, respectively.

The French of Parisians, who tend to speak quickly, presented a more challenging test of her linguistic skills, although they appreciated her effort to speak the language. "The people were very nice," she said. "They would gently correct me when I made a mistake."

The time in Paris was filled with cultural and sightseeing highlights, while the weeks in Avignon, a city of about 90,000 and home to many of the early Popes, included several visits to the city's annual theater festival, one of the most renowned in the world.

"I loved the shows, but I can't see making acting a career," she said. "I would rather write a play than portray someone else's character."

Massengill is also an accomplished athlete, playing shooting guard on the Pittsburgh Westinghouse basketball team and running both cross-country and track, where she shines in the sprints. She plans to attend either the University of Pittsburgh or the University of Maryland next fall.

She plans to continue her study of French in college — "you never know where it will take you" — while continuing her track career. She would like to visit France again but also harbors a desire to visit Africa to do some charity work.

Laura Wenneker, a French teacher at Pittsburgh Westinghouse who recommended Massengill for the program, said her selection as a scholar was "a real boost to the school. The vast majority of students may never consider doing something like this, so it was great for them to see one of their own getting out into the world."

David A. Murdoch, chair of the World Affairs Council's education committee and chair emeritus of World Learning, the parent organization of The Experiment, was instrumental in implementing the Global Travel Scholarship program in Pittsburgh.

"Not only does The Experiment provide a real understanding of the world in which we live, but it equips a person on how to cope with difference and adversity and builds confidence and courage in its participants," he said.

Wenneker said Massengill "attacks life" and is the type of person who "doesn't want to take no for answer."

She described watching her play basketball against much taller opponents: "She's not that big — maybe 5-4 — but she gets herself in there and gets the ball against girls who are a foot taller than she is."

All of these qualities combined to make Massengill the perfect candidate for the overseas program. "Tracey's not the type of person to let a situation such as being in a foreign country with a limited knowledge of the language defeat her," Wenneker said.



Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School senior Tracy Massengill spent a month in France last summer.

## STUDENT AMBASSADORS



Pittsburgh Oliver senior Erica Green experienced arts and culture in Brazil.

# Global perspective

## Trip to Brazil marks chance of a lifetime for Green

By RICH FAHEY

In traveling to Brazil, Erica Green discovered a culture, a people, and something about herself.

The senior at Pittsburgh Oliver High School participates in the school's dance troupe, and one of the reasons she chose to travel to Brazil as part of the World Affairs Council's Global Travel Scholars program was the chance to be involved in art and dance programs in the country.

Green spent five weeks in Brazil last summer, with stops in breathtaking Rio de Janeiro; Salvador, a center of culture that is also known as Brazil's capital of happiness due to its easygoing population and countless popular outdoor parties, including its street carnival; and the town of Lencois, a picturesque country village. In Salvador, she participated in Brazilian dance programs.

She loved the attitude of the Brazilian people, calling them "warm and loving," but some of what she saw unnerved her.

"You can read up on a country all you

want, but there's still a certain culture shock in going there. In some places, there were children living on the street," she said. "It seemed they were either very wealthy or very poor."

Green learned enough Portuguese to get by and reveled in the food and cultural attractions. She also found Brazilians to be intensely interested in American pop culture and politics, and they had numerous questions about the U.S. presidential race.

Another of her discoveries was the close relationship between the rhythms of African and Brazilian music and the music's strong connection to the hip-hop music scene here at home. "They're up on all the hip-hop artists and even country music," she said.

Kenneth Smith, who was Green's U.S.

History teacher at the time she was nominated for the program as a junior, said he was not surprised that Smith had been picked for the program and that she has done such a good job communicating her

experiences with her fellow students.

"Erica is an excellent student and a go-getter with a broad range of interests," said Smith. "She took it upon herself to speak to our student who was in the program last year, and our nominee for this year. She is very open to meeting new challenges and was a perfect fit for the program."

Smith credited the sponsoring World Affairs Council with being supportive of the students during the experience and for encouraging the students' families to get involved.

"A lot of times, the student's family can

tell us how the experience changed the student," he said.

Smith said it is not really important where the students decide to go, only that they seize the opportunity and make the most of it, thereby paving the way for future students from the school.

"They may never have an opportunity like this again," he said. "It's a great experience and it may have a lasting impact."

Green, who plays basketball at Pittsburgh Oliver as a 5-7 power forward, is also a member of the Student Council and the National Honor Society. She has yet to decide where she will attend college next year, but she has already interviewed at both Harvard and Yale and is also considering several other top-flight schools.

She said the Global Scholars Program is well worth the time and effort. "I would definitely recommend getting involved," she said. "It's a great chance to immerse yourself in a culture. And someday, I'm going back to Brazil."



**They may never have an opportunity like this again. It's a great experience and it may have a lasting impact.**

**Kenneth Smith  
Pittsburgh Oliver teacher**





# In Pittsburgh, healthy is in

## Middle-schoolers participate in national study

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Students at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 who used to dine on chicken wings, pizza and French fries now form long lines at the wrap bar and salad bar in the cafeteria. Physical education classes feature more movement and better equipment. Students are aware of the number of calories in their snacks and the amount of physical activity they are engaged in.

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 is in the third and final year of participation in a national research study designed to prevent the risk factors for type 2 diabetes in middle-school-age youth. The study – called Healthy – is being conducted at 21 intervention schools throughout the country, with an equal number of others serving as control schools.

Approximately 100 eighth-graders at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 have been participating in the study since sixth grade. It will determine the rate of overweight and obesity among students at the intervention schools vs. the control schools, according to Dr. Elizabeth Venditti, a Behavioral Health Psychologist at the University of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Frick 6-8 and Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8 are also serving as intervention schools in the study.

Students who volunteered to take part agreed to have blood work done at the beginning and end of the study.

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 Principal Debra Rucki and physical education teacher John Leemhuis said the transformation of the menu in the cafeteria has made a huge difference. “We pushed for the change in the menu,” Rucki said. “We were trying to make a profound difference in what kids are putting into their body.”

“The kids fought it at the beginning; they weren’t happy their nachos were gone,” Leemhuis said. “But they have



The salad bar is a big hit with eighth-grader Darius Barnes and the rest of the students at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8.

gotten used to it and they have bought in.”

The dietary changes were not limited to the cafeteria, as the food offerings in vending machines, the school store and classroom snacks were similarly modified. Even the menu at Parent School Community Council meetings was adjusted: fried chicken and French fries out and baked chicken and fruit in.

“The major risk factor for type 2 diabetes in children and adults is overweight,” Venditti said. “You have to improve the quality of food and activity to prevent an

increase in obesity.” A second key element to the Healthy study is the upgrading of both the physical

education curriculum and the equipment available to teachers and students. Healthy provided items such as jump ropes, exercise balls, scooters and pedometers, as well as an instructor to work with the four Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 physical education teachers in incorporating the new activities.

“They have implemented strategies to enhance the likelihood of keeping kids moving for as much of the 42-minute period as possible,” Venditti said. “We are trying to create a culture where kids are moving and getting their heart rates up over the course of the period.”

The third facet to the study is a program called FLASH – Fun Learning Activities for Student Health. It is an interactive education piece designed to help students understand why it is important to eat

better and exercise more. Students work in small groups on workbook-based activities.

“At the middle-school level, the kids need to take ownership of the program,” Venditti said. “It helps kids make sense of it.”

As part of an overall communications strategy, students designed posters that hang throughout the school, with messages such as “Move More, Sit Less” and “Let Water be your Life Force.”

“We hope we are making some kind of impact on their future choices,” Rucki said. “It is critical to educate kids about healthy living.”

The Healthy study is being conducted as part of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases STOPP-T2D initiative.



**You have to improve the quality of food and activity to prevent an increase in obesity.**

**Dr. Elizabeth Venditti**



## HEALTHY SCHOOLS



Top photo, Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 sixth-grader Thomas Johnston gets ready to dive into the pool; above, sixth-grader Hawa Mganga gets his teeth checked at a dental screening sponsored by the Allegheny County Health Department as part of National Dental Health Month; at right, sixth-grader Patience Cansler exercises in the gym. PHOTOS: JASON COHN

## Focus on health includes PPS staff

BY PAUL HALLORAN

The emphasis on healthier living in Pittsburgh Public Schools is not limited to students.

Through the Lifestyle Returns program, all PPS employees are invited to complete a personal health assessment questionnaire, attend a District-sponsored health fair and receive a biometric screening.

Participants' blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure will be tested and the results made available virtually right away. Counselors will be there to answer questions and provide recommendations. Vendors and representatives of health-related agencies will also be in attendance and available to answer questions.

All employees who receive health-care benefits have \$2.50 per month deducted from their paycheck, and that money helps to fund the Lifestyle Returns initiative, according to Susan Sinicki, Manager of Employee Relations for PPS. The maximum total amount deducted will be \$50. Employees who complete the questionnaire and attend one of three health fair sessions can be fully reimbursed and receive an extra \$50, Sinicki said.

Sinicki said 779 employees have completed the questionnaire and 532 attended the first health fair. Future health fairs will be held on March 30 and April 29 at the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Building on the South Side, 10 South Nineteenth St. A Nintendo Wii and Wii Fit will be raffled off at each health fair.





# PROMISING DEVELOPMENT

## District updates teachers on achievement gains and thanks them for their dedication

BY PAUL HALLORAN

What happens when you put almost 4,000 Pittsburgh teachers, administrators and community leaders in the same room? We Dream Big. We Work Hard. We Promise.

That was the theme on Jan. 27 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center when Pittsburgh Public Schools held a special professional development event led by Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

The purpose of the event was three-fold. First, it gave the superintendent a chance to deliver an overview of the District's plan to address student achievement as well as a review of its accomplishments. For example, on the 2007-08 PSSA exams, PPS students made academic gains in reading and math proficiency on 13 of the 14 exams and advanced on 12 of 14, exceeding the state's rate of progress in almost every area.

"We are engaged in a comeback and the education of our children is central to the Renaissance of Pittsburgh," Roosevelt told the large gathering. "We have a plan and because of the hard work of our teachers we are beginning to see promising results."

"Pittsburgh is on the right track," said John Deasy, deputy director of education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. "Excellence for All (the District's plan for improving student achievement) has all the necessary ingredients to raise Pittsburgh into the ranks of our nation's premier school districts."

The second purpose was to emphasize that The Pittsburgh Promise – a community commitment to help families plan, prepare and pay for college – has life-changing potential for students and the City. Regardless of income, PPS graduates can earn up to \$20,000 in Promise scholarships over four



Eric Kuczma listens intently.

years to more than 100 qualifying schools in Pennsylvania. Beginning with the Class of 2012, the maximum amount doubles to \$40,000.

"If you help your students plan and prepare, we promise to do our part and provide the financial resources they need to help shape and enrich their lives and to make their dreams come true," said The Pittsburgh Promise Board Chair and Steelers legend Franco Harris.

The Pittsburgh Promise Executive Director Saleem Ghubril said he tells students that the Pittsburgh Promise is really more than one promise: first there is the college scholarship, which many students need to remove the financial hurdle that stands between them and continuing their education; the second promise, he said, is "much more daunting than raising \$250 million (the overall fundraising goal of the Promise). We promise them a first-rate, exceptional, urban public education. I believe it's happening here."

And the last, but not least, reason for gathering was to give Roosevelt, Deputy Superintendent Linda Lane and prominent community members in attendance (and on

video) the opportunity to personally thank Pittsburgh teachers for their commitment and dedication to their students.

"We are in this business to improve children's lives and that's what's happening here thanks to your hard work," Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers President John Tarka told the audience.

"I promise to work hard and dream big every day for the kids we are privileged to serve," Roosevelt said. "And I promise to believe in you."

Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, former superintendent Helen Faison, University of Pittsburgh men's basketball coach Jamie Dixon, WPXI news anchor David Johnson, Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh President and CEO, and members of the Pittsburgh Board of Education were among those who walked around to meet and thank teachers.

"I thought it was a fantastic event. It's nice to be thanked," said Katie LaCava, who is in her first year teaching special education at Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5.

A Pittsburgh native and graduate of Pittsburgh Carrick High School, LaCava taught in Virginia for five years before coming home. "It's neat to come back here," she said. "It's totally different from when I was a student. There is a much more positive attitude. The Promise is amazing – to be able to help Pittsburgh youth get ahead."

According to Roosevelt, LaCava is not alone in her assessment.

"We've converted a lot of people into believers," the superintendent said. "The Promise is seeping in. It's real; it's magnificent. They really do believe in it."

Attendees were welcomed by Steelers Coach Mike Tomlin, via video. WTAE-TV meteorologist Demetrius Ivory emceed the event.



Above and below, teachers at the event showed their Steelers pride; at right, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl greets an attendee.

PHOTOS: JASON COHN



Katie LaCava, right, a teacher at Pittsburgh Fulton, called the event "fantastic."



Speakers at the professional development event included, top, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt, middle, The Pittsburgh Promise Chair Franco Harris and Executive Director Saleem Ghubril, above left, John Deasy of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers President John Tarka.





PPS  
ALUMNI  
PROFILE

Benjamin Orbach feels at home at the camel market in Jordan.

# International relations

## Pittsburgh native unofficial ambassador in Middle East

BY RICH FAHEY

It is often said that in the political quagmire that is the Middle East, everyone has an agenda.

And while the same might be said about Benjamin Orbach, this Pittsburgh native takes his responsibility for East-West relations very personally. During his many travels in the region, Orbach has been determined to present the Arab world with a wholesome and caring picture of Americans.

Born and raised in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh and a 1993 graduate of Pittsburgh Alderdice High School, the 33-year-old Orbach speaks both Hebrew and Arabic. He works as Creative Associates International Resident Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza International.

Orbach, whose wife, Ashley, is also a graduate of Pittsburgh Alderdice, said the Pittsburgh Public Schools gave him a strong education and stoked the love of history that helped shape his choice of occupations.

He came to Jordan after 9/11, when war with Iraq was imminent, and at a difficult time for Americans. A prominent American diplomat was assassinated in the country in 2002 and there was great tension and the feeling that anything could happen.

"Being Jewish in Jordan is something extraordinary," he said, noting the country

does not have the resident Jewish population that other Arabic nations do and that Jordan is also home to many Palestinian refugees.

Although Orbach did not try to hide the fact he was an American, he was cautious about admitting to also being Jewish.

"As I made friends, I opened up to them more. But I couldn't be entirely open to most people I met," he said.

He said he doesn't feel unsafe during his travels, which includes visiting the West Bank several times a week, often working alongside residents and sharing meals with them.

"This isn't a war zone," he said. "There are incidents of political violence but almost no violent crime."

Orbach earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Michigan and a master's in Middle East Studies and International Economics from the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He was awarded a Boren Fellowship from the National Security Education Program (NSEP) to study Arabic in Jordan, and his experiences formed the basis for a book, "Live from Jordan: Letters Home from My Journey Through the Middle East" (*Amacom Books*, 2007).

In "Live from Jordan," Orbach explores Middle East issues such as anti-Americanism, the absence of peace, Islamist terrorism and the causes of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But he also manages to weave in the beauty and color of everyday life in Egypt, Jordan and Syria — the camel markets, deserts, nightclubs, coffee shops and people.

"People tell me that my book changed their impression of Arabs or that they are planning on studying abroad in the Middle East now, or they ask me what they can do to be involved in better relations with that part of the world," he said.

After a year spent as a Boren Fellow, Orbach worked for three years for the State Department in the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and for a year as MEPI coordinator at the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, before becoming Creative Associates International's resident country director for the West Bank and Gaza.

Each year, the National Security Education Program honors one Boren Scholar alumnus and one Boren Fellow alumnus for their outstanding federal service and academic achievement. Last September, the NSEP presented Orbach with its 2008 Sol Linowitz Award in Washington, D.C.



Benjamin Orbach

# Pittsburgh schools stay in touch

BY RICH FAHEY

One of the objectives in the Pittsburgh Public Schools Strategic Plan is to "Promote District priorities, programs and progress proactively through broadcast, print and online media."

Pat Kennedy, the Executive Director for Communications and Marketing, said the District is taking a multi-layered and dynamic approach to meeting this objective by employing a variety of communications techniques designed to educate consumers about what the District and its schools have to offer.

Tools being used to share news and information include the District's Web site ([www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us)); the *Pittsburgh Educator*, the official newspaper of Pittsburgh Public Schools published twice each school year; activities and events for parents such as Parent Engagement Tuesdays; a Parent Hotline where callers can ask questions or provide feedback; Webcasting of Board meetings and other school events; and Alert-Now phone messages and direct mail to families about important events.

Feedback mechanisms on the Web site, focus groups and parental surveys give the District an idea how it is doing in getting out its message and where weak areas can be reinforced.

The newest endeavor, a cable TV show titled

"Excellence for All" debuted in February on City Channel Pittsburgh, Comcast Channel 13. The program will be rebroadcast daily at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. and a new program will air on the last Wednesday of each month. The program is designed to acquaint people with what's going on across the District and highlight topics and issues of interest to parents.

The sneak preview on Feb. 25 at Pittsburgh CAPA High School gave viewers a summary of progress the District is making in student achievement and other areas and showed performances by the Pittsburgh Perry High School marching band and the choir from Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5. Kennedy said the reaction to the inaugural show was positive.

Kennedy said the District will use raw footage from "Connect With Kids" TV show on popular topics such as bullying prevention and literacy to augment locally shot footage.

The MacMillan reading program will be the topic of the March 25 show while the April 29 show will be about prom safety. On May 27, the program will focus on The Pittsburgh Promise.

Anji Corley, host of "The Midday Experience with Anji" on WAMO-FM, hosts the show.

“

Pat Kennedy said the District is taking a multi-layered and dynamic approach to promoting its priorities.



# Neverending story

Nichols has been reading to Pittsburgh students for 17 years

By PAUL HALLORAN

You might say that Mike Nichols was swept up in the spirit of volunteerism 17 years ago and he has never let go.

Nichols' job as a street sweeper for the Pittsburgh Department of Public Works had him working in front of Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5. He ran into Theresa Cherry, then a teacher at the school, and asked her if she would like him to read to her students. She took him up on the offer and it marked the beginning of an impressive run that continues today.

"I've just kept on reading and reading," said Nichols, who now reads to students at Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5 and six other schools: Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5, Pittsburgh Faison PreK-8, Pittsburgh King PreK-8, Pittsburgh Morrow PreK-5, Pittsburgh Vann K-8 and Pittsburgh Weil PreK-8.

Among the many stories Nichols has read over the years, he said some of his favorites are picture books featuring African-Americans "so the kids can learn about heroes like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Rosa Parks," he said. "I do what I can to educate them."

Nichols also discusses with students the opportunity that The Pittsburgh Promise affords them and encourages them to start becoming Promise-ready at an early age.

A 1979 graduate of Pittsburgh Schenley, Nichols has worked for the DPW for 21 years. His days off are Thursday and Friday, days on which he can usually be found at one of "his" schools.

"Mike is a great example of what an



Volunteer Mike Nichols has been reading to Pittsburgh students for 17 years.

individual can do," said Mark Conner, Director of Family and Community Engagement for Pittsburgh Public Schools. "He has established great relationships with principals."

Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5 Principal Ruthie Rea is happy to have Nichols.

"He's very engaging and the children really enjoy the experience," she said.

In addition to volunteering his time, Nichols solicits local restaurants and other businesses for gift certificates that he gives to students as rewards or motivators. He is also involved with Junior Achievement and Beginning with Books and serves as chairman of the Hill House Halloween Party that attracts several hundred children.

"We need more positive role models in

the schools," he said. "It's time for us men to step up to the plate."

Ask Nichols why he is so generous with his time and he responds instantly. "Because it's in my heart. I love to do it," he said. "I never expected it to last 17 years."

Two generations of Pittsburgh students are glad it has.

## Building Excellence is part of strategic plan

In moving forward with a key strategy of the District's Strategic Plan, the Pittsburgh Public Schools is beginning a facilities study that is expected to be completed by July. The study will result in a 10-year facility plan.

*Building Excellence: Blueprint for the Future* will evaluate the District's facilities. The study will include long- and short-term strategies for improving facilities.

On Jan. 21, the Board approved hiring DeJong Inc. to conduct the study. The Ohio-based firm has done similar work in other urban districts over the past several years. In addition to collecting and analyzing data, DeJong will facilitate community dialogues to provide

opportunities for public engagement.

The first dialogue will be a city-wide meeting held on March 30, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the IBEW Circuit Center, 5 Hot Metal St., South Side, 15203. The IBEW site, which was donated by Local Union #5, provides free parking and access by public transportation. The District will provide additional free transportation; schedules will be announced when they are complete. On May 13-14, three regional dialogues will be held to provide a deeper level of input from community members. All regional dialogues will take place from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The facilities study process began with the formation of a steering

committee. Members of the steering committee were appointed by the superintendent and include Board members, district level educators, principals, teachers, parents, students, community representatives and a representative from the Urban Redevelopment Authority and City Planning.

The scope of the feasibility study will include, but not be limited to:

- ◆ an examination of all previous studies and reports available to build upon existing data, including data from the Urban Redevelopment Authority, City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority, City of Pittsburgh, major real estate agencies and developers and the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation;

- ◆ a review of the District's 69 school buildings, five early childhood centers — Arlington, Chartiers, Homewood, McCleary and Spring Garden — and four closed facilities including Schenley, Connolly, South Annex and Ridge Avenue;

- ◆ an accounting of demographics within the city limits, both current and projected for a 10-year period, including an evaluation of population shifts and birth rates;

- ◆ a review of enrollment for students PreK-12 with respect to population shifts; and

- ◆ a conceptual framework, including a roadmap for career and technical education, that will address facility locations, implementation timeframe and project costs.

A draft report including a plan for the District's facility needs over the next 10 years is expected to be reviewed and discussed with the Board at a work session on June 22.

Opportunities for public input include:

**March 30** — City-wide meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m., 5 Hot Metal St., Pittsburgh.

**May 13-14** — Regional dialogues — 6:30-8:30 p.m., locations to be determined.

**April 20, May 18, and June 15** — Regular public hearings, 7 p.m., Administration Building, Conference Room A.

For more information call the Parent Hotline at (412) 622-7920, or visit [www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us).





Teacher Cheryl Giles, shown above with Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8 student Jaivaunn Harrison, was misidentified in the Fall 2008 edition of *The Pittsburgh Educator*.

# Nationally certified teachers

Eleven Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers were honored with Distinguished Achievement Awards by the Pittsburgh School Board and Superintendent Mark Roosevelt for receiving national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

To complete the certification process, the candidates were required to meet the Professional Teaching standards reflected in five core

propositions: Teachers are committed to students and their learning; Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and Teachers are members of learning communities.

<b>Meredith Bruner</b> <i>Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center</i>	<b>John Dropcho</b> <i>Pittsburgh Carrick High School</i>	<b>Marianne O'Connor</b> <i>Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8</i>
<b>Mara Cregan</b> <i>Pittsburgh CAPA High School</i>	<b>Mario Iasella</b> <i>Pittsburgh Schenley High School</i>	<b>Shari Sacca</b> <i>Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5</i>
<b>Jacqueline Hale</b> <i>Pittsburgh CAPA High School</i>	<b>Kelly Mancuso</b> <i>Pittsburgh Rooney 6-8</i>	<b>Christine Tapu</b> <i>Pittsburgh Allderdice High School</i>
	<b>Amy Morton</b> <i>Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8</i>	<b>Mark Ward</b> <i>Pittsburgh Perry High School</i>

# Pittsburgh students are on Pathways to the Promise

PROMISE: from Page 1


there. To support that goal, the District is developing *Pathways to the Promise*.

“*Pathways* brings extra visibility to the importance of higher education,” said Edward Jones, project manager for the Pittsburgh Promise. “We are raising the level of dialogue about the skills and education required for careers in today’s work world.”

*Pathways to the Promise* is based on the philosophy that the road to the Promise should start at an early age, and families need to be kept “in the loop” through regular communication. Kindergarten and grades 3, 6 and 9 have been identified as key learning transitions to monitor and communicate student progress.

Yes, kindergarten. Not only is kindergarten important because it sets the foundation for students’ future learning, but students who have been enrolled in PPS since kindergarten are eligible for the maximum amount of Promise money (currently \$20,000, but scheduled to double starting with the Class of 2012).

In third grade, the emphasis is on literacy.



Pittsburgh Woollair third-graders Veronika Gillespie and Janae Bandy focus on their work.

Earlier this year, a letter went home to all families with children in kindergarten through grade 5 to introduce the Macmillan *Treasures Home School Connection*. *Treasures* is the District’s PreK-5 reading program, and *Home School Connection* gives parents tools and tips to provide support at home that will help all children, especially in the early years, to improve their reading skills. Parents receive a letter from their child’s school at the beginning of each new reading theme that lists the reading skills introduced throughout the theme.

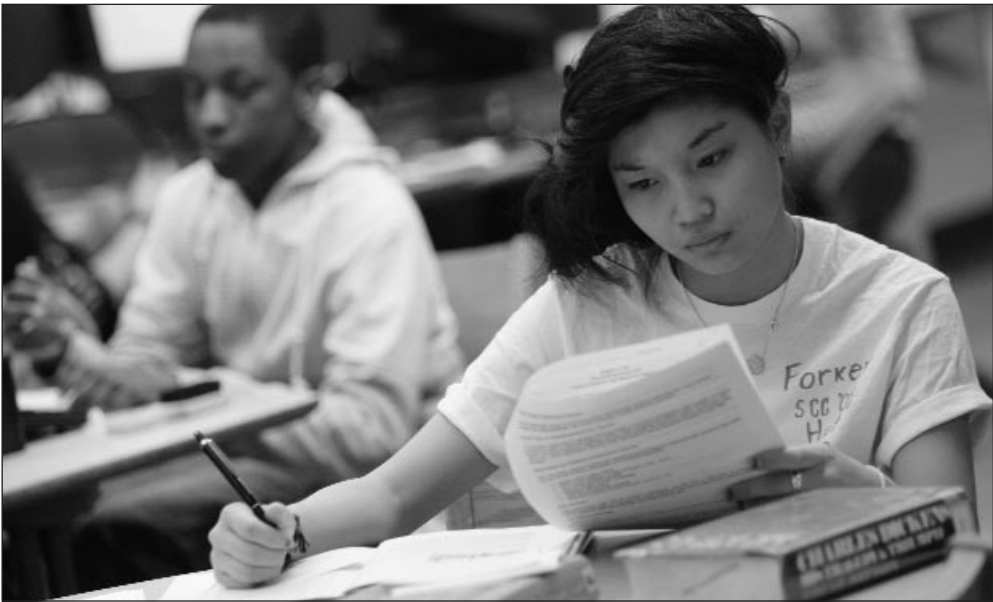
The *Connection* also includes a set of homework activities with questions parents can use to guide a child in practicing a particular skill; Word Workout to encourage family discussion about vocabulary words and spelling lists; and Take Home Stories for families to read together. Reading is the primary building block for all learning, and the special emphasis in grade three is intended to ensure that students have learned to read by grade three so that they can read to learn in higher grades.

In the sixth grade, there is an emphasis on good behavior, attendance and citizenship. Career planning also starts in sixth grade, when students are encouraged to start thinking more seriously about what they might want to be someday and the education they will need to get there.

Grade 9 is one of the most important steps along the *Pathways to the Promise*, as grades, test scores and attendance all count toward Promise eligibility.

“Ninth grade is a big transition year because it is the first time credits count toward graduation,” said Nancy Kodman, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives who works on the High School Excellence team. “We start measuring students against the Promise criteria.”

Every ninth-grader in Pittsburgh Public Schools received a letter in the mail in February which included their 4Sight test scores from



Pittsburgh Allderdice ninth-grader Vaughan Skinker is the picture of concentration.

September and January and an evaluation of their Promise eligibility at this point.

All other students in grades 3-11 also received letters with their 4Sight scores. “We’re encouraging parents to talk to their kids about their future,” Jones said.

As another way of increasing awareness about the Promise and the importance of higher education, PPS asked Promise-eligible colleges to donate their banners to hang in the high schools. The banners provide visual reminders to the students of what’s possible if they continue to “Dream Big” and “Work Hard.”

Individual schools also find unique ways to keep the Promise in the forefront. At Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8, teachers wear various college sweatshirts on Friday. Fourth-graders at Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5 are assigned to write about how the Pittsburgh Promise will help them achieve their goals.

Promise Nights were held at 11 high schools

in November and December for students and parents. The evenings began with a complimentary dinner, followed by representatives of Pittsburgh Public Schools and The Pittsburgh Promise explaining Promise eligibility, the application process, and how Promise scholarships work with federal and state financial aid.

Jones said attendance at the Promise Nights exceeded expectations, including Dec. 11 at Pittsburgh Westinghouse, when more than 200 people came out on a cold, snowy night.

The application process for 2009 Promise scholarships started in February. Jones said all eligible seniors are encouraged to apply, even if they currently plan to attend college out of state, in case their plans change.

Information about *Pathways to the Promise* and the Pittsburgh Promise is available on the District Web site ([www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us)) or by calling the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920.



# Technically speaking, students have options

BY RICH FAHEY

The days when you could be a high school graduate – and, in some cases, even a high school dropout – and still make a wage that could support a family are all but gone.

Almost every occupation today requires at least some type of post-secondary education.

Because the playing field has changed, so has the Pittsburgh Public Schools' approach to career and technical education. The District is starting earlier to introduce students to opportunities that are available, as well as what they will have to do to succeed in them.

Dr. Julia Stewart, Executive Director of Career and Technical Education, said the effort to help students make wise career choices begins at the elementary level and continues through middle and high school. Stewart said the changes include more rigorous academic standards and an emphasis on the skills needed to compete.

"We let students know what's out there, the education required, and the compensation," she said. "We try to enlighten students and parents on what the job market will look like in the future."

The changing landscape means students today will be prepared for emerging areas such as pre-engineering, robotics, biotechnology, the environment, computer technology, business and finance, health careers, advanced manufacturing and the building trades.

The changes in career and technical education have come partly in response to urging from the federal government. Former President George W. Bush signed the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006 into law on Aug. 12, 2006. The law provides for an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students, strengthening of the connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and improving state and local accountability.

Another part of the process in upgrading career and technical education was the name change about six years ago for the field formerly known as vocational education, said Stewart.

"There was definitely a negative image in the past associated with vocational education," she said. "There were those who thought it was for students who couldn't make it in a regular high school and those who thought it was an easy way to graduate."

Ron Painter, Executive Director of the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, a nonprofit, government-related agency that oversees the network of Pennsylvania CareerLink centers, applauded the District's efforts to upgrade career and technical education and said an emphasis on

post-graduate education is key.

"A high school diploma is a bare minimum for a decent job, and the vast majority of employers require something more," he said. "It doesn't have to be a four-year degree. It could be certifications in certain technical areas."

Painter said financial services, health care and education will continue to be areas of job growth in the Pittsburgh area, and educational requirements vary in those areas.

He added there are also career opportunities in areas that may require only technical training or certification such as heating and air-conditioning, the trades and manufacturing.

But just as important as education and skill sets are the so-called "soft skills" – reliability, taking supervision, the ability to work as a member of a team. Painter said communication skills are paramount, no matter what the job, citing a decision by Robert Morris University to have its

accounting majors take writing and speaking courses in order to be able to communicate more effectively with their future clients.

While Stewart agreed that not every student will need a four-year college degree, she emphasized that all students are being prepared for college as well as the workforce. Instead of general math, students are encouraged to take algebra and geometry; instead of a general science course, physics and chemistry. Some will be fine with an associate's degree

or specific technical training, Stewart said, but they will have the foundation they need if they decide to pursue that four-year degree.

The District is also looking to expand its involvement in the e-mentoring program being run by Smart Futures, the non-profit group working to make career education a part of every Pennsylvania classroom.

Romy Banks, Director of Outreach for Smart Futures, said 500 students are currently being mentored in 10 counties around Pittsburgh, 64 of them at Pittsburgh Westinghouse and Pittsburgh Carrick high schools.

Banks said she is seeking more working and retired adults and mature college students to serve as mentors in the program, and those interested can go to [www.pa-mentor.org](http://www.pa-mentor.org) to contact her and get more information.

"I do believe we will be expanding the program to more career and technical education students," said Stewart, who herself has signed up to be a mentor. "All the feedback from students and teachers has been positive."



## Districtwide

### Pittsburgh Oliver and Pittsburgh Perry at Rendell press conference

Students and families from Pittsburgh Oliver and Pittsburgh Perry attended Gov. Rendell's press conference on Feb. 18 at CCAC on the Pennsylvania Tuition Relief Fund. A few of the students had an opportunity to ask the governor questions at the conclusion of the press conference.

### Inauguration activities

On Jan. 20 students in schools throughout the District celebrated the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Inspired and motivated, students discussed this historic event with teachers and peers. Students at Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8 assembled in the morning to participate in a professional interactive dramatization of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that brought to life four of his powerful speeches. The presentation framed the importance of the day's events and set the stage for viewing the inauguration. In other schools students assembled in auditoriums and gymnasiums to watch the ceremony and 46 students and six teachers from Pittsburgh Schenley High School made the trip to Washington, D.C. to witness the event in person.

### Lions Club Peace Poster contest

Students from Pittsburgh Sunnyside K-8 and Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 have been recognized for their art and writing talent. Eighth-grade students Jordyn Reblock of Pittsburgh Sunnyside K-8 and Latrice McGinnis of Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 were among the top five winners of the Bloomfield/Lawrenceville Lions Club Peace Poster Contest recognized at a dinner held on Feb. 3, 2009. Jordan took second place while Latrice took fourth. Joined by family, art teachers and school principles the winners each received a monetary award of \$20 and a trophy.

### Scottish Rite Essay Contest

Lyric Jackson, seventh-grader at Pittsburgh Sunnyside K-8, and Parys Durham, eighth-grader at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, were recognized along with students from 10 other Allegheny County schools for their participation in the Scottish Rite Valley of Pittsburgh essay contest "What My Family Means to Me." The students were honored at a dinner held at the Pittsburgh Masonic Temple.

### Parent Book Club

The Title I Parents' Book Club is meeting again. Once a month, parents receive a book to read and the following month they meet for an open discussion about the story. The focus of the program is to model reading and reading comprehension for students at home.

### District 9 Skills USA competition

Several PPS Career and Technical Education (CTE) students recently participated in the District 9 Skills USA competition held Jan. 20-21 at Central Westmoreland Career Center and the Somerset Career and Technical Center. The Skills USA mission is to help students become world-class workers and responsible American citizens. Congratulations to the following students and their teacher sponsors:

Monica Hall with model Nikeisha Depree-Slack of Pittsburgh Oliver placed second in the Nail Care event. Rachel Mooney of Pittsburgh Brashear took third place in the Auto Collision Repair with a \$2,000 scholarship to Baran Institute. Valarie Diggs with model Jayme Ordean of Pittsburgh Oliver placed third in the Esthetics event. Joshua Kramer of Pittsburgh Brashear placed third and earned a \$2,000 scholarship to Baran Institute.

### Army Athlete of the Week

ESPN Radio named Markel Walker of Pittsburgh Schenley High School and Shalonda Winton of Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School as candidates for 1250 ESPN's Army Athlete of the Week. Each week ESPN Radio names four local area high school athletes as candidates for this award. The winner is decided by voting that takes place exclusively on [www.1250ESPN.com](http://www.1250ESPN.com).

### Expressions of Freedom contest winners

Forty-seven students were winners in the eighth annual Expressions of Freedom writing contest sponsored by Citizens Bank. The contest recognizes outstanding achievement in writing skills, historical accuracy, creativity and substance. In celebration of the 45th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, the contest asked students to write a short essay describing what they could do to fulfill Dr. King's dream.

The winners were recognized at an awards ceremony and received a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond from Citizens Bank as well as the opportunity to record select portions of their essays for broadcast on WAMO-FM or WPXI-TV in honor of Black History Month.

The winners were: Alexandria Adams, Pittsburgh Colfax; Todd Best, Pittsburgh Fulton; Patience



We try to enlighten students and parents on what the job market will look like in the future.

Dr. Julia Stewart



Cansler, Pittsburgh Arsenal; Sincere Carter, Pittsburgh Fulton; Darissa Chapman, Pittsburgh Oliver; Jaleel Culter, Pittsburgh Fulton; Daniella Eglash, Pittsburgh Sterrett; Noor El-Dehaibi, Pittsburgh Greenfield; Cheyenne Figurski, Pittsburgh Concord; Mallory Flohr, Pittsburgh Arlington; Tyler Gee, Pittsburgh Fulton; Lindsey Grinage, Pittsburgh Lincoln; Maria Hall, Pittsburgh Schiller; Indigo Hymes, Pittsburgh King; Shakur James, Pittsburgh Fulton; Erika Jefferson, Pittsburgh Fulton; Anbria Johnson, Pittsburgh Frick; Virginia Kane, Pittsburgh Fulton; Caquan Kennedy, Pittsburgh Westwood; Geneva Kenney, Pittsburgh Westwood; Delmar Kirkland, Pittsburgh Schenley; Elizabeth Koslow, Pittsburgh Brookline; Tayshauna Lester, Pittsburgh Allegheny; Alexandria Loar, Pittsburgh Langley; Larry McLaughlin, Pittsburgh Fulton; Paige Meyer, Pittsburgh South Brook; Austin Mowrey, Pittsburgh Fulton; Oleg Mykhayliv, Pittsburgh Brashear; Robert Nelson, Pittsburgh Allderice; Bryan Noel, Pittsburgh Fort Pitt; Aaliyah Owens, Pittsburgh Fulton; Theodore Papazekos, Pittsburgh Liberty; Ja'Taya Pendleton, Pittsburgh Morrow; Shauna Purtell, Pittsburgh Carrick; Aysha Salter-Volz, Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA; Ryan Seiavitch, Pittsburgh Allderice; Anastasia Shabalov, Pittsburgh Minadeo; Chaz Shields, Pittsburgh Arsenal; Richard Stewart, Pittsburgh Classical; Tyreese Taylor, Pittsburgh Vann; Trey Twyman, Pittsburgh Fulton; Love Wanyoike, Pittsburgh Carmalt; Jamir Washington, Pittsburgh Fulton; Sherdina Waymer, Pittsburgh Fulton; Monet Wilkins, Pittsburgh Fulton; Daysean Woodson, Pittsburgh Grandview; Adam Zell, Pittsburgh CAPA.

K-5 schools

Pittsburgh Allegheny

The Writing Club, Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5's innovative new academic organization for students in grades 3-5, is designed to capture the hearts of North Side families and friends by focusing on the personal experiences of children through narrative writing. The goal of the Writing Club is to inspire children to become lifelong readers and writers, while allowing them to experience the benefits of being members of a connected community. The Writing Club has worked collaboratively with the staff of SLB Radio Productions, Inc. to create a 3D exhibit in which viewers can see the students and listen to their stories on audio. The narratives also will be aired and available on the SLB Radio

website, and the students' personal narratives will be on exhibit at the Children's Museum in the spring of 2009. Writing teacher Lea Hutson received a grant to fund the Writing Club from the Charm Bracelet Project by submitting a proposal called Amazing Memoirs: A Children's Collection of Personal Narratives. Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8 featured a living museum and an African drum performance as part of the District's annual celebration of Black History Month. Students who took part in the living museum project researched prominent African-Americans in history and then were stationed in the halls as "exhibits" that were still until a touch to the hand brought them to life. The student African drum performance featured master drummers Lamont Chatman and Maurice Redwood. Students, parents, families, and community members all had an opportunity to visit the living museum.

Pittsburgh Concord K-5

At Pittsburgh Concord, the students are reminded each month that coming to school every day is an important part of being "Promise-Ready." Counselor Diane Dwulit calculates the highest percentage of attendance for each of the 14 homerooms and the data is then displayed each month in the hallway. The Gold Cup goes to the class with the best monthly attendance. This incentive has increased attendance and created a friendly competition between homerooms as students become more aware that attendance promotes school success.

Pittsburgh Linden K-5

Students at Pittsburgh Linden followed the tradition of Martinstag by conducting a food drive for the East End Cooperative Ministry (EEMC) during the week of November 10-14. Martinstag is a German celebration honoring the generosity of Martin of Tours, a Roman soldier, who without thinking of himself gave half his cloak to a freezing beggar. Students commemorated this act of selfless giving with donations of non-perishable food items during the week to benefit families served by EECM. Finally, during the culminating parade on Nov. 14th, students and teachers gathered around the peace pole in front of the school and proceeded down Linden Avenue, singing and stopping at designated houses where they received treats provided by the PTO.

Pittsburgh Minedao PreK-5

On February 12th a mentor training session was held for reading mentors to assist Pittsburgh Minadeo's students in meeting their goal of reading 25 books



during the school year. Thanks to the Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the initial training went very well and there are currently 15 Minadeo Mentors available to read with students. Plans are in the works to recruit and train more reading mentors.

Pittsburgh Woolslair K-5

On February 27th Pittsburgh Woolslair celebrated their Character Trait of the Month – Freedom – with a unique culminating celebration. Each month the school selects a character trait which is discussed in morning class meetings and throughout the month via weekly activities. Making this month's culminating activity even more outstanding was the attendance of special guests Technical Sergeant Matthew Bruzdewicz and his squadron. The squadron recently adopted Pittsburgh Woolslair after receiving letters of encouragement from a number of students, including Cheyenne and Hunter Rocco, Bruzdewicz's niece and nephew, while serving the past four months in Kyrgyzstan. At the celebration, Sergeant Bruzdewicz presented the school with an American Flag that had flown over Bagdad on Christmas Day and also a "United We Stand" flag which was signed by all 450 members of his unit. In return Cheyenne and Hunter Rocco presented the Sergeant with a Thank You banner signed by the students and staff; and second graders recited a poem called "Heroes" in tribute of Technical Sergeant Bruzdewicz's service to America.

K-8 schools

Pittsburgh Faison PreK-8

On February 23rd, Pittsburgh Faison received a "Spirit of King" Award Certificate of Excellence from Kingsley Association, Port Authority of Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh Pirates for creating a banner representing Martin Luther King's dream of unity and peace. Included in the awards ceremony was a musical slide show of Martin Luther King and other well known African-American heroes presented by Master of Ceremonies Malik Bankston. He also explained that the East Liberty Bus way was called the Martin Luther King Busway and the busway parklet was named after Wilhelmina Byrd Brown, the "Spirit of King" Award Program's first recipient. The Pittsburgh

Faison choir performed a medley of freedom songs as part of the program.

Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8

Pittsburgh Manchester students and staff celebrated the 105th birthday of Dr. Seuss in a big way with over more than 25 guest readers. Among the guest readers were Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Board Member McCrea, The Cat In The Hat and the Pittsburgh Public School's own mascot, Owlbert Einstein. Each reader reaffirmed the importance of reading for the students of the school.

Pittsburgh Miller PreK-8

Pittsburgh Miller held an essay contest for 5th through 8th graders that focused on the Pittsburgh Promise. The contest, which began in January, was initiated by the Miller Young Writers Project that was created to give Miller students an opportunity to apply skills they have learned in the classroom to various writing projects. Students were required to first turn in a "Write Tools" outline, followed by a rough draft of their essay and lastly they submitted final copies in mid February. Topics regarding the Pittsburgh Promise were: 5th grade – Convince someone to donate to the Pittsburgh Promise; 6th and 7th grade – "What is the Pittsburgh Promise?"; 8th grade – Tell a friend how to get "Promise Ready". In addition to being recognized at an awards ceremony and receiving gift cards, contest winners read their essays on the family radio show "The Saturday Light Brigade" airing on WRCT 88.3 on March 7th. The winners were: 8th grader Hassan Howze, 7th graders Marshaie Newson and William Johnson, 6th graders Alexandria Williams and Tiara Hurt, and 5th graders Nyjee Mitchell and DeV Vaughn Harris.

Pittsburgh Schaeffer K-8

Pittsburgh Schaeffer Primary held an assembly on Thursday, February 12, 2009 to honor Health/Physical Education teacher Joshua White. Representatives from UPMC, DelMonte Foods, Heinz, and Sonni Abatta from KDKA News were present to award a \$4,000.00 Pittsburgh on the Move grant to Mr. White and Pittsburgh Schaeffer. Pittsburgh on the Move is a part of America on the Move, a national initiative that provides funding and support for programs that help students stay active and understand the importance of exercise and nutrition. Pittsburgh Schaeffer Primary will use the funds to help Mr. White become a certified Yoga Instructor. He will then incorporate the techniques and self-control strategies into the daily physical education curriculum.

Pittsburgh Westwood K-8

On February 27th Pittsburgh Westwood celebrated Black History month with a school-wide tribute to African Americans who have helped to shape the history of the United States. The walls of the auditorium came to life with portraits of famous African Americans created by 4th grade students, while on stage kindergarten through third grade students sang "I Believe I Can Fly" and students in grades four through eight performed dances and skits. Also in attendance were a number of prominent African American role models who spoke to students and faculty about their achievements. Later in the afternoon, parents and community members were invited to a repeat performance of the celebration.

Middle Schools

Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8

Pittsburgh Schiller students learned about engineering, programming and robot design as they prepared for and participated in the FIRST LEGO League competition at Carnegie Mellon University's Robotics Center in Lawrenceville in December. The theme was "Climate Connection" and each team had to elevate and insulate a house, extract an ice core sample and test a levee system using a robot made of LEGOS. Each mission had to be completed within 2 ½ minutes.

A team of Pittsburgh Schiller students won a cash prize of \$30 when they took 3rd Place out of the ten participating middle schools in the 2009 IndEEE 500cm Car Race at the Carnegie Science Center on February 21st. Organized by the Pittsburgh Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), the competition was held as part of National Engineering week. It was designed to engage young students in robotics and engineering while also having fun as they applied robotics principles to their cars. Team members were Emily Van Horn, Tyler Sing and Kaylin Herzer, and they were supported by Science teacher Emanuel DiNatale, Technology Specialist Tom Connolly and Principal Paula Heinzman.

Accelerated Learning Academies

Pittsburgh Fort Pitt PreK-5

Pittsburgh Fort Pitt is the first school in western Pennsylvania to be involved in the PNC School Bank Program. A unique partnership with PNC Bank, this program connects PNC branch



banks with neighborhood schools to teach children to be fiscally responsible and to enable students to do banking at school. Students learn about passbooks, make monthly deposits, get statements and learn about how money grows in their own personal bank accounts. In addition, student leaders are trained as bank tellers and as marketers of the program. Students in grades 1-5 may participate in the program. At Fort Pitt the program is being coordinated by Mary Ellen Sullivan from PNC Community Development Bankin, and Mathew Ebberts and Michael Tempest from the Bloomfield Branch. Fort Pitt was chosen because of its partnership with the Bloomfield Garfield Corporation under the umbrella of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Ms Sullivan emphasizes that PNC sees the need for financial education in the early part of a child's life, and hopes the program will expand to other schools.

**Pittsburgh King PreK-8**

At Pittsburgh King, students are invited to participate in Everybody Wins, a lunchtime literacy and mentoring program through Beginning with Books that pairs Pittsburgh King students with volunteers from local companies and other community organizations to share lunch, conversation and good books. Pittsburgh King's fifth- and sixth-grade students also have the opportunity to participate in Point Park University's Champions of Character Program. This mentoring partnership links university athletes with students in local schools and is designed to instill an understanding of character values in sports and provide practical tools for student athletes, coaches and parents to use in modeling exemplary character traits.

**High Schools**

**Pittsburgh Allderdice High School**

Donald Nania, teacher and coach at Pittsburgh Allderdice, was selected by the University of Pittsburgh as a PITT Varsity Letter Club Awardee of Distinction for his community, professional and athletic achievements. The Varsity Letter Club is the equivalent of Pitt's Athletic Hall of Fame. Among the other honorees this year is NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino, Billy Knight, Tony Dorsett and Mike Ditka. He is a member of the Health and Physical Education staff at Pittsburgh Allderdice and is currently head baseball coach, head wrestling coach and assistant soccer coach for the Pittsburgh Allderdice Dragons. His

lifetime record in baseball is 70-21. He has also coached volleyball, swimming, softball and football during his 30-year career, and has a long list of community involvement activities, including National Youth Sports Director for the University of Pittsburgh and coach and board member for Franklin Regional Youth Sports.

For the second year in a row, Pittsburgh Allderdice earned a silver medal in US News & World Report's America's Best High Schools. Based on the key principles that a great high school must serve all of its students well and successfully educate them across a range of performance indicators, the schools were assessed by determining whether the students were performing better than the state average in math and reading, whether the least-advantaged students were performing better than average for similar students in the state, and determining which schools produced the best college-level achievement for the highest percentage of their students based on Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate test data. Pittsburgh Allderdice was the only Pennsylvania urban school where students are assigned rather than selected to earn Silver status.

**Pittsburgh Brashear High School**

Students from Pittsburgh Brashear participated in the 2008 Greater Pittsburgh Student Voices Civics Fair in December at the Heinz History Center, making an impressive showing and bringing home a number of first- and second-place awards in a variety of categories. Students from across the District participated by sharing projects they had conducted during their studies of the fall campaign season, elections and voting process. Entries were judged on research, quality of the presentation and how the project was shared with others. Earning second-place awards were Michael Baker in the Voter Education Material category for his Web site on the features of voting; Bryan Delany for his op-ed on negative campaigning in elections; Taylor Hughes and Marissa Mudrich for their Community Project that raised funds for kids at Children's Hospital in the category of Fundraising to Help Those in Need; and Chelsea Minsinger and Sara Zahorchak in the category of the Fourth Estate for their PowerPoint presentation of "How the Media Affects Elections." First-place awards were earned by Katherine Derrick, Danielle Paez and Alyssa Rupert in the Voter Education Material category for their brochure about the Electoral College and whether it is still effective today, and by Sarah Long for her op-ed on negative



campaigning.

Michael Bosco, a Physical Education I.T.L. and teacher at Pittsburgh Brashear, had his book "The Breath of Hellspur: A Hero's Tale" published by iUniverse, Inc. The fantasy-fiction work is an easy read for high-schoolers and is available for purchase both at [www.BarnesandNoble.com](http://www.BarnesandNoble.com) and [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

**Pittsburgh CAPA High School**

Pittsburgh CAPA has been nominated for the national Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. In addition to being honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school receives a plaque and flag signifying their status, Blue Ribbon schools serve as models for other schools throughout the nation.

Pittsburgh CAPA marimba player Jeremy Malvin and violinist Hope Vannucci were among the 2009 Pittsburgh Concert Society Young Artist scholarship winners. After auditioning in early January the winners received a \$500 Perlow scholarship and will perform in a concert in March.

Pittsburgh CAPA ninth-grade Civics classes donated the proceeds of their January performance and fundraiser (totaling \$1,188.75) to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. The students planned the fundraiser for the food bank to meet the Civics course requirement for community service. Students researched world hunger and participated in a panel discussion with representatives from Just Harvest, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and the local food movement. They also created a bulletin board with hunger facts from around the world, read hunger facts during morning announcements and solicited donations from the student body. Finally, on Jan. 13, students performed songs, poetry and dances related to hunger. Audience members bid on silent auction items donated from area merchants and bought student-created art and baking. In addition, several students volunteered at neighborhood food pantries.

**Pittsburgh Carrick High School**

Pittsburgh Carrick tennis player Alexandra Warble received the

KDKA Extra Effort Award. The award recognizes high school students for outstanding community service, academics and extracurricular activity participation.

Students Anthony Comport, Kristin Istik and Nicollette Byrne were presented with awards by Sen. Jim Ferlo and Lynn Illig from Matthews International at the City County Building on Feb. 12, as winners in the Public Art in Public Places Contest. Each student received \$250 for the winning photograph or essay.

The Pittsburgh Carrick High School students and staff, led by Health Technology instructor Cynthia Falls, collected personal items for the Light of Life Rescue Mission in hopes of making the holiday season easier for local families. The students and staff collected a total of five boxes of soap, shampoo, body wash and other personal products. In addition, Debra Parham, Carrick Cafeteria Manager, made homemade scarves as part of the project.

**Pittsburgh Schenley High School**

Twenty-nine students of the Class of 2008 International Baccalaureate Programme were honored at a recognition ceremony held at Pittsburgh Schenley High School. The IB Diploma Programme is a two-year comprehensive and rigorous pre-university curriculum leading to a diploma for highly motivated secondary school students ages 16-19. To receive the IB diploma, students must receive passing grades in six IB subjects, write an independent research paper, fulfill 150 hours of community service and demonstrate an understanding of the Theory of Knowledge. The Diploma recipients are: Michael Bennet, Emily Campbell, Rhonda Dinkins, Emma Donoughe, Joshua Falk, Lindsay Hayes, Nathan Howell, Alana Karsh, Caitlin Kegley, Hannah Thyberg, Stephanie Mauro, Molly McManus, Aliza Resnick, Hannah Ridge, Anna Rosenblum, Katherine Scheines, Ameeta Schmitt, Samuel Suzuki, and Ellie Tecza. The students who received the Certificate are: Margaret Deptola, Danielle Dougherty, Gregory Galuska, David Harris, James Jermany Jr., Minuet Kurjakovic, Ian McIntyre, Alan McLain, Jena Meyer and Andrew Miller.

**Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School**

On Feb. 11, the Pittsburgh Westinghouse cosmetology class attended the annual Career and Technical Education Celebration sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The event, held at the State Capitol in Harrisburg, showcased student projects representing all areas of career and technical education. The students also toured the

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Capitol before eating lunch with State Representatives Jake Wheatley Jr., Joseph Preston and Anthony DeLuca. The representatives shared legislation critical to career and technical education. Before concluding the visit, the students were introduced on the House floor.

Six students from Pittsburgh Westinghouse — Clayton Jackson, Glenn Smith, Janaya Hanner, Reginald Moore, Richardo Grimsley and Therae Crumpton — had works published in the 2008 Ralph Munn Creative Writing Anthology, written by Allegheny County high school students and compiled by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Teen Specialists. Each student had one or more original poems selected for the anthology that included works from approximately 100 high school students from 32 schools across Allegheny County.

**Special Schools**

**Pittsburgh Pioneer**

Lorraine Crawshaw-Julius, who teaches at Pittsburgh Pioneer, was honored for her selection as 2008 Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Adapted physical education is designed to provide the best physical education and physical activity opportunities possible for students with disabilities. The PSAHPERD annually recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the fields of adapted physical education and adapted physical activity. Crawshaw-Julius has been teaching physical education at Pittsburgh Pioneer for 18 years.



# PITTSBURGH DIRECTORY schools

## K-5 Schools

**Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5**

Viola Burgess, Principal  
810 Arch St., 15212  
412-323-4100

**Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5**

Ruthie Rea, Principal  
215 39th St., 15201  
412-622-7307

**Pittsburgh Banksville PreK-5**

Dr. Patricia Washington, Principal  
1001 Carnahan Rd., 15216  
412-571-7400

**Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5**

Sally Rifugiato, Principal  
810 Rockland Ave., 15216  
412-571-7390

**Pittsburgh Concord K-5**

Susan Barie, Principal  
2350 Brownsville Rd., 15210  
412-885-7755

**Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5**

Monica Lamar, Principal  
6200 Stanton Ave., 15206  
412-665-5000

**Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5**

Kevin Bivins, Principal  
5799 Hampton St., 15206  
412-665-4590

**Pittsburgh Grandview K-5**

Dr. Ethel Flam, Principal  
845 McLain St., 15210  
412-488-6605

**Pittsburgh Liberty K-5**

Barabara Soroczak, Acting Principal  
601 Filbert St., 15232  
412-622-8450

**Pittsburgh Linden K-5**

Carla Berdnik, Principal  
725 S. Linden Ave., 15208  
412-665-3996

**Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5**

Glory Getty, Principal  
6502 Lilac St., 15217  
412-422-3520

**Pittsburgh Morrow PreK-5**

Dr. Annette Scott-Piper, Principal  
1611 Davis Ave., 15212  
412-734-6600

**Pittsburgh Phillips K-5**

Rodney Necciai, Principal  
1901 Sarah St., 15203  
412-488-5190

**Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5**

*Primary Campus (PreK-1)*  
Vincent Lewandowski, Principal  
200 The Boulevard, 15210  
412-885-7788

**Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5**

*Intermediate Campus (2-5)*  
Vincent Lewandowski, Principal  
17 W. Cherryhill St., 15210  
412-885-7780

**Pittsburgh Spring Hill K-5**

Todd Van Horn, Principal  
1351 Damas St., 15212  
412-323-3000

**Pittsburgh West Liberty K-5**

Kathy Moran, Principal  
785 Dunster St., 15226  
412-571-7420

**Pittsburgh Whittier K-5**

Elaine Wallace, Principal  
150 Meridan St., 15211  
412-488-8211

**Pittsburgh Woolslair K-5**

Victoria Burgess, Principal  
501 40th St., 15224  
412-623-8800

## K-8 Schools

**Pittsburgh Brookline K-8**

Valerie Lucas, Principal  
500 Woodbourne Ave., 15226  
412-571-7380

**Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK-8**

Dr. Sandra Och, Principal  
1550 Breining St., 15226  
412-885-7760

**Pittsburgh Faison PreK-8**

*Primary Campus (PreK-4)*  
Yvona Smith, Principal  
7430 Tioga St., 15208  
412-247-0305

**Pittsburgh Faison PreK-8**

*Intermediate Campus (5-8)*  
Kevin McGuire, Principal  
8080 Bennett St., 15221  
412-247-7840

**Pittsburgh Greenfield K-8**

Eric Rosenthal, Principal  
1 Alger St., 15207  
412-422-3535

**Pittsburgh Lincoln K-8**

*Primary Campus (K-4)*  
Dr. Regina Holley, Principal  
328 Lincoln Ave., 15206  
412-665-3980

**Pittsburgh Lincoln**

*Intermediate Campus (5-8)*  
Dr. Regina Holley, Principal  
7109 Hermitage St., 15208  
412-247-7880

**Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8**

Henry Stephens, Principal  
Theresa Cherry, Acting Principal  
1612 Manhattan St., 15233  
412-323-3100

**Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8**

Edward Littlehale, Principal  
1290 Mifflin Rd., 15207  
412-464-4350

**Pittsburgh Miller PreK-8**

Alvin Gipson, Principal  
2055 Bedford Ave., 15219  
412-338-3830

**Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-8**

Cynthia Wallace, Principal  
201 S. Graham St., 15206  
412-665-2010

**Pittsburgh Schaeffer K-8**

*Primary Campus (K-3)*  
Dr. Cynthia Zurchin, Co-Principal  
LaVerne Anthony, Co-Principal  
1235 Clairhaven St., 15205  
412-928-6560

**Pittsburgh Schaeffer K-8**

*Intermediate Campus (4-8)*  
Dr. Cynthia Zurchin, Co-Principal  
LaVerne Anthony, Co-Principal  
3128 Allendale St., 15204  
412-778-2170

**Pittsburgh Stevens K-8**

Virginia Hill, Principal  
822 Crucible St., 15220  
412-928-6550

**Pittsburgh Sunnyside K-8**

Laura Dadey, Principal  
4801 Stanton Ave., 15201  
412-665-2040

**Pittsburgh Vann K-8**

Derrick Hardy, Principal  
631 Watt St., 15219  
412-622-8455

**Pittsburgh Westwood K-8**

Denyse Littles-Cullens, Principal  
508 Shadyhill Rd., 15205  
412-928-6570

## Middle Schools

**Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8**

Toni Kendrick, Principal  
810 Arch St., 15212  
412-323-4115

**Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8**

Debra Rucki, Principal  
220 40th St., 15201  
412-622-5740

**Pittsburgh Classical 6-8**

Valerie Merlo, Principal  
1463 Chartiers Ave., 15220  
412-928-3110

**Pittsburgh Frick 6-8**

Dr. Wayne Walters, Principal  
107 Thackeray St., 15213  
412-622-5980

**Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA 6-8**

Ronald Jones, Principal  
5525 Columbo St., 15206  
412-665-2000

**Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8**

Paula Heinzman, Principal  
1018 Peralta St., 15212  
412-323-4190

**Pittsburgh South Brook 6-8**

Gina Reichert, Principal  
779 Dunster St., 15226  
412-572-8170

**Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8**

Dr. Deborah Ann Cox, Principal  
595 Crane Ave., 15216  
412-572-8130

**Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8**

Sarah Sumpter, Principal  
7100 Reynolds St., 15208  
412-247-7870

## Accelerated Learning Academies (ALA)

**Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8**

*Primary Campus (PreK-2)*  
Dr. Cindi Muehlbauer, Principal  
2429 Charcot St., 15210  
412-488-4700

**Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8**

*Intermediate Campus (3-8)*  
Dr. Cindi Muehlbauer, Principal  
2500 Jonquil Way, 15210  
412-488-3641

**Pittsburgh Colfax K-8**

David May-Stein, Principal  
2332 Beechwood Blvd., 15217  
412-422-3525

**Pittsburgh Fort Pitt PreK-5**

Verna Arnold, Principal  
5101 Hillcrest St., 15224  
412-665-2020

**Pittsburgh King PreK-8**

Joan Murphy, Principal  
50 Montgomery Place, 15212  
412-323-4160

**Pittsburgh Murray PreK-8**

James Nath, Principal  
800 Rectenwald St., 15210  
412-488-6815

**Pittsburgh Northview PreK-5**

David May, Principal  
310 Mt. Pleasant Rd., 15214  
412-323-3130

**Pittsburgh Rooney 6-8**

Jennifer Mikula, Principal  
3530 Fleming Ave., 15212  
412-732-6700

**Pittsburgh Weil PreK-8**

Mark McClinchie, Principal  
2250 Centre Ave., 15219  
412-338-3840

## High Schools

**Pittsburgh Allderdice High School**

Robert Scherrer, Principal  
2409 Shady Ave., 15217  
412-422-4800

**Pittsburgh Brashear High School**

John Vater, Principal  
590 Crane Ave., 15216  
412-571-7300

**Pittsburgh CAPA High School**

Dr. Rhonda Taliaferro, Principal  
111 Ninth Street, 15222  
412-338-6100

**Pittsburgh Carrick High School**

Dr. Jennifer Murphy, Principal  
125 Parkfield St., 15210  
412-885-7700

**Pittsburgh Langley High School**

Linda Baehr, Principal  
2940 Sheraden Blvd., 15204  
412-778-2100

**Pittsburgh Milliones 6–12  
University Preparatory School**

Dr. Sito Narcisse, Principal  
3117 Centre Ave., 15219  
412-622-5900

**Pittsburgh Oliver High School**

Dennis Chakey, Principal  
2323 Brighton Rd., 15212  
412-323-3250

**Pittsburgh Peabody High School**

Melissa Friez, Principal  
515 N. Highland Ave., 15206  
412-665-2050

**Pittsburgh Perry High School**

Nina Sacco, Principal  
3875 Perrysville Ave., 15214  
412-323-3400

**Pittsburgh Schenley High School**

Sophia Facaros, Principal  
129 Denniston Ave., 15206  
412-665-2260

**Pittsburgh Westinghouse High**

Dr. Shemeca Crenshaw, Principal  
1101 N. Murtland Ave., 15208  
412-665-3940

## Special Schools

**Pittsburgh Conroy**

Rudley Mrvos, Principal  
1398 Page St., 15233  
412-323-3105

**Pittsburgh Gifted Center**

Dr. Jerry Minsinger, Principal  
1400 Crucible St., 15205  
412-338-3820

**Pittsburgh McNaugher**

Jane Doncaster, Principal  
2610 Maple St., 15214  
412-323-3115

**Pittsburgh Pioneer**

Dr. Sylbia Kunst, Principal  
775 Dunster St., 15226  
412-571-7405

**Pittsburgh South Side Annex  
Transition Center**

Rhonda Brown  
93 South 10th St., 15203  
412-488-5185

**Pittsburgh Student Achievement Ctr.**

Dalhart Dobbs Jr., Principal  
925 Brushton Ave., 15208  
412-247-7860

## Early Childhood Education Centers

**Pittsburgh Bon Air E.C. Center**

252 Fordyce St., 15210  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh Chartiers E.C. Center**

3799 Chartiers Ave., 15204  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh Conroy E.C. Center**

1398 Page St., 15233  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh Homewood E.C. Center**

7100 Hamilton Ave., 15208  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh McCleary E.C. Center**

5251 Holmes St., 15201  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh Reizenstein E.C. Center**

129 Denniston Ave., 15206  
412-325-4291

**Pittsburgh Spring Garden E.C.  
Center**

1501 Spring Garden Ave., 15212  
412-325-4291





Students and staff in the City Connections programs include, front from left: Brandon Carter, Sheryl Milch, Nicole Denham and Nikki Layton; back from left: paraprofessional Sherri McCary, Richard Ge, J.D. Keller, aide Alison Johnson, Terrance Wood, Leonard Sly and speech/language therapist Tom Wyse.

# Students prepare to live independently

LIFE SKILLS: from Page 20

## Community Based Vocational Education (CBVE)

CBVE prepares 107 students in grades 9-12 at six Pittsburgh high schools—Pittsburgh Allderdice, Pittsburgh Brashear, Pittsburgh Langley, Pittsburgh Schenley, Pittsburgh Peabody and Pittsburgh Perry—who require support or life skills for future employment.

Program facilitator Peg Fitzgerald said the goal is to give the students—who are either intellectually challenged or autistic—a true job experience in the community.

The first step is to meet with students, parents and teachers to discover the student's interests and skills. Students also take an entrance survey to further explore their interests. Some students may be non-readers, so photos and pictures are used. "We take the data and try to match the students up with a job experience," said Fitzgerald.

In the ninth grade, students may go into the community once a week as a volunteer. In grade 10, students go into the community to experience a job once a week. In grades 11 and 12, they go out to a job for a couple of hours a day twice a week.

Students may start out working in a job in one area — food service, for example — and later decide they want to move on to something else. Students do pieces of a job while working to master a certain task or skill.

"This is not free labor," Fitzgerald said, noting that the program complies with all state laws governing child labor. There are weekly reports for parents and, at the end of nine weeks, a grade that notes a student's progress.

"The program gives students the chance to experience public transportation, provides self-esteem and a chance to see what the real world of work is like," said Fitzgerald.

## City Connections

Gayle Bair, educational coordinator for City Connections, said the program serves 70 students

from ages 18 to 21. They live in four apartments owned by the program or in a campus-based facility at Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC).

Bair said most students have moderate disabilities, including being intellectually challenged or autistic, while a handful have learning or physical disabilities.

"We help them get connected to the community by teaching them the life skills they'll need to live on their own while also offering work experience," said Bair.

Students in the apartments, which are staffed by special education teachers, a paraprofessional support staff, and 1-on-1 support as needed, learn how to maintain the household while going out each day to work — be it in the competitive workplace, in a supported job, a workshop or volunteering for programs such as Meals on Wheels or a food bank.

Travel trainers work with students on pedestrian skills and riding Port Authority buses.

"We have each student assessed before they're allowed to travel independently," Bair said.

Each student receives a \$50 a month stipend to help with work-related expenses and give them experience in managing money, using a checkbook and ATM, and interacting with bank staff.

At CCAC, students also learn life skills while being offered the chance to partake in additional courses and training. Modifications to courses and support staff make the courses more accessible to students. Bair said the program recently allowed one student to graduate from the Pittsburgh Technical Institute, while another is working towards an associate's degree in music at CCAC.

City Connections also partners with the non-profit group Achieva, western Pennsylvania's



Nicole Denham and Brandon Carter work in the kitchen.

largest provider of comprehensive services and supports for children and adults with disabilities and their families, to offer students the chance to stay overnight at a different apartment where they can experience the independence of staying away from home and planning their own meals and recreation.

The program is geared toward providing as much independence as possible and having the proper support systems in place when students transition from schools to adult programs.

## Start on Success

Start on Success (SOS) offers students with learning disabilities in nine Pittsburgh high schools the chance to acquire skills they will need to compete in the workplace and eventually work in paid internships for one of several companies across the city.

Students are selected for the program in grade 9 after recommendations from teachers and counselors. Later that year, they begin a daily

Start on Success transition class.

"It's all about self-awareness, determining students' interests and setting goals," said McFall.

In grade 10, they begin a mentorship program with a successful business person.

In grades 11 and 12, they are offered paid internships at participating Pittsburgh businesses and non-profit institutions such as CIGNA Group Insurance, Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Students who qualify — currently 77 of the 250 students in the program — leave school four or five times a week and take public transportation to the two-hour internships, which pay the state minimum wage of \$7.15 per hour and are funded by a Workforce Investment Grant from the Pittsburgh Partnership. Students also earn elective credits toward their diploma.

Sometimes, the internship leads to an offer of employment for a student after

graduation, as was the case with a student working as a nurse's aide at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Shadyside.

Following the interns' high school graduation, SOS provides year-long follow-up.

McFall said some of the students will go on to four-year colleges, some to community college, while others enter the world of competitive employment.

"The skills they might need and we work on are so-called 'soft skills,' such as interacting with fellow employees and taking instructions from an employer," McFall said.

Pittsburgh's SOS program has earned widespread recognition, including being honored by the City Council, awarded the Program of Distinction Award by YouthWorks, named a model transition program by the State Bureau of Special Education, and selected for "What Works in Pennsylvania Schools."



# EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

## Lessons for life

### Transition programs prepare students to live independently

BY RICH FAHEY

Every student dreams of what life will be like when they've completed their education and are on the way to independent living. For students with disabilities, the District offers a trio of programs specifically designed to help them successfully prepare for that day.

Community Based Vocational Education, City Connections and Start on Success (SOS) all are designed for one purpose: equipping students with the life and job skills they'll need when their school days are behind them.

SOS transition coordinator Kathrine McFall noted that while each of the programs brings a different approach to their work, the results, hopefully, are the same. "We're three different programs, but we all have the same goal: helping our students find success after high school."

See LIFE SKILLS Page 19



Alison Johnson, an aide, works with J.D. Keller.



City Connections student Brandon Carter heads to a class under the watchful eye of travel trainer Kelly Graff.

PHOTOS: JASON COHN