

INSIDE the inaugural EDITION

Getting an early start

Pittsburgh PreK
program a success

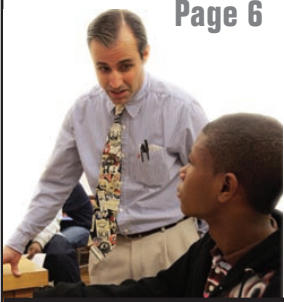
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Read all about us

Pittsburgh Public Schools has a great story to tell. It is a story about *Excellence for All* — every student in every classroom. *The Pittsburgh Educator* tells that story. In this inaugural edition, you will read about programs and partnerships, academics and athletics.

So, like Pittsburgh Roosevelt Librarian Dave Lewandowski and his students, pull up a chair and enjoy our story.

Pittsburgh schools strive for excellence

Every child — at every level of academic performance — can achieve excellence.

That's the premise of *Excellence for All*, Pittsburgh Public Schools' vision for improving the academic performance of all students.

"We're in the process of implementing dramatic changes throughout our schools to ensure that each student has every opportunity to succeed in all aspects of their lives," said Superintendent of Schools Mark Roosevelt.

Roosevelt acknowledged that Pittsburgh, like many urban districts, faces a complex set of challenges. "We know that the problems we face are not simple, and we know that there is no simple 'silver bullet' answer to them," he said, adding that improving student outcomes will require many improvements and expansions to the work already being done in the District. "We have set very ambitious goals, as ambitious as any district in the country, and we have embraced an equally ambitious set of strategies designed to achieve those goals."

A Declaration of Beliefs lays the foundation for the *Excellence for All* framework:

- ◆ All children can learn at high levels;
- ◆ Teachers have a profound impact on

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"Raising the achievement level of all students is paramount, and that is what the District must be held accountable for."

**Thomas Sumpter
Board member**

See EXCELLENCE Page 4

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS VISIT WWW.PPS.K12.PA.US

Celebrating 'Excellence' in Pittsburgh schools

Welcome to the first issue of *The Pittsburgh Educator* and thank you for being a part of the Pittsburgh Public Schools community.

Many wonderful things are happening in our District. We are working hard to give every child the best possible opportunity to succeed, and the stories in this newspaper highlight some of the steps we are taking to improve our educational program. Our vision is *Excellence for All*, and we mean to get there.

With so much going on, it is impossible to cover all of our efforts in a single message. It was difficult to choose just a few items to call to your attention, and that is exciting news. I chose the initiatives below because they will touch the lives of each student, and they are at the heart of our efforts to become one of the nation's premier school districts.

The Pittsburgh Promise

On Dec. 4, 2007, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) transformed The Pittsburgh Promise from a great dream to a real program with its incredible contribution of \$100 million. The Promise is our community commitment to help students and families of the Pittsburgh Public Schools plan, prepare, and pay for education beyond high school. What an extraordinary gift from the community to our students! Once the fundraising is complete (and we know that we still have a great deal of work ahead of us) we will know that from this time



Mark Roosevelt

forward, every Pittsburgh Public Schools student who is willing to "Dream Big" and "Work Hard" to meet the program requirements will have significant dollars to fund their education after high school. Since having the money alone isn't enough to guarantee success after

high school, we are developing "Pathways to the Promise" to make sure that students are "Promise Ready" at graduation.

Facts that you need to know about The Promise: Most importantly, what are the requirements, how might they change, and how much money might be there for your child? In this issue, you will find a brief story about The Promise, and you can visit www.pittsburghpromise.com or call the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920 for more information.

We have approximately 1,000 applications from this year's seniors, and more continue to come in. This is an incredible success in the program's first year. Hundreds of students have received their eligibility letters and families tell us that the Promise dollars are a huge help in making education after high school a reality.

Educational reforms: quality principals in every school

We are in the midst of implementing many educational reforms, including improving our curriculum, but none will mean more to our students than the work being done with and by our principals. Our goal is to ensure that every one of our schools is led by a principal who is a great instructional leader. Toward that end we have developed a program to train new principals as well as support the professional progress of those who already lead our schools.

As you will learn in the story about 4Sight assessments, principals are getting tools that advance effective leadership, including information on which students are grasping the material and which might be struggling. Getting help to struggling students quickly is a key quality in a high-functioning school.

In addition to getting a great deal of support, principals will also be rigorously evaluated on whether they put into practice what has been shown to move students to greater achievement.

We are very proud that *Education Week*, the most important periodical covering American education, highlighted our work with principals in the April 30, 2008 issue.

Excel.9-12 — High quality high schools

Finally, I want to highlight *Excel.9-12*, *The Plan for High School Excellence*. *Excel.9-12*

is our commitment to creating learning communities that challenge our students while ensuring that they graduate with a plan for the future. "Relevance" and "Rigor" are two of *Excel.9-12's* guiding principles. We want to offer engaging, demanding content and teaching that prepare and connect students to the real world.

In September, we will open the University Prep school at the Millions building. Next year we will open the Pittsburgh Science and Technology school. Both of these schools will include grades 6-12. Five years from now we plan to be a district in which a vast majority of our high school students choose a school rather than get assigned to one on the basis of where they live.

While *Excel.9-12* is the plan for high school excellence, we will fall short of our goal if we wait until ninth grade to apply its guiding principles. The work of preparing children for success after graduation must go on in every classroom, regardless of grade level.

We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of *The Pittsburgh Educator* to you and hope that you enjoy reading about the wonderful people who are committed to making a difference in Pittsburgh's future.

Mark Roosevelt is Superintendent of Schools.

EDUCATOR

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Deputy superintendent knows it takes a team effort to achieve excellence

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Dr. Linda Lane, Deputy Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, believes the pathway to excellence is not a solitary one.

"For each child to put forth their excellent selves, we as educators have to put forth our best efforts," she said. "The challenge for children is to work hard. The challenge for us is to make sure our students are fully engaged."

Lane joined the Pittsburgh Public Schools in January 2007, following a 30-year career in the Des Moines (Iowa) Public Schools.

"I heard about the initiatives that had begun in this District, focusing on student achievement, and they were congruent with my values," said Lane. "It was exciting to come on board. The commitment to excellence here is not just a passing one; it's serious. It's the same reason people are drawn to sports teams. They want to be on the winning side."

She has been consistently impressed with the level of dedication among the District's staff, students and community members.

"It's rewarding to be able to help people who are working so hard," said Lane. "They're not holding back in their support of the initiatives and their work towards full implementation."

One of those initiatives, the Pittsburgh Promise, is particularly exciting to Lane. The Promise is a

communal effort, helping students and their families afford and prepare for higher education. Its purpose is two-fold: to convince families to stay in Pittsburgh and to serve as a catalyst for achievement.

"It's enormously important for us to provide opportunities to our students and present college as something they have access to," said Lane. "We want to make sure our students are motivated, working hard and Promise-ready, and that starts in the very beginning."

In her current role, Lane is overseeing instruction, assessment and accountability. She believes the focus of assessment should not be on standardized tests, but on daily self-examinations.

"Successful teachers assess every minute of every day," she said. "They interpret the work of their students to find out, 'What was their thinking process? How did they come to this wrong answer?' They understand it's about taking the temperature of each child to find out if they're hitting the mark."

Lane served as deputy superintendent in the Des

Moines Public Schools from 2003-2006, after graduating from the Broad Superintendent's Academy in 2003. She was also Des Moines' Chief of Human Resources and Chief Operating Officer. Born in Morgantown, W.Va., Lane was raised in Des Moines and educated in the public schools. She served as an elementary school teacher from 1971-82 in Iowa City and Des Moines.

She earned her bachelor's degree in education from the University of Iowa and her master's and doctorate from Drake University. Lane's decision to embrace her role as an educator was not an immediate one. She declared her major in education in her junior year at Iowa.

"My father was a teacher and my great aunt was a teacher and they always encouraged me in that field," said Lane. "In the beginning, I actively resisted. I wanted to do something different."

She attributes her participation in her high school's Future Teachers of America club as a turning point.

"A group of us visited the middle school to work with students and, frankly, I was surprised at the level of need of some of those kids," she said. "I found out about myself through that experience. I realized that I liked teaching people and that I was good at it. That realization didn't immediately take root, but later it did."



Dr. Linda Lane

Pittsburgh students Pledge excellence

By MEAGHAN CASEY

As Pittsburgh Public Schools students rise each morning, pledging their allegiance to the American flag, they are also pledging allegiance to their own potential.

Unveiled last August, the Pittsburgh Pledge unites the District in a common vision of clear expectations for students, teachers, parents, administrators and community leaders.

"We're all in this together," said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. "We each have an important role in preparing our students to achieve academic success and strength of character. Everybody has to do their part."

Pledge banners and posters are located in all Pittsburgh Public Schools, and each school has the responsibility to reinforce the words.

"I know it is ultimately up to us as students to work hard so that we can advance economically and socially in today's society," said Charlynn White, a senior at Pittsburgh Perry High School. "We must show respect for our teachers and each other and take ownership in keeping our schools safe."

Pittsburgh Pledge

"We know that education is the key to our future. All of us — students, teachers, administrators, families, community, board members and other civic leaders — will take an active role in helping all students.

We pledge to:

- Have high expectations,
- Work hard,
- Achieve academic excellence,
- Keep our schools safe,
- Set a positive example,
- Be respectful and considerate of one another,
- Listen and be open to new ideas.

Together, we will hold ourselves accountable for achieving *Excellence for All*.

"



Pittsburgh Roosevelt second- and third-graders have taken the Pittsburgh Pledge.

UPMC and the Pittsburgh community make Promise to students and families

By MEAGHAN CASEY

The seeds of inspiration, the road to higher education and the pathway to success all begin with a promise.

In Pittsburgh, that promise is a community commitment to help students and families of the Pittsburgh Public Schools plan, prepare and pay for education beyond high school.

Announced in 2006, The Pittsburgh Promise is a college access program and revitalization strategy for the City of Pittsburgh. It will provide scholarship awards up to \$5,000 (with the potential of up to \$20,000 over four years) to pay for tuition and fees not covered by federal and state grants at eligible colleges or technical/trade schools within the state of Pennsylvania.

"What an incredible gift from a community to say, 'If you do your work, we'll take care of the financial obligations,'" said Superintendent of Schools

Mark Roosevelt.

In 2007, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) committed to donating up to \$100 million to The Pittsburgh Promise. UPMC donated \$10 million to mobilize the program and to fund the class of 2008. The remaining \$90 million is a challenge grant to

spur the fundraising necessary to create a permanent endowment fund of \$250 million so that sufficient resources will be available for future generations of Pittsburgh Public Schools' students.

"As far as we know, it's the second-biggest

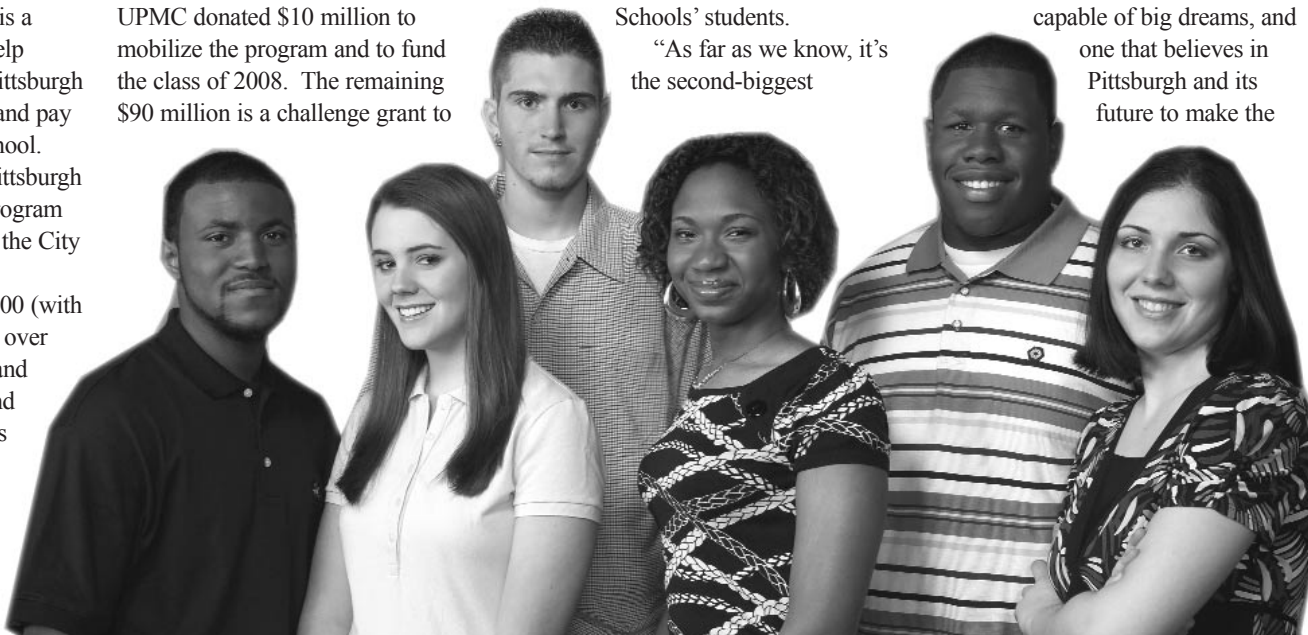
donation to a school system," said Roosevelt. "When you're raising \$250 million you need a significant gift to get people to believe, to get them on board. It took an institution capable of big dreams, and one that believes in Pittsburgh and its future to make the

Promise real."

"For UPMC to step up is incredible," said Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. "We're certainly very thankful. Now it's our turn to raise the remaining funds."

To be eligible, students must be residents of the City of Pittsburgh or Mt. Oliver, be graduating from the Pittsburgh Public Schools, have a minimum GPA of 2.0 and earn admission to any pre-approved school. The amount of the Promise award is based on the amount of time spent in Pittsburgh Public Schools. Students enrolled since kindergarten will receive up to \$5,000. Students who have been enrolled at least since ninth grade qualify for up to 75 percent of the award.

Starting with the Class of 2009, students will have to meet minimum attendance requirements and obtain at least a 2.5 GPA. Beginning with the Class of 2012, the maximum scholarship could be up to \$10,000 each year based on completion of a graduation exam.



Pictured here are six of more than 750 students that have already received notification from the Pittsburgh Promise that they are eligible for a scholarship award: from left, Lenny Macklin (Pittsburgh Perry), Leah Silinski (Pittsburgh Brashear), Jacob Dornberger (Pittsburgh Brashear), Charlynn White (Pittsburgh Perry), Andrew Moore (Pittsburgh Brashear) and Lauren Bucaro (Pittsburgh Langley).

Plan is for high schoolers to excel

In the English language, the root of excellence is excel. In Pittsburgh, school officials believe that the same reasoning applies. In order to achieve excellence for all, each individual student must excel.

In April 2007, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt and the High School Reform Task Force unveiled *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*, a multi-year plan focused on the redesign and restructure of the District's high schools and



Students enjoy a 9th Grade Nation event at Heinz Field.

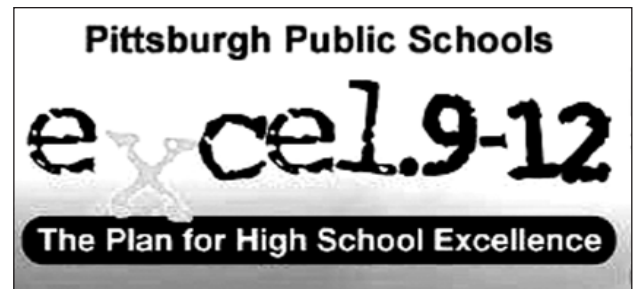
improvement of student achievement.

"High school redesign, as part of *Excellence for All*, is a priority for the District," said Roosevelt. "The key is to have more students coming into ninth grade academically prepared for high school."

Excel.9-12 is organized around five core principles: safe and welcoming schools, relationships, rigor, student support, and relevance. It is designed to provide students with a culture of high expectations and personalized learning environments and encourage students to connect to teachers, peers and the school.

Year 1 focused on creating safe and welcoming environments, said Roosevelt. One component involved the creation of *9th Grade Nation*, a program to offer students guidance and support in their freshman year. The goal is to create an environment that immerses students in their learning, encourages them to support each other, and promotes deep relationships among students and faculty.

Beginning with the Class of 2011, students will see new possibilities, according to Derrick Lopez, Chief of High School Reform. "This class will be the first to experience the full effects of the District's high school redesign efforts," said Lopez. "They will be challenged to work hard to achieve



academic excellence while being guided by their own creativity and ingenuity."

Year 2 of the Plan calls for the creation of theme-based schools and the addition of several grade 6-12 learning communities. Supporters say the 6-12 structure creates a cohesive learning environment and eliminates the critical transition from eighth grade to ninth.

"My hope is for students to have only one transition going forward," said Roosevelt.

Four grade 6-12 schools are currently in the planning and development stages. University Prep 6-12 school will open this fall at the Milliones facility. Collaborating with the University of Pittsburgh, the grade 6-12 school will serve as a model for school district/university partnerships.

Schools seek excellence

EXCELLENCE: from Page 1

student development, and should have ample training, support and resources;

- ◆ Education begins with a safe and healthy learning environment;
- ◆ Families are an essential part of the educational process; and
- ◆ A commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement.

In February 2008, the Board of Education adopted a set of commitments that support the *Excellence for All* beliefs, including: "We will educate all children to their highest level of academic achievement;" "We will provide a safe and orderly environment for all students and employees;" and "We will improve public confidence and encourage strong parent/community engagement in the District." Additional commitments relate to providing support for parents, families and employees, and ensuring efficient and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of all students.

"Raising the achievement of all students is paramount, and that is what the District must be held accountable for," said Thomas Sumpster, Board Second Vice President and District 3 Representative.

Key accomplishments since the introduction of the *Excellence for All* agenda in May 2006 include: implementation of the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Treasures reading program for students in grades PreK-5; complete rewriting of the core curriculum for grades 6-12; formation of eight new Accelerated Learning Academies; creation of the Office of High School Excellence and presentation



Pittsburgh Schenley civics teacher Jenna O'Neill makes a point to students, from left, Kate Carbine, Michael Wortham and Justin Rongier.

of *Excel.9-12, The Plan for High School Excellence*; and development of Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence (PULSE), a comprehensive program to recruit, train, evaluate and support school principals in their role as instructional

leaders.

While recognizing that much remains to be accomplished, Roosevelt sees progress.

"I am beginning to see evidence in many quarters for new ways of thinking and acting that promise better results for our

children," the superintendent said. "We must continue to push, innovate and explore new methods of achieving the higher levels of student learning we all know are necessary if our children are to have a fair chance at a good life."

Summer in the city schools



Summer High School Success and *Secondary Summer School* are programs available to Pittsburgh high school students such as, from left, Cody Caterino, Brooke Carlson, Rico Ross and Chelsea Shaw of Pittsburgh Allderdice High School, shown touring the Heinz History Center.

Classes in June and July help students catch up or get ahead

Summertime, and the living is easy. And students who don't attend class from mid-June to September may not remember a good deal of what they have learned during the school year.

So, summer programs are being offered that reinforce lessons learned during the school year, help students who are lagging behind their peers, or allow high school students to recover credits lost during the school year.

Students in grades K-8 can attend the *Summer Regional Extended Learning Camps*, which begin on June 23 and end on July 18. The program offers additional support to students in reading and math. Most sites offer a half-day program. All camps offer breakfast and lunch, and free transportation for students who live more than 1.5 miles away.

Lawrence Hubbard, Special Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent and head of the Office of Funding and Compliance, said this summer's camp program will be much the same as last year's, which was credited with helping participating students boost their academic performance. Students were tested before



Pittsburgh Colfax fourth-grader Keilan Donahue.

and after the program. Many in grades 3-8 made strong gains in math, while there were also gains in reading in grades 3 and 6. "We're hoping parents kept that in mind when they decided on whether to enroll

their children," Hubbard said.

In addition to the regional camps program, opportunities for summer learning are available for eligible pre-school students through the Early

Intervention and Summer Transition programs. Special Education School-Age Extended School Year programs will serve eligible students with disabilities. At the high school level, the *9th Grade Nation Summer Transition Program* is designed to support students entering high school, and the *Summer High School Success* and *Secondary Summer School* programs allow students in grade 9-12 to make up a failing grade, complete graduation requirements or take a course to avoid scheduling conflicts during the regular school year.

According to data compiled by the Office of Research, Assessment and Accountability, only 34 percent of eligible students took part in summer programs last year, a statistic District officials would like to see rise.

Letters, brochures and postcards were sent to homes, phone calls were made and e-mails were sent to inform families about summer possibilities.

"Attending summer programs can give students the support they need, so that they're ready to advance their learning when they start back in the fall," said Hubbard.



United Nation

Initiative helps freshmen adjust to high school

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Adjusting to new hallways, new teachers, new classmates and new course requirements are just some of the challenges facing any incoming freshman. Add to that social pressures, athletic and extracurricular responsibilities and increased academic expectations, and the journey to graduation might seem like a daunting one.

In Pittsburgh, school officials hope to transform that journey into an exciting and successful one for its students by building a nation of ninth-graders.

The idea for *9th Grade Nation* — a freshman class that stands united and confident — grew out of the High School Reform Task Force, which was created in 2006. The task force, made up of leaders of both secondary and higher education, foundations and businesses, experts in workforce development, parents and members of the community, was challenged to evaluate and reinvent Pittsburgh's high schools as part of the District's *Excellence for All* reform plan.

"In ninth grade, the dropout and failure rates are the highest," said Superintendent of Schools Mark Roosevelt. "It's a critical year."

"Everyone's accountable for student success," said Nancy Kodman, Principal on Special Assignment. A veteran in the District, Kodman taught for more than 20 years and served as a middle school principal for five years. She now specializes in high school redesign.

"Nationally, one-third of students drop out during or at the end of their ninth-grade year," she continued. "If you don't get the kids hooked and provide them with the extra support and caring adults to help them succeed, we're going to lose them."

Currently, the District is moving forward in plans to expand the 9th Grade Academy model that exists in many high-performing schools across the nation. The plan includes separate wings or floors for the ninth grade in each high school and a dedicated administrator responsible for all freshmen.

"It's a move to more personalized teaching and learning," said Roosevelt.

To enforce ninth-grade pride, schools are branding identities for the class of 2011 with personalized T-shirts, events and activities.

"It gives them a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves," said Kodman. "It's about building spirit and unity and leadership."

Each school has developed its own action plan that meets the minimal district-wide standards and the more specific needs of its community. The *9th Grade Nation* school leadership teams are responsible for planning and implementing programs and activities to better serve freshmen and to build relationships among students, staff, parents and the community. Some buildings already offer separate wings with dedicated teams of teachers, as well as separate lunches.

The teams are also responsible for observing student data and providing timely and effective interventions to meet students' needs.

In terms of additional support, administrators are focusing on reading and math, hoping to increase the level of proficiency among students. Read 180 is a ramp-up course designed to improve literacy and language arts skills. Schools are also offering double periods of math, with tutoring in addition to regular classes.

For students, the additional attention has been positive.

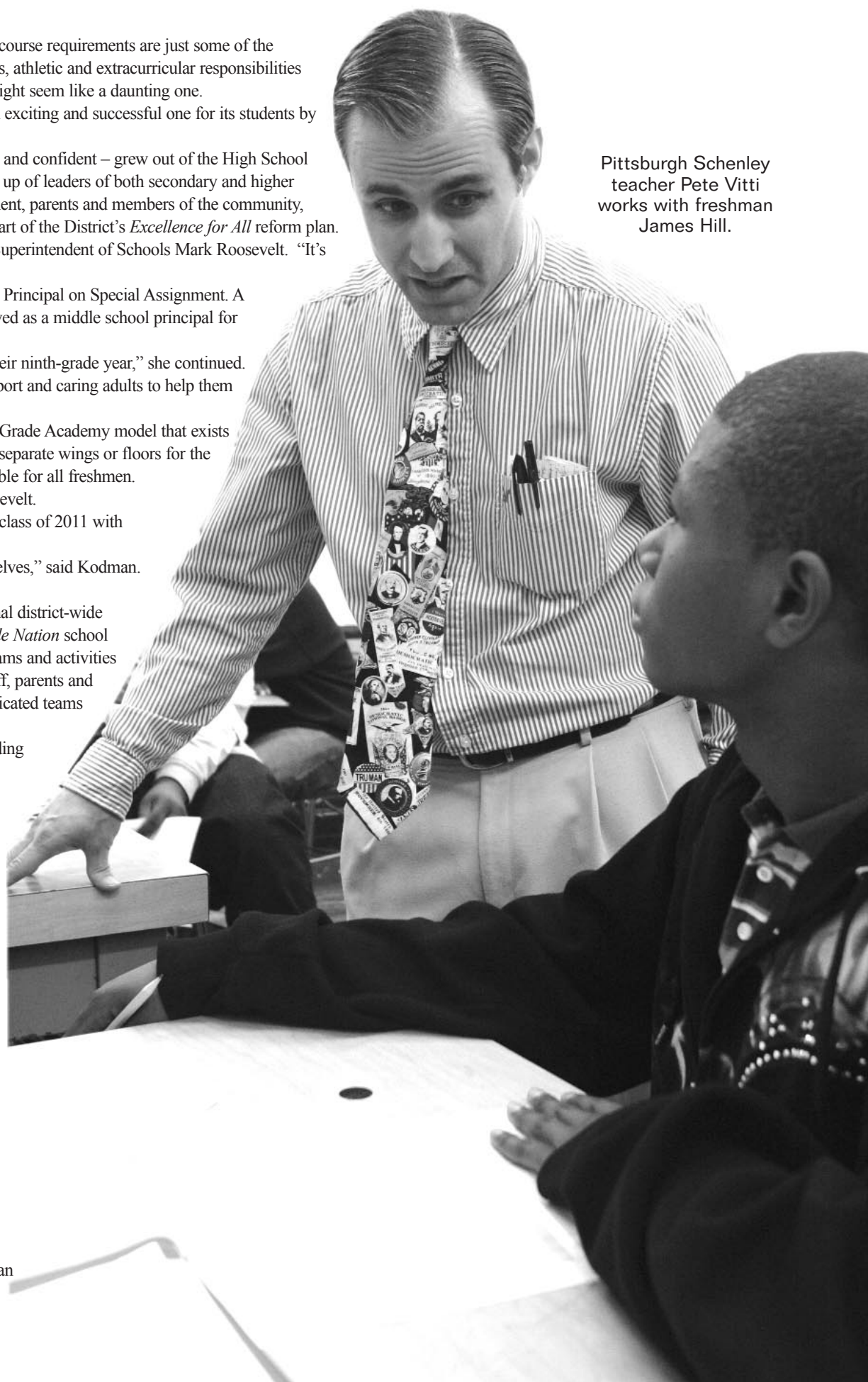
"In eighth grade I remember them telling us ninth grade is a big step, and it was kind of intimidating," said Ethan Butler, a freshman at Pittsburgh CAPA High School. "The whole idea of block programming and balancing homework and activities after school was a change. I'm really glad they tried to do something to help us."

To kick off *9th Grade Nation*, the District offered a unique summer transition program, through which students had the opportunity to join together as the class of 2011 and learn about high school life. The weeklong summer program included team-building activities, planning for graduation, off-site activities, an ice cream social, pizza party and a full day at Camp Gukasuta.

"It's definitely a scary transition," said Marissa Cross, a freshman at Pittsburgh CAPA. "The summer program was good because I got to know some people before coming in here for the first day. It's kind of like orientation week in college."

"It was really helpful," said Roberta Knafler, president of the freshman class at Pittsburgh Peabody High School. "I enjoyed meeting up with the other kids and getting to know them, and the school, better. It got me excited for the school year."

Pittsburgh Schenley teacher Pete Vitti works with freshman James Hill.





9th
**Grade
 Nation**
 Be the Change!



Above, Pittsburgh CAPA High School Civics teacher Kate Daher initiates a class discussion. At left, Pittsburgh CAPA ninth-graders, Markiela Johnson, left, and Ryan Allen listen during teacher Natalie Bobak's Civics class.

Students learn about the world and their role in it

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Students in Kate Daher's ninth-grade civics classroom at the Pittsburgh CAPA High School are engaged in a heated debate concerning celebrity endorsements of presidential candidates.

Some argue that the appearance of Jessica Alba in a Black Eyed Peas music video supporting Barack Obama would sway their opinions.

Others say there's a big difference between a celebrity paving the way for the next pair of "it" jeans versus the next president of the United States.

Daher steps back and smiles at her students' enthusiasm. In an attempt to make civics both exciting and engaging, it seems as though her mission is accomplished.

"I really, really like politics," said Pittsburgh CAPA freshman Ethan Butler. "I like how we can have discussions and everyone has their own opinions."

The full-year required course — Civics: Be the Change! — is designed to guide ninth-graders through a journey of civic awareness, empowerment and engagement.

"The course stresses 'you can be the change,'" said Nancy

Kodman, Principal on Special Assignment. "There's a process to get results and change the atmosphere in their schools. If they set goals and work hard, they can accomplish what they set out to do. It's preparing them for the real world, the bigger picture."

Throughout the course students investigate and reflect on the following guiding questions:

- ◆ Why should I participate in the civic life of my community?
- ◆ What are tools of change?
- ◆ How can I be an agent of change in my community?

"The goal is to expose them to things beyond their own worlds," said Kodman. "We want them to recognize that they're part of a district-wide ninth-grade community."

Curriculum is both inquiry-based and project-based. Students engage in service-learning and become more informed citizens of Pittsburgh. They investigate a challenge faced by the city and present possible solutions at a district-wide roundtable event. They also research and present a project on voting or a campaign issue for the annual Civics Fair, sponsored by Greater Pittsburgh Student Voices and held in December at the Heinz History Center.

“

There's a process to get results and change the atmosphere in their schools. If they set goals and work hard, they can accomplish what they set out to do. It's preparing them for the real world, the bigger picture.

**Nancy Kodman
 Principal on Special Assignment**

Parent and Community Engagement

Below, parent engagement specialist Donna McManus works with Tajionna Anderson.

Parents get special treatment

Connection between schools and homes is enhanced

BY GRETCHEN WEBER

Donna McManus looks forward to cafeteria duty. In fact, she volunteered for it. "It's the best way for me to get to know the kids," said McManus. "Everyday, I am the first person they see in the cafeteria for breakfast, and then they see me at lunch. I know every kid in the school."

McManus is one of 12 Parent Engagement Specialists in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and supporting students is just one of the many responsibilities that come with the position. They also work to empower parents with information, tools, and a direct line of communication with the schools so that they can best support their children and help them succeed.

"Sometimes (parents) need encouragement, sometimes they need resources, and sometimes they just need to vent. I help them know what questions to ask and I can serve as an advocate," said Debra Creighton, the Parent Engagement Specialist at Pittsburgh Lincoln K-8.

Strong parent and community involvement is a priority in Pittsburgh Public Schools, but no single approach works for all schools. Each school must develop a customized plan that best suits the needs of their school community. As part of their plans, Pittsburgh Allegheny, where McManus works, and 11 other District schools have chosen to hire parent engagement specialists to serve as a three-way link between parents, schools and the community.

Dr. Regina Holley, Principal of Pittsburgh Lincoln K-8, said she hired a parent engagement specialist seven years ago to ensure that communication is a two-way street. "We wanted to be sure that parent concerns were getting into the schools," said Holley.

Specialists facilitate communication between parents and schools by sending out parent surveys, monthly calendars listing school and community events and resources, hosting parent trainings and events, and serving as liaisons with parent groups. "They really are the link," said L. Twila Davis, a Pittsburgh Lincoln parent and President of the school's PTA. "There is sometimes a gap between home and school, but there needs to be a coming together. Parents need to feel like there is enough of a relationship with the school that they can call and not just harbor something they might be upset about."

At Pittsburgh Allegheny, one way McManus builds relationships with parents is by hosting an activity for families every month. Each month has a theme such as art or Spanish, and McManus works with teachers to design fun activities that attract students and their parents.

One of the most popular events is Back to School Family Swim Night. While most parents opt not to swim, said McManus, the students have a great time in the pool while parents are given a chance to get to know teachers, other parents, and the school's curriculum. Another Pittsburgh Allegheny favorite is the Amazing Math Race, which pits combined teams of parents and students against one another as they solve math problems and navigate the school using "road maps."

At Pittsburgh Lincoln K-8, Creighton also holds family nights to encourage parents to come into the school, meet one another, and learn more about their children's education. These events combine fun activities such as Bingo with a mix of free resources such as books, library cards, and information about how to support student education at home. Creighton has seen parent involvement grow tremendously. Pittsburgh Lincoln's first Literacy Night attracted 12 families. This year's drew 89.

Diane Condie, the Parent Engagement Specialist at Pittsburgh Colfax K-8, expands parent involvement by bringing literacy workshops outside the school and into community centers so that after-school program staff and parents have the tools to reinforce what students are learning in school.

Condie's work highlights another goal of parent engagement specialists: forging meaningful connections with the community. At Pittsburgh Colfax K-8, this includes bringing in high school students to help students with Spanish and working with outside organizations such as the Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program which brings in retired community members to help students with reading and language skills.



Partners play pivotal part in Pittsburgh pupils' performance

Parent
and
Community
Engagement

By GRETCHEN WEBER

Pittsburgh Public Schools are reaching beyond their own walls to find resources through community partnerships and technology to enhance learning experiences for English as a Second Language (ESL) students.

At Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, ESL students benefit from the services of two outside organizations committed to helping improve language and communication skills. On Monday and Friday afternoons, all 29 ESL students are invited to work with volunteer math and language tutors from a University of Pittsburgh program called "Keep it Real" that works with the Somali Bantu population in the area and is affiliated with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization.

"It's the most wonderful partnership we've ever been in

and one we definitely need," said Pittsburgh Arsenal Principal Debra Rucki. "Six-and-a-half hours in a school day is not enough."

Tutors are recruited, interviewed, and trained as mentors by Big Brothers Big Sisters before they begin working with students. The organization also works with students at Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8 and Pittsburgh Frick 6-8.

Pittsburgh Arsenal ESL students, many of whom are refugees from countries such as Burma, Somalia, and Iraq, are also busy on Thursday afternoons when they work with the MGR Foundation's Murals program, which uses the arts to help students with issues relating to conflict resolution, personal identity, anger management, and community building.

"Using every artistic way you can imagine, we use art to

help students communicate about these things," said Phil Koch, Director of the Murals program.

Most recently, through the Murals program,

Pittsburgh Arsenal ESL students worked with the public radio

station WYEP to tell personal stories about their

past, present, and future using printmaking, collages, and

audio recordings. Students

from the Pittsburgh

Faison PreK-8 worked

with the Murals program to create a violence-prevention installation using masks of their faces and audio recordings about their experiences.



Online program gives credit where credit is overdue

By GRETCHEN WEBER

Students who need to recover credits in order to graduate are benefiting from an innovative computer tool that delivers classes online so that students can work at their own pace as they master the course material. This tool, called NovaNET, provides instruction and assessment and is currently offered at Pittsburgh high schools, sometimes as part of the school day or as an after-school program.

"It's a different way of learning that works really well for some students," said Janis Ripper, Principal on Special Assignment for Alternative Education and Discipline. "Because it's self-paced, they can just focus completely on their own learning."

Over the seven years that NovaNET has been available in Pittsburgh Public Schools, students have recovered more than 1,200 credits. NovaNET courses are offered in all four grades of high school in English, science, and social studies. In most courses, all of the reading and learning takes place online; however, in some English courses the curriculum has been adjusted to meet Pittsburgh education standards, and additional reading has been added. A teacher who serves as a resource for both content and technical questions is always present in the room when students are working.

When students begin a NovaNET course, they take a pre-test, which evaluates the knowledge they already have. The application then adjusts the course appropriately for each individual.

"The students this school year have been surprised at how much they know in some of the courses. They see this when they get their pre-test scores back. Some of the students are working harder to get their percentages up. They are not satisfied with an 80 percent; they want to earn an A," said Kathleen Accamando, a teacher at Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center High School.

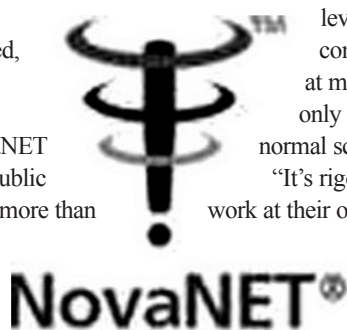
Most students using NovaNET are juniors and seniors. According to Ripper, successful NovaNET students are mature, self-motivated, and read at or above eighth-grade level. They also must be committed to the course because at most high schools, NovaNET is only available as an option after the normal school day.

"It's rigorous," said Ripper. "Students work at their own pace, but they have to do the reading and take notes.

This works well for some students, but not all."

Teachers report that students taking the NovaNET courses tend to improve in their other classes because they are forced to learn skills they might have missed along the way, such as note-taking and organizing information.

"In line with *Excellence for All*, a primary objective of the leadership of the District is to improve the academic performance of all students," said Lawrence "Bud" Bergie, Chief Information Officer for Pittsburgh Public Schools. "Programs like NovaNet allow us the opportunity to use technology to directly support student learning."



STAY INFORMED

In addition to a Web site (www.pps.k12.pa.us) with a wealth of current information, Pittsburgh has implemented a handful of effective new tools to keep parents aware and involved in their children's schools and to obtain feedback.

The Parent Hotline (412-622-7920)

The Parent Hotline is the one-stop number to call for parents with feedback and questions about the District and its initiatives. Designed as an easily accessible place for parents to get answers, the hotline has been taking calls during business hours since October 2006. At night and on weekends, parents may leave messages. According to Customer Service Manager Tanya Gore-White, the topics parents call about range from transportation, attendance, and discipline issues to questions about District policies.

AlertNow

AlertNow is a new technology implemented in December that allows the District to get important messages out to families on a large scale very rapidly. With this new program, calls can be placed to the entire District — more than 18,000 calls — in less than an hour. This is one of the District's newest ways to make sure that families are kept as informed and up to date as possible. AlertNow can also send e-mails, and the District plans an aggressive effort in the fall to obtain e-mail addresses of families.

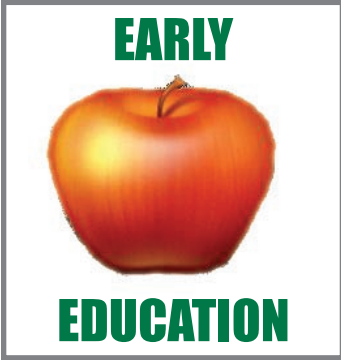
To date, AlertNow has been used to notify families of school closures, parent/teacher conferences days, and District-wide announcements. An added benefit is that the system generates reports detailing whether calls were answered, how long listeners stayed on the phone, and if a number is disconnected. This allows the District to maintain the most up-to-date contact information, which is important should an emergency arise.

The Pittsburgh Educator

This inaugural edition of *The Pittsburgh Educator* is the latest in the District's efforts to better communicate with parents and the community. *The Educator* includes stories and photos about students, teachers, administrators and programs. It provides examples of how Pittsburgh Public Schools is delivering on its commitment to *Excellence for All*.

Parent/teacher conference surveys

More than 5,000 surveys were collected from parents over the two days of parent/teacher conferences throughout the District, and the majority indicated that the conferences were a positive experience for parents. "These surveys told us with real data the value of parents and teachers having a substantive dialogue," said Edward Jones, who helps coordinate district-wide parent events and engagement initiatives.



Getting an early start

Starting students younger leads to improved results

By RICH FAHEY

The debate is over. Major studies have shown that children in good early childhood education programs are less likely to repeat grades, need special-education services or seek public assistance later in life.

Carol Barone-Martin, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Program in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, said the District, by using new state funding, is steadily expanding full-day pre-kindergarten opportunities for children.

“We have been following how students entering the early childhood programs do on the state assessment tests, and the answer is better than the general populations,” said Barone-Martin.

In the year 2000, Pittsburgh school pre-kindergarten programs enrolled 800 children and involved about 20 classrooms; now the program encompasses about 2,500 children and more than 100 classrooms, all at no charge to the families.

The state of Pennsylvania has been playing catch-up when it comes to early childhood education. The state does not require children to attend kindergarten or pre-kindergarten.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, almost 90,000 3- and 4-year-

olds were enrolled in early education programs in Pennsylvania during the 2006-07 school year, up 70 percent in four years. Still, that was fewer than one-third of all children in that age group.

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program is providing more early education programs for children, beginning at age 3. Backed by \$75 million, the program, still in its first year, is expected to reach 11,000 children.

Early childhood education has been around in some form since the federally-funded Head Start program was started in 1965, but that program is closely tied to income guidelines.

While its goal is education and not child care, the full-day program also allows families where parents are working full-time to know their child is safe and in good hands for those six hours.

While the District still doesn’t have enough space to accommodate all 3-year-old students who want to take part, preference is given to 4-year-olds and children who have siblings already in the program.

Barone-Martin said the goal is

that every student has at least one year of exposure to the program before entering kindergarten.

“There’s no doubt that these programs do benefit working families,” said Barone-Martin. The schools also work with other agencies such as Head Start that provide education, child care and family services.

Barone-Martin said the pre-kindergarten program is also important because the number of assessments and screenings performed when children first enter the program help identify children who need services at an early age. Because of early intervention, 27 percent of those students who require special education no longer need those services when they enter kindergarten.

Students are weighed and measured, tested for fine and gross motor skills, observed for emotional or social problems and their overall physical well-being.

Barone-Martin said the expansion of state funding in recent years has allowed the programs to be expanded to students across the economic spectrum.



Pittsburgh Reizenstein students, from left, Kyra Hamilton, Janis Coto-Williams, Briasia Glenn-Anderson, and Mariam Adegoke.



Reizenstein Early Childhood Center PreK teacher assistant Melony Petrick works with Elise Silvestri.



Above, from left, Pittsburgh Reizenstein PreK student Eli Murphy listens during class; early childhood educator Stephanie Szolis takes on the role of “farm boy” as she reads to students from the book “Farm Flu” at Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5; Pittsburgh Reizenstein student Dylan Simpson participates in class.



Pittsburgh Reizenstein Early Childhood Center PreK student Samya Gurley plays at the sand box.



Opera singer Christina Farrell, a Gateway to the Arts teaching artist, leads a student activity at Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5.

Team approach serves teachers, students well

By RICH FAHEY

Early education teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools are taking a team approach to students who enter the system needing help, and the results – for students and the district – have been encouraging.

According to Carol Barone-Martin, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Education Program, 27 percent of those students assessed in early childhood education screenings as needing early intervention programs no longer need those services when they enter kindergarten.

“It’s a win-win when that happens,” she said. “When we catch problems early and work on them, students can enter kindergarten more on par with the other students and we can conserve precious resources.”

A battery of specialized services are available to students who are designated for early intervention when they enter the early childhood program at age three or four. Students may have issues when it comes to speech, behavior, gross and fine motor skills, or cognitive abilities.

In schools across the district, teachers, speech therapists and occupational therapists work with these students and their parents. At Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5, which is home to three early childhood classrooms, teacher Ariane Burke is assisted by Tara Shimatzki. The duo work with Early Intervention Teacher Corie Mann,

Occupational Therapy Assistant Maribeth Digregory and Speech/Language Therapist Amber Bongiorno.

“The five of us are a team that maps out plans to best suit the needs of our students,” said Burke.

Burke said Pittsburgh Beechwood Principal Sally Rifugiato has created a learning environment that celebrates and recognizes the importance of early childhood education.

The team also works closely with the classes of Tabitha Wilk and assistant Rachel Pallotta, and Jeannie Nipaver and assistant Barb Meixner.

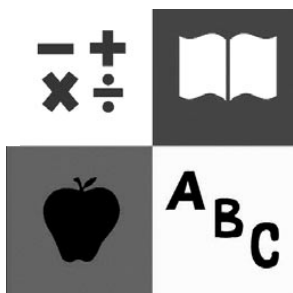
Dorinda Toman, a PreK-2 teacher at Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8, has seen what the work can do. A boy in her school was diagnosed with childhood apraxia of speech (CAS), a severe articulation disorder. The student was in intensive therapy until the end of the last school year, but he has made substantial progress and is doing well this year in Toman’s pre-kindergarten class. “He’s been fitting in and has worked hard in the class,” said Toman.

Early childhood success stories are not limited to improvements in speech and behavior. Every Thursday, Kandace Taylor and her early childhood education class at Pittsburgh Classical 6-8 visit a class of middle-school age (12-14) autistic students at the academy.

“All of the kids seem to really enjoy the visits,” said Taylor. “Some of the autistic kids who never spoke now talk to their classmates and even to us.”

There is still time to enroll for next year. Call 412-622-7920.

Student Assessment



4Sight for learning

At right, Pittsburgh Colfax student Melinda Ritter is the picture of concentration; below, Pittsburgh CAPA High freshman Ethan Butler enjoys a lesson.



Teachers use four scores to address their students' needs

BY RICH FAHEY

In an ideal world, students would be measured by their own academic progress, not compared to their peers' test scores.

Pittsburgh school officials are turning that concept into reality with a new benchmark assessment tool, 4Sight. Developed by the Success for All Foundation, 4Sight assessments generate immediate results, based on individual student performance.

“The point of 4Sight is getting it down to an individual basis,” said Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. “We’re moving to a model: teach it, assess it and immediately provide help. It’s a key tool for principals and teachers as instructional leaders, taking the results and turning them into useful information.”

The District introduced 4Sight in place of Terra Nova, a national standardized achievement test given at the end of the school year for grades K-12. The reason, said Dr. Paulette Poncelet, Pittsburgh Public Schools Chief of Research and

Accountability, is that schools are focusing on using assessment data as a road map for success during the school year.

Pittsburgh students in grades 3-8 will have taken the one-hour 4Sight tests four times this year, while high schools students will have been tested in reading and math three times. The test was customized to correlate strongly to the annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams.

"4Sight results give us a snapshot of how an individual child is doing, how a classroom is doing, how that school is doing, and how the District is doing," said Deputy Superintendent Dr. Linda Lane.

Critical to 4Sight's success is

The basis for any test should be to determine how to do better. It's not justifiable unless it contributes to learning and is used to improve the delivery of educational content.

Mark Roosevelt
Superintendent of Schools

timeliness, said Lane. Unlike the PSSA, which generates results months later, 4Sight results are processed in-house and returned to the schools in 48 hours or less. This allows schools to chart students' progress from test to test, rather than once a year. The results help teachers and administrators more effectively assess the impact of their instructional practices on student learning.

"The basis for any test should be to determine if it improves the curriculum," said Roosevelt. "It's not enough to say, 'Unless it contributes to the curriculum, it's not used to improve the curriculum.' It's not enough to say, 'Unless it contributes to the curriculum, it's not used to improve the curriculum.'"

"The key is going over results with the students to find out 'why?'" said Lane.

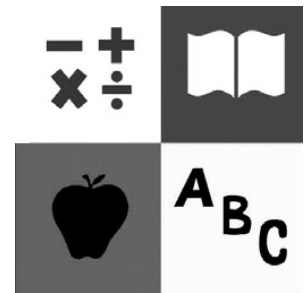
"It's powerful for kids to learn how they got to that place, what they did wrong and what they can do to avoid making that mistake again."

Poncelet, who came to the Pittsburgh schools after working in a similar position in the Cleveland schools, said her office has developed a parent-friendly 4Sight report, which she piloted with third- and sixth-grade families in April. The report lets people know if their child is on track to reach proficiency in their grade level by the end of the school year, and whether they should be making plans for the child to attend summer programs or other extended-learning opportunities.

"I'm very service-oriented and my customers are the schools and families," said Poncelet. "My goal is to make the assessment information so good and user-friendly that teachers, curriculum coaches, principals and parents know how to use it to make a difference in each child's path to academic excellence."

Improvement is elementary

Student Assessment



Students at three schools post huge gains in achievement

By RICH FAHEY

Assessment data is a tool that allows principals and teachers to target instruction to meet students' individual needs. But even if you have a tool, you still need to build something with it.

Three Pittsburgh elementary schools are shining examples of using assessment data to effect positive change in the way teachers teach and students learn. The result has been impressive gains in reading and mathematics in just a few months.

Students in grades 3-5 at Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8 have demonstrated significant gains in mathematics from September to the present, to the point that now more than half the students in those three grades are scoring proficient or advanced on the 4Sight test.

Pittsburgh Manchester Principal Henry Stephens called the gains "a remarkable achievement." He said the data provided

by 4Sight assessments "helps drive the instruction. The data gives you a prescription for success for every youngster," said Stephens.

Stephens said he, assistant principal Theresa Cherry and school staff are analyzing data on a constant basis. At monthly grade level meetings, they compile an action plan for each student.

"Every teacher knows or should know where each student stands," said Stephens, who has been Principal of Pittsburgh Manchester for 10 years.

At Pittsburgh Phillips K-5, the grade 3 classes of Stacy Riggle and Dina Moreno have shown remarkable gains in both reading and mathematics.

Second-year Principal Rod Necciai said getting back assessment data quickly and in a user-friendly format is important to the success of his students. "We look for trends within that data," he said. "The quick turnaround of information enables us to spend more time building strategies



Pittsburgh Phillips third-grade teacher Stacy Riggle's students are hard at work.

to help students."

Necciai holds weekly grade-level team meetings with teachers and curriculum coach Dr. Susan Smith to go over the

latest data. "The meetings allow us to focus and make sure we're on track with the kids," said Necciai.

Smith makes hard copies of the data reports. She highlights specific areas where students are doing well and where students are struggling. Then she discusses the results with teachers and they work together to adjust their lessons.

Smith said the fact that both grade 3 classes have shown remarkable improvement indicates that the two teachers are working closely together. She added that a keen analysis of the data by classroom teachers is helping to drive the gains at the school.

At Pittsburgh Liberty K-5, scores in the grade 3 4Sight assessment for reading have risen sharply, with more than three-quarters of the students scoring proficient or advanced.

"Our District provides the strategies and the tools to use data to target students' individual needs," said Pittsburgh Liberty Principal Marjorie Murphy.

Grade 3 teacher Antonella Gabriel said assessments give teachers an answer to the question "who didn't master what skill, and who needs work on what skill."



Pittsburgh Phillips third-grade teacher Dina Moreno, center, uses assessment data to drive her classroom instruction.

Districtwide

National Walk at Lunch Day

Co-Grand Marshalls Mark Roosevelt, superintendent of schools, Nancy Kodman, Principal on Assignment for *Excel.9-12* and Employee Relations Manager Tonia Suber-Hill led employees at the Administration Building on a walk around the Cathedral of Learning in Oakland in recognition of National Walk at Lunch Day on April 30. Following the walk, participants received healthy snacks and water as well as a gift bag with health and wellness items. A group of employees also started a daily lunch-time walking club.

Participation by the superintendent and central office staff in the walk reinforced the district's commitment to health and wellness of students and staff and sent a message of encouragement to schools, which are charged with establishing their own wellness initiatives. Pittsburgh Public Schools was among the first school districts in the nation to develop a wellness policy in advance of the in 2005 Child Reauthorization Act requirements.

African-American History Challenge Bowl

Student teams from Pittsburgh Classical 6–8 and Pittsburgh Oliver High School were the top-scoring teams in the 14th annual African-American History Challenge Bowl. Middle and high school students from across the city competed in the Challenge Bowl to demonstrate their knowledge of both past and current African and African-American history.

The Pittsburgh Classical team of Chelsea Minsinger, Jasmine Holtz, Patrick Ross and Keili Branche and Pittsburgh Oliver team members Rayshawn Pritchard and Jamika Williams received medals for their winning effort, and the Pittsburgh Oliver team will represent the Greater Pittsburgh area at the 100 Black Men of America's national conference in Orlando, Fla. this summer. All expenses for the trip are paid by 100 Black Men of Western PA, Inc.

The middle and high school teams were coached by Arthur Stewart and Ken Smith, respectively. Runners-up at the high school level were Jamie Hargrove and Charmaine Jemison of Pittsburgh Allderdice; and Brittany Fitch, Marcus Dean, Tamara Butler and Shawnese Johnson from Pittsburgh Allegheny 6–8 at the middle school level. These teams were coached by Joelle Armenti and Paul Lyons. The Challenge Bowl is co-sponsored by the Pittsburgh Public Schools and 100 Black Men of Western PA.

2008 Think-A-Thon

More than 50 teams of students in grades 4-12 competed in the district's 10th annual Think-A-Thon

on March 29. This popular event tests the creativity, teamwork, artistic expression, higher-level thinking skills and communication ability of the participants as they are judged in seven different events. Teams accumulate points for their solutions to two long-term challenges completed at their home schools before the Think-A-Thon and five "surprise" activities for which they must display the ability to think "on the fly" without prior preparation. Events are judged by teams of district employees, parents and community members. Winning teams were Pittsburgh Colfax K–8 Team 6 (Elementary); Pittsburgh Colfax K–8 Team 8 (Middle); and Pittsburgh CAPA High School.

School safety

Thanks to the quick efforts of his fellow School Police officers, Officer Gary Paul made a full recovery from a life-threatening health incident. Officers William Ehrin, Tom Etters, Stephen Filip and Mike Foriska earned a Distinguished Achievement Award from board members and the superintendent for knowing what to do and doing it well under tough circumstances.

Program for students with exceptionalities

Speech/Language Pathologist Emily Crow earned the 2007 Musicians' Hearing Center Award from UPMC and Etymotic Research for her efforts to promote hearing protection for instrumental music students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Crow worked with Dr. Catherine Palmer from the Hearing Center, who developed the program to educate students and teachers about noise-induced hearing loss and how to prevent it. Through her work as a speech/language pathologist, Crow educated the district's speech staff about the program. She also played a critical role in introducing music teachers Arthur Powell, who directs the choir, dancing and drumming corps at Pittsburgh Miller PreK–8, and Lori Russo, director of the music and drumming programs at Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK–5, to the program. Both schools now use hearing protection for their drummers and other musicians. The national trade publication *Advance* for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists featured the program on the front cover of its Feb. 18, 2008 edition, with an article that included photos of the Pittsburgh Miller drummers using their hearing protection as they performed.

2008 Carson Scholars

Fifty-two Pittsburgh Public Schools students were among 600 chosen from across the nation as 2008 Carson Scholars. The Carson Scholars Fund was founded in 1994 by world-renowned pediatric neurosurgeon Benjamin S. Carson and his wife, Candy, to motivate and reward academic excellence in young people. Each year the fund



awards \$1,000 scholarships to a select group of high-achieving students in grades 4–11 who demonstrate academic achievement (a minimum 3.75 grade point average) and humanitarian involvement in their communities. The Carson Scholars were honored at a banquet on May 4 at the Omni William Penn Hotel. Dr. Carson provided the keynote address, and WTAE-TV anchor Sally Wiggin served as emcee. In addition to the scholarship, each honoree received a personalized Olympic-style medal and a certificate of achievement.

National board-certified teachers

This year, 14 members of the Pittsburgh Public Schools teaching staff received national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, bringing to 64 the total number of District teachers who have met the rigorous standards. Certification requires a one- to three-year professional development process, as well as a serious commitment of time, talent and energy. Teachers certified this year are: Eileen Butler, Pittsburgh Montessori; Kathleen Hammer, Pittsburgh Phillips; Danielle Harris, Pittsburgh Classical; Elizabeth Juhas, Pittsburgh Montessori; Anne Kelly, Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5; Karen Kennedy, Pittsburgh CAPA; Kara LaPorte, Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8; Mary Beth Mongelluzo, Pittsburgh Minadeo; Lisa Robinson, Pittsburgh CAPA; David Selko, Pittsburgh Perry; Nancy Souilliar, Pittsburgh Langley; Renee Sunder, Pittsburgh Beechwood; Yolanda Tolliver, Pittsburgh Gifted Center; and Amy Troyani, Pittsburgh Allderdice.

K-5 Schools

Pittsburgh Concord K–5

Pittsburgh Concord has climbed to the top of the First in Math online rankings in the district. The students have earned more than 111,000 stickers; and each student must answer at least three math questions correctly for every sticker earned. With 250 students active on the site, this equals an average of 1,330 correct answers per student.

Pittsburgh Morrow PreK-5

In celebration of Foreign Language Week, six Spanish 5 Advanced Placement students from Pittsburgh Perry High School visited Brian Glickman's PreK class at Pittsburgh Morrow on March 5. Spanish teacher Michael Varlotta and his students planned activities to introduce the preschoolers to the new language. Each Perry student worked with a

small group of children, teaching them the Spanish words for a number of body parts. After the lesson, the young students and their mentors sang a song ("Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes") using their new vocabulary words. The Pittsburgh Perry students also read a story to the children.

Pittsburgh Fulton PreK–5

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon, First Book® Senior Vice President Lynda Lancaster and Superintendent of Schools Mark Roosevelt presented free books to Pittsburgh Fulton on Dec. 12 as part of the 2007 Holiday Book Donation. The effort is designed to provide new, age-appropriate children's books to schools, libraries and literacy organizations serving low-income youth across the country. Random House Children's Books, First Book and the U.S. Department of Education are partnering in a multi-year campaign to promote literacy and supply books to children in need. More than two million books have been distributed since 2006.

Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK–5

When a fire took all the possessions of a Pittsburgh Minadeo family, their fellow students went to work. Fifth-graders Alison Klevens and Jessica Scoratow organized a schoolwide fundraising plan to help give the family a fresh start. With the help of their teachers and principal Glory Getty, the students started their own fund, named the A&J Foundation, and hung posters around the school to call attention to the project. They also wrote a note to send home to parents to encourage additional donations. In five days, they raised more than \$2,000. "We were blown away," Alison told Pittsburgh Tribune-Review columnist Eric Heyl. "We're really happy, and we hope it makes (the family) happy."

Pittsburgh Spring Hill K–5

Danielle Loos, fifth-grade teacher at Pittsburgh Spring Hill, is one of 300 math and science teachers from 47 states and 15 countries to be accepted into the Space Academy program to be held at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala. this summer. Loos will spend five days learning about space missions and engaging in an astronaut simulation. Math and science activities include Martian Math, NASA's Engineering Design Challenges, Built Environment, Lunar Stations, Mars Project, Space Gardening, Toys in Space and Rocket Construction. As part of her experience, she will plan a space week for the following school year. Honeywell Educators is covering tuition and expenses for the week, and in addition to the workbooks and program materials, Loos will bring back educational materials for the classroom and a flight suit.

Pittsburgh Whittier K–5

In celebration of the 100th day of

school this year, Pittsburgh Whittier held a 100 Facts Challenge. Students had to answer 50 facts in three minutes, 30 facts in two minutes and 20 facts in one minute. Second- and third-graders were challenged with a mix of addition and subtraction facts, while fourth- and fifth-graders faced addition, subtraction, multiplication and division challenges. Sixteen students in grades 2-5 successfully completed the challenge.

K-8 Schools

Pittsburgh Brookline K–8

Fifteen fifth-grade students were featured in a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article about the fifth annual Megaconference Jr., a videoconference connecting the students to their peers from hundreds of schools in 13 countries. Since Pittsburgh Brookline was one of approximately two dozen schools invited to present during the videoconference, the students and their teacher, Beth Kovalcik, developed an exercise called "Smart Clip Challenge" in which they wrote and videotaped plays to demonstrate what they had studied in art, math, science, spelling and gym. They then "tested" their audience by asking them questions about some of the subjects covered in their presentation.

The Pittsburgh Brookline participants are part of a technology leadership group started last year to help students develop leadership skills and improve their proficiency. To become a part of the group, students must meet certain standards in homework, grades, attendance and behavior. Third-graders presented "The Whacky World of Weather" to students in New Mexico, and sixth-graders got to know students in Belfast, Ireland before sharing a writing assignment. First-graders, who were studying wolves, took a virtual field trip to talk with experts and see the animals at the International Wolf Center in Minnesota. Eighth-graders turned results of a survey including student complaints about amusement parks into a "Family Feud"-like game. In addition to Pittsburgh Brookline, Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK–8, Pittsburgh Vann K–8, Pittsburgh South Brook 6–8, Pittsburgh South Hills 6–8, and Pittsburgh Schenley High School took part in Megaconference Jr.

Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK–8

Assistant Principal Richard Mathews received the 2007 Alumni Award for the Department of Instruction and Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. Mathews was honored for his long-standing commitment to science education in urban public schools.

Pittsburgh Colfax K–8

As part of their social studies curriculum, second-grade students learn about the jobs in their neighborhood and the importance of good citizenship. In January, students began reading books about the post office and toured the East Liberty facility. On Feb. 4, the students opened a “post office” at their school to benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Student-created stamps, envelopes and stationery were sold during the school’s three lunch periods. Students then wrote letters to their friends by finding their school address in the school’s directory and adding a 15-cent “stamp.” Mail carriers from each second-grade class visited all classrooms in the morning to pick up the mail and in the afternoon for mail delivery. Other students served as stamp cancellers, mail sorters, binders who bound the sorted mail, and bag inspectors who inspected each bag before it went out for delivery. By the end of February, the students had raised more than \$1,000 for the charity. The “post office” experience, which taught students the importance of job roles and the value of helping others in need, was coordinated by teachers April Bickerstaff, Joanne Lepinsky, Randi Sarkin, and Robyn Stefanyak, with the help of more than a dozen parent volunteers.

Pittsburgh Lincoln K–8

Pittsburgh Lincoln K–8 students Kennesha Kirkland, Ahsley Grinage and Raynell Legrande were winners in the Smarthelp Holiday-A-Thon, a national competition sponsored by Apangea Learning for users of the Smarthelp math tutoring program. Raynell, who finished third nationally, enjoys math and gym, and plans to be a doctor. Ashley was the second place winner and her favorite subject is math. Kennesha was first in the nation, and she earned this honor by completing more problems and perfecting more tests than anyone else using Smarthelp during the competition.

Pittsburgh Manchester PreK–8

First-grade students in Room 149 at Pittsburgh Manchester, under the direction of teacher Helena Schaefer, turned an impromptu visit into a wonderful research and observation opportunity. A praying mantis came in on one of the teacher’s plants, and the students found a second companion on the playground. Within a few hours, the newest arrival deposited an egg case on the plant she was perched on, and the first-graders and their kindergarten neighbors were able to observe this amazing event. Since the mantises’ arrival in the fall, the students have been busy learning about their environment, nesting, eating and molting habits and have shared their experiences by inviting other classrooms in to see their special

finds. They discovered the kinds of insects the mantises eat and have watched them catch crickets and grasshoppers bought from the pet store or caught on the playground.

The young researchers got an early surprise one day in January, when 10 young mantises hatched from the egg sac. The students watched them grow from the size of tiny, thin ants to almost an inch long. They also learned about flightless gnats, the food source of their new arrivals, and Schaefer got a lesson in how to start a flightless gnat culture. In addition to all that they learned about mantises, this experience also offered the students a remarkable hands-on view of how scientists use observation and research to guide their work.

Pittsburgh Schaeffer K–8

Pittsburgh Schaeffer faculty members are starting and ending their day in a slightly different way this year: They’re riding the buses to and from school with their students. Staff members are picked up at the school in the morning before the buses make their runs, and they board the buses after school for the ride home. Principal Dr. Cynthia Zurchin said the practice has been embraced by the faculty and parents, and bus volunteers received a grateful round of applause at a recent parent meeting.

Zurchin, who also takes part in the program, says the benefits have been many. Bus suspensions are down to a handful this year, and “when you sit with the kids, you have the most wonderful conversations,” she said. “They love sitting with us on the bus. Students come into the building calm, focused and ready to learn.” Parents, too, enjoy the opportunity for impromptu face-to-face conversations with teachers and other faculty members at bus stops, or at home on those occasions when the bus volunteers have walked to homes from the bus stop to deliver homework packages and other important information. “This is a win-win-win situation, for parents, teachers, students and the bus drivers,” Zurchin concluded. “The staff is going above and beyond the call of duty. We’re trying to make a difference.”

Middle Schools

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6–8

Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak and Pittsburgh Steeler Brett Keisel visited Pittsburgh Arsenal seventh-grade students in the fall for the kickoff of the state’s What Moves You initiative to combat childhood diabetes. Math teachers Yolanda Colbert and Mike Schrenker facilitated a math lesson in conjunction with physical education teachers John Leemhuis, Lezlie Conway, Crystal



Stepanovich and Jason Inesso to demonstrate how students can be encouraged to move by the use of interactive lessons that cross-subject areas. The seventh-graders are part of HEALTHY, a three-year national research project in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh that encourages students to make better choices related to food and exercise.

High Schools

Pittsburgh Allderdice High School

Pittsburgh Allderdice entrepreneurship and marketing teacher Brandy Ralston also received honors for her leadership in the NFTE experience. Ralston was named Certified Entrepreneurship Teacher of the Year by NFTE. She was chosen from among more than 1,000 certified entrepreneurship teachers in the country.

Ninth-grade civics students have taken to heart the 9th Grade Nation’s call to community action. Many volunteer with the school’s recycling program, and others are involved in charity events in their home communities. So when teacher Sonia Henze presented the opportunity to build a giant Rubik’s Cube for the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh’s 25th anniversary, the classmates answered the call. The group had to plan the design, then execute the construction of the 6-foot cube, and the project presented some unexpected tests of their creativity. There were problems with uneven cubes (cardboard boxes), challenges with bonding materials, and the question of how to get the entire 132-pound unit to rotate on a display triangle. Unlike their materials, the students had no problems bonding. “The process has brought the class together,” said Henze. Connor Belanger, one of the team leaders, said of the cube: “We all hope it will provoke intellectual curiosity and especially a desire for young children to explore their own dreams and future possibilities.”

Pittsburgh Brashear High School

Three Brashear students took part in Pittsburgh’s first Microsoft DigiGirlz Day at the University of Pittsburgh on April 25. This event provides participants with career planning assistance, information about technology and business roles, thought-provoking exercises, and interesting Microsoft product demonstrations. Young women can learn about the variety of opportunities available in the high-tech industry and explore future career paths. Students interact with Microsoft employees and

managers to gain exposure to careers in business and technology and to get an inside look at what a career in technology is all about. Teacher Jacqueline Pfeiffer reported that one of her students has decided to change her college major because of the advice she received.

Pittsburgh CAPA High School

Pittsburgh CAPA sophomore McKenna Whisler was selected from 3,000 voices nationally as one of 12 members of a vocal jazz ensemble that performed as part of the Grammy Awards Festival in February.

Another sophomore, DaMarra Underwood, was in the national spotlight during an appearance on “The Morning Show” on April 2. Her appearance combined her musical talent with being named 2008 Global Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). DaMarra participated in an Introduction to Entrepreneurship course taught by Rita Buettner and developed a business plan for selling her gospel music CDs. Buettner, who described the plan as “fantastic,” entered DaMarra in the NFTE competition, and she and her family won the trip to New York. In keeping with her entrepreneurial spirit, DaMarra took the CDs along on the trip and sold about 50 copies. Through entrepreneurship education, the NFTE experience helps young people explore new opportunities as well as career and educational aspirations.

Pittsburgh Carrick High School

On March 15, the Carrick Bagpipe Band was the first unit in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, and its position was not the only “first” of the day. The Bagpipe Band received the Mayor’s Award for Best City Band, which completed a sweep of the three major downtown parades. The band started the season with another first by taking the title at the Ultimate Battle of the Marching Bands, which was held at Petersen Events Center on Sept. 7. The Bagpipe Band is directed by Instrumental Music Director Sarah J. Gilberto.

Joshua Donehue attends Pittsburgh Carrick High School for half the day and travels to Pittsburgh Connelley Learning Center to study welding for the other half. Joshua has made the daily trip well worthwhile by earning a silver medal at this year’s District 9 Skills USA Competition. The event brings welding students from a seven-county region to demonstrate their skills. Joshua’s welding instructor is George Kirk.

Pittsburgh Langley High School

Pittsburgh Langley Spanish 3 and 4 classes taught by Elise Power used a field trip to the Frick Art & Historical Center to combine a lesson in Pittsburgh history with a real-world chance to test their Spanish language skills. The trip

included a visit to Clayton, the restored 1880s Victorian home of Henry Clay Frick, who made his fortune in the early days of steelmaking in Pittsburgh, and the Car and Carriage Museum, which features some of Frick’s horse-drawn carriages as well as some of the first horseless carriages to travel Pittsburgh’s streets. Special tours are conducted in Spanish at the Frick, and the students demonstrated their proficiency in the language by conversing with their Argentinian tour guide.

Pittsburgh Oliver High School

The Oliver Junior ROTC Unit has maintained its rank of Honor Unit with Distinction for the 19th consecutive year by scoring 96.1 out of a possible 100 points during the annual formal inspection by inspectors from the U.S. Army. Inspectors said that “Cadets excelled in all facets of this formal inspection.” They also noted that the JROTC staff “set and demand high standards that cadets must meet to remain in the program,” and the program is well integrated into the school and community. Honor Unit with Distinction is the highest rank attainable by a JROTC unit. Unit instructors are Major Dwight Daniels, Command Sergeant Alton Eckert and First Sergeant Stough.

Pittsburgh Peabody High School

Pittsburgh Peabody Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Entrepreneurship students Argena Olivis, Alexis Jackson and Greg White won first place at the FBLA regional competition on Dec. 17, 2007. Robin Simmons won third place in marketing, William Dawkins earned fourth place in business math, and Jarell Fields won fifth place in technology concepts. The entrepreneurship team and Robin Simmons attended the State FBLA conference in Harrisburg in March, where they networked with other members, attended workshops and talked with college representatives to discuss their plans for the future. The Pittsburgh Peabody FBLA program is sponsored by Vivian Kirk and Marilyn Nizinski. FBLA-PBL is the oldest and largest business-career student organization in the world. The mission is to bring business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs.

Pittsburgh Perry High School

Pittsburgh Perry senior George Allen was one of 250 finalists selected from 80,000 applicants in the national Coca-Cola Scholars Program. He attended the Scholars Weekend April 24-27 in Atlanta, and was named a Regional Scholar. George will receive a four-year renewable award of \$2,500 per year. George is also a finalist in the 2008 Body by Milk SAMMY (Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year)

Continued from Page 15

program. The SAMMY Awards recognize outstanding scholar-athletes from high schools throughout the U.S. George could win a \$7,500 scholarship and an appearance in a milk mustache ad. He is interested in majoring in either pharmacy or zoology.

Ellen Wright, who teaches biotechnology and biology at Pittsburgh Perry, was honored as 2008 High School Educator through the Carnegie Science Awards Honoring Innovation in the Sciences and Technology. Carnegie Science Center established the Awards for Excellence program in 1997 to recognize and promote outstanding science and technology achievements in Western Pennsylvania. Wright is also one of the district's National Board Certified teachers.

Pittsburgh Schenley High School

Pittsburgh Schenley High School's Youth & Government (YAG) Club members joined their peers from across the state at the annual Model Legislative Session in Harrisburg in April. Sponsored by the State YMCA of Pennsylvania, Youth & Government is designed

to give high school students true "hands-on" experience in the workings of government. Students participate throughout the year in weekly after-school meetings as well as regional and statewide YAG events which culminate in the three-day "take-over" of the Capitol Building. Delegates play the role of legislators, Supreme Court judges, press corps, lobbyists and members of the Youth Governor's administration as they bring bills to the table in committee, debate the issues, and take the bills that pass to the floor of the House or Senate for full debate and vote. Pittsburgh Schenley has had an active and accomplished five-year membership, with graduates Davon Magwood serving as Youth Governor two years ago and Marc Werner as Lieutenant Governor last year.

Pittsburgh Schenley junior Markel Walker was named 2007-08 Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Basketball Player of the Year. The award recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character. Walker shot 54.6 percent from the field and is rated the nation's No. 7 junior by



Hoopgurlz. She has maintained a 3.14 GPA and participates in several community service initiatives, including volunteering at a youth day camp, fundraising for her team, and donating time at a local dentist's office to further her interest in a career in medicine. She has made a verbal commitment to the University of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School

A score of 75 percent is required to pass the State Board of Cosmetology Examination, a requirement for state licensing. But 75 wasn't enough for Pittsburgh Westinghouse High student Sheena Stenhouse. She scored a 99, one of the highest scores in the state. Candidates take two tests — written and practical. In addition to hair, skin and nail care, the written exam covers such topics as Infection Control, Human Anatomy and

Physiology, Basic Principles of Chemistry and Electricity, and Pennsylvania Law. The candidate then has to demonstrate techniques involving curling, coloring, cutting, waving, manicure and facial skills.

Special Schools

Pittsburgh Conroy

It's been an exciting year for students in the Pittsburgh Conroy Community-Based Vocational Training (CBVT) program. Four new businesses have been added to the list of training sites serving as partners in the program. Bev-O-Matic Vending and Food Service offered students the opportunity to learn how to fill vending machine orders with a variety of snack items for distribution throughout Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Brashear Association, Inc. provided a mentorship for Kalief Gates at their food bank located in the Arlington community. Kalief's valuable skills have led to the possibility of employment with Brashear in the near future. Barbara Jackson is training at the Allentown Adult Day Services

program. She assists senior citizens with a variety of fun activities, including craft projects, exercise class, and monthly field trips. And as a bonus, she now has 12 new grandmothers! DeWayne Frazier has earned rave reviews from his mentor, Pittsburgh CAPA cafeteria manager Lois Smith, for his work in food service. The Pittsburgh Conroy CBVT program has 26 additional students involved in vocational training at various businesses and organizations across the Pittsburgh area.

The Pittsburgh Conroy BlueJays varsity basketball team earned a bronze medal at the Special Olympics Basketball Tournament held at Petersen Events Center on March 16. The BlueJays competed against approximately 25 teams from across Allegheny County. The basketball tournament is part of a year-round athletic program in soccer, bowling and track & field. The athletes train throughout the school year for the events. The team is coached by Kevin Sutton, with support and expertise from a number of additional Conroy staff members.

District employs new methods to improve students' reading levels

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Under the framework of *Excellence for All*, the Pittsburgh Public Schools pledged that 80 percent of third-graders will be reading at proficient or advanced levels by the spring of 2009.

It's a big goal, but the district has big plans to make it a reality.

Susan Sauer, the District's Curriculum Supervisor for Elementary Reading, attributes future success to two elements: a new, comprehensive reading series and parent/role model motivation.

The first, an all-new, research-based reading program, is *Treasures*. Published by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, *Treasures* offers a variety of high-quality literature, mixing fiction and non-fiction, to engage learners. Explicit instruction and ample practice ensure students' growth in reading proficiency. The District replaced Harcourt Trophies reading series with *Treasures*. It is in its second full year of implementation of the new series in grades PreK-5.

"Among its strengths, it offers differentiated instruction and provides lessons and resources to support both large and small group work," said Sauer.

The series emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Each week's lesson integrates grammar, writing and spelling for a total language arts approach.

"It's a higher level of engagement," said Sauer. "Week-to-week, all texts are related to a theme. The unique strategies and skills are reinforced throughout the week. Students learn what those strategies and skills are, why and when good readers use them and how they can apply them on their own in understanding a text."

The series is also tailored to independent work, providing a leveled readers program that matches students to text based on individual achievement levels. Students are encouraged to become reflective of their own reading.

While independent reading is essential, Sauer also praises the benefits of reading aloud.

"Through expressive reading, a child hears what a fluent reader sounds like and can make the connection between the text and the spoken language," she said. "It also stimulates the imagination and conditions children to associate reading with pleasure. That's the ultimate goal. We want to encourage and instill this lifelong love of reading."

Positive role models are particularly influential in helping to strengthen a child's reading and listening skills. In March, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl visited with Pittsburgh Colfax fourth- and eighth-graders as part of Read Across America Day and read to them "I Could Do That!: Ester Morris Gets Women the Vote." As the youngest mayor of any major U.S. city, Ravenstahl, 28, serves as an example to Pittsburgh students to dream big.

"You can achieve anything," said Ravenstahl, addressing a group of Pittsburgh Colfax K-8 students. "I'm living proof of it. I'm here today to encourage you to aspire to be whatever you want to be, whether it's a doctor or a politician. Take advantage of the opportunities in this city. Get involved and stay active. You can accomplish wonderful things."

Outside of the classroom walls, parents play a key role in fostering their children's love of reading. Schools offer a variety of organized events and activities to encourage family reading time and to teach parents how they can help their children to become fluent readers.



Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl reads to fourth graders, from left, Sophia Cosentino, Carlisle Turner, and Joan Mukogosi at Pittsburgh Colfax K-8 as part of Read Across America Day.

PITTSBURGH DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

K-5 Schools

Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5

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

Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5

Anita Walker, Principal
215 39th St., 15201
412-622-7307

Pittsburgh Banksville PreK-5

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

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

Pittsburgh Liberty K-5

Marjorie Murphy, 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

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

Sara M.T. Alexander, Principal
785 Dunster St., 15226
412-571-7420

Pittsburgh Whittier K-5

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

Pittsburgh Woollair 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

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)
Regina Holley, Principal
328 Lincoln Ave., 15206
412-665-3980

Pittsburgh Lincoln

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

Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8

Henry Stephens, 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

Rosemary Moriarty, 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)
LaVerne Anthony, Principal
1235 Clairhaven St., 15205
412-928-6560

Pittsburgh Schaeffer K-8

Intermediate Campus (4-8)
Cynthia Zurchin, 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 PreK-8

Martin Slomberg, 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

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

Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA 6-8

Lynda Lewis, Principal
5525 Columbo St., 15206
412-665-2000

Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8

Scott Grosh, 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

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)
Cindi Muehlbauer, Principal
2429 Charcot St., 15210
412-488-4700

Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8

Intermediate Campus (3-8)
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

MiChele Holly, 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

Merridith Murray, Principal
3530 Fleming Ave., 15212
412-732-6700

Pittsburgh Weil PreK-8

Carolyn Davis, 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

Ruthane Reginella, Principal
590 Crane Ave., 15216
412-571-7300

Pittsburgh CAPA High School

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

Pittsburgh Carrick High School

Anita Burley, Principal
125 Parkfield St., 15210
412-885-7700

Pittsburgh Langley High School

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

Pittsburgh Oliver High School

Tawayne Weems, Principal
2323 Brighton Rd., 15212
412-323-3250

Pittsburgh Peabody High School

John Vater, Principal
515 N. Highland Ave., 15206
412-665-2050

Pittsburgh Perry High School

Jacqueline Blakey-Tate, Principal
3875 Perrysville Ave., 15214
412-323-3400

Pittsburgh Schenley High School

Sophia Facaros, Principal
4101 Bigelow Blvd., 15213
412-622-8200

Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School

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

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

Pittsburgh McNaugher

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

Pittsburgh Pioneer

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

Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center 6-8

Dalhart Dobbs Jr., Principal
925 Brushton Ave., 15208
412-247-7863

Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center High School

Craig Jackson, 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

TEACHER PROFILE

The power of positivity

Gabriel intent on students reaching their potential

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Third-grade teacher Antonella Gabriel believes in the power of positive thinking.

“Never say I can’t; that’s our rule,” said Gabriel.

A 15-year veteran of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Gabriel has taught at Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 for the past eight years. She started her career at Pittsburgh Northview PreK-5, after earning her degree from the University of Pittsburgh. A native of Pittsburgh, Gabriel grew up in Highland Park and attended Pittsburgh Dilworth K-5 (which was K-8 at the time). Her decision to go into teaching was an inherent one.

“I always knew this is what I wanted to do,” she said. “The joy of seeing a child’s face light up when they learn something, that’s the reward of this job.”

In her classroom, Gabriel is intent on ensuring that all of her students achieve excellence. She recognizes the importance of preparing every child to be Promise-ready, aspiring to higher education.

“You have to set high expectations,” Gabriel said. “Every child has the ability to succeed, and it’s my promise to do whatever I can to help them. Their promise is: ‘I’m going to do well, because I know I can.’”

“Students know I believe in them,” she continued. “It’s a simple philosophy: practice

makes perfect. We’ll work on a skill until we get it.”

This year, Pittsburgh Liberty’s 4Sight assessment scores have climbed rapidly. The number of grade 3 students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels has increased by 40 percent. Gabriel credits tools such as Study Island and Compass Learning, as well as the school’s curriculum and reading coaches. She is also impressed with what 4Sight results reveal and how she, as a teacher, can learn from those scores.

“It gives us the ability to use data to drive instruction,” said Gabriel. “It’s immediate, so we know right away what to work on and we can keep drilling every day.”

Beyond the curriculum tools, the human side of Pittsburgh Liberty is one of the school’s strengths.

“The student themselves, the parents and the teachers make this school a wonderful community,” she said. “The third grade team plans and shares ideas. If you work well together, that’s half the battle.”

Connecting with her students is equally important.

“Teaching isn’t all academic,” said Gabriel. “We have to take in emotional and social factors to develop life-long learners. It’s a lot of hard work and encouragement.”



Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 teacher Antonella Gabriel helps students achieve excellence.

Pittsburgh native making a difference at home

Pittsburgh native Edward Jones is a firm believer in the opportunities of in-state higher education, having earned his bachelor’s degree from Penn State and his master’s from Carnegie Mellon University.

“Higher education made a huge difference in my life, professionally and personally,” he said.

A 1994 graduate of Pittsburgh Schenley High School, Jones worked in management consulting for eight years before returning home to his educational roots. He is completing a two-year residency in the Pittsburgh Public Schools through the Broad Residency in Urban Education, a national program.

“I’d love to see this District grow,” he said. “My vision for the Pittsburgh Public Schools is for it to be recognized as a model district around the country.”

“

My vision for the Pittsburgh Public Schools is for it to be recognized as a model district around the country

Edward Jones

During his residency, Jones is serving as project manager for the Pittsburgh Promise, overseeing outreach efforts. He has given talks at high school financial nights, reaching more than 500 people through those meetings.

“I’m hugely excited about the Promise,” said Jones. “I think higher education is essential in today’s world. Students are competing with people not only in this city, but around the world. If students choose to continue their education and stay in this city, there are huge opportunities for them,” he said.

As a graduate of two Promise-eligible schools, Jones credits the list of 96 colleges, universities and trade schools where District graduates may use their scholarships. The schools include 65 public schools in Pennsylvania, as well as private schools in Allegheny County.

“Anything you want to attain in life – whether you want to be a physicist, a doctor, a writer, a businessperson – you can attain it at all Promise-eligible schools,” he said.

SPORTS

Hoop dreams

Pittsburgh Schenley graduates go Big in college basketball



DeJuan Blair

By PAUL HALLORAN

In Pittsburgh Public Schools, the *Excellence for All* mantra is not limited to academics.

Pittsburgh students also are excelling in areas outside the classroom, including athletics. Two of last year's stars have taken their talent to the next level and have made their presence felt on the Big (East) stage — one in the big city and the other in his own backyard, literally.

We refer to D.J. Kennedy and DeJuan Blair, former Pittsburgh Schenley High basketball standouts who started as freshmen at St. John's and Pitt, respectively. Both had an immediate impact on their college teams while playing in one of the best conferences in the country.

And while both Kennedy and Blair have plenty to say about their current success, it doesn't take much to get them to reflect on the glory days at Pittsburgh Schenley, specifically the 2006-07 season when they led the Spartans to the PIAA Class AAAA state title.

"We felt we should have captured the state championship our junior year. Last year we wanted to go out on top," said Kennedy, a 6-6 guard/forward who averaged 18 points, eight rebounds and five assists and was named first team All-State in helping to lead Schenley to a 29-3 record and its first state championship in 29 years. "We had a great coach (Fred Skrocki) and great talent."

All Blair did last year was average 16 points and 14 rebounds a game and dominate the state final win over Chester with 18 points and 23 rebounds. He was named first team All-State for the second year in a row and Pennsylvania Player of the Year.

"It was excellent for us to do what we did. It was big for us and it was big for the school," said Blair. "It was our goal and it all came together."

While Kennedy and Blair went to college on athletic scholarships, they both realize they would not have had the opportunity if they had not also succeeded academically in high school. Kennedy won a scholar-athlete award from the Pittsburgh YMCA, while Blair took advantage of programs such as credit recovery to ensure he would be not only eligible to play in college, but also prepared to do the course work.

When it came time to pick a college, Kennedy and Blair went about the task differently. Blair, who was heavily recruited by most of the major college programs and received 18 scholarship offers, opted to stay home and attend Pitt, which is located just a few football fields from his home.

The Pitt coaches, especially assistant Orlando Antigua, went all out to ensure that they did not lose a prized recruit from right in their back yard. Other schools tried to sell Blair on the advantages of going away for college, but the opportunity to stay home and play in front of his family and friends was too great to pass up.

"Pitt is a good fit for me," he said. "I'm close to my mother and father and brothers and sisters and I'm a big influence on my little cousins. I think I'm an excellent role model and I've got my head on straight."

Blair was honored to be asked to speak at this year's



D.J. Kennedy

Pittsburgh Schenley graduation. He said he would tell the graduates to "stay positive" and that they "can make it coming out of a city school."

Blair did not miss a beat transitioning from high school to the collegiate game. He started all but one game and averaged 12 points and nine rebounds and helped lead the Panthers to the Big East Tournament championship and a No. 4 seed in the NCAA Tourney, where they lost to Michigan State in the second round. At 6-7 and 265 pounds, he is a power forward in the truest sense.

Unlike Blair, who gave an early commitment to Pitt, Kennedy waited until after his senior season to make his college choice. He was recruited by the likes of two-time defending national champion Florida and Georgia out of the Southeastern Conference, but he decided on St. John's for a few key reasons: personalities and geography.

"The coaching staff are great guys," Kennedy said of Norm Roberts and assistants. "And everybody as a kid wants to play in New York City. It's the biggest media market in the world. It's great to be part of a great program and be part of history (St. John's is celebrating 100 years of basketball this year)."

How about the added pressure of playing in the big city, especially when the team struggles as it did this year (11-19)? Not a problem for Kennedy, who started 29 games and averaged eight points and six rebounds.

"New York fans are the best and they want you to win," he said. "When you win, they love you, when you lose, it's not so good. I like it. There's a lot of pressure, but if I were a fan I'd want my team to be winning, too. I understand that; that's why I came here."

The Red Storm may have taken their lumps this year, but with four underclassmen starting and only one senior playing meaningful minutes, Kennedy is planning on a reversal of fortune.



Dyas of their lives

Veteran educator back helping students

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

With a mission of “bringin’ the body back,” Carol Dyas put retirement on hold and assumed full-time volunteer responsibilities at Pittsburgh Peabody High School this year.

Dyas, raised in Pittsburgh, graduated first in her class from Pittsburgh Langley High School and received a full scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh. She taught for 40 years at the high school level, at Pittsburgh Langley and Pittsburgh Schenley. Among her accomplishments, she was the first-ever winner of the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year award in 1980.

She credits her experience in Pittsburgh Public Schools as influencing her methods of teaching.

“I had some of the best teachers in the system,” she said. “They seemed to garner the utmost respect from their students. I took a little from each one of them, applying what they taught me to my own career.”

Dyas retired from teaching in 2000. Last fall, Pittsburgh Peabody Principal John Vater convinced her to come back as activities coordinator and leader of the *9th Grade Nation* initiatives. Some of those activities include line dancing, monthly ninth-grade assemblies, birthday celebrations and bus trips to away football games. She also is overseeing the class officers, has established class colors and is helping with fundraising for a class trip.

“I’m delighted to be back,” she said. “I’m doing things I used to do with the kids, but there are no papers to grade. I enjoy what I’m doing. I’m tired at the end of the day, but it’s a different kind of tired — a good tired.”

Dyas applauds the work the District is doing in the area of high school redesign, especially with the creation of *9th Grade Nation*. In the cafeteria of Pittsburgh Peabody, Dyas has her own *9th*

Grade Nation Station, through which she hopes to establish class unity and pride, as well as an overall sense of respect for one another. One of her priorities is to expose the students to acceptable behavior, dress and language.

“I dealt with a lot of ninth-graders when I was teaching,” she said. “I like that you can work with them, and they’re willing to give you a shot. They have a lot of energy at that age. You just have to channel it.”

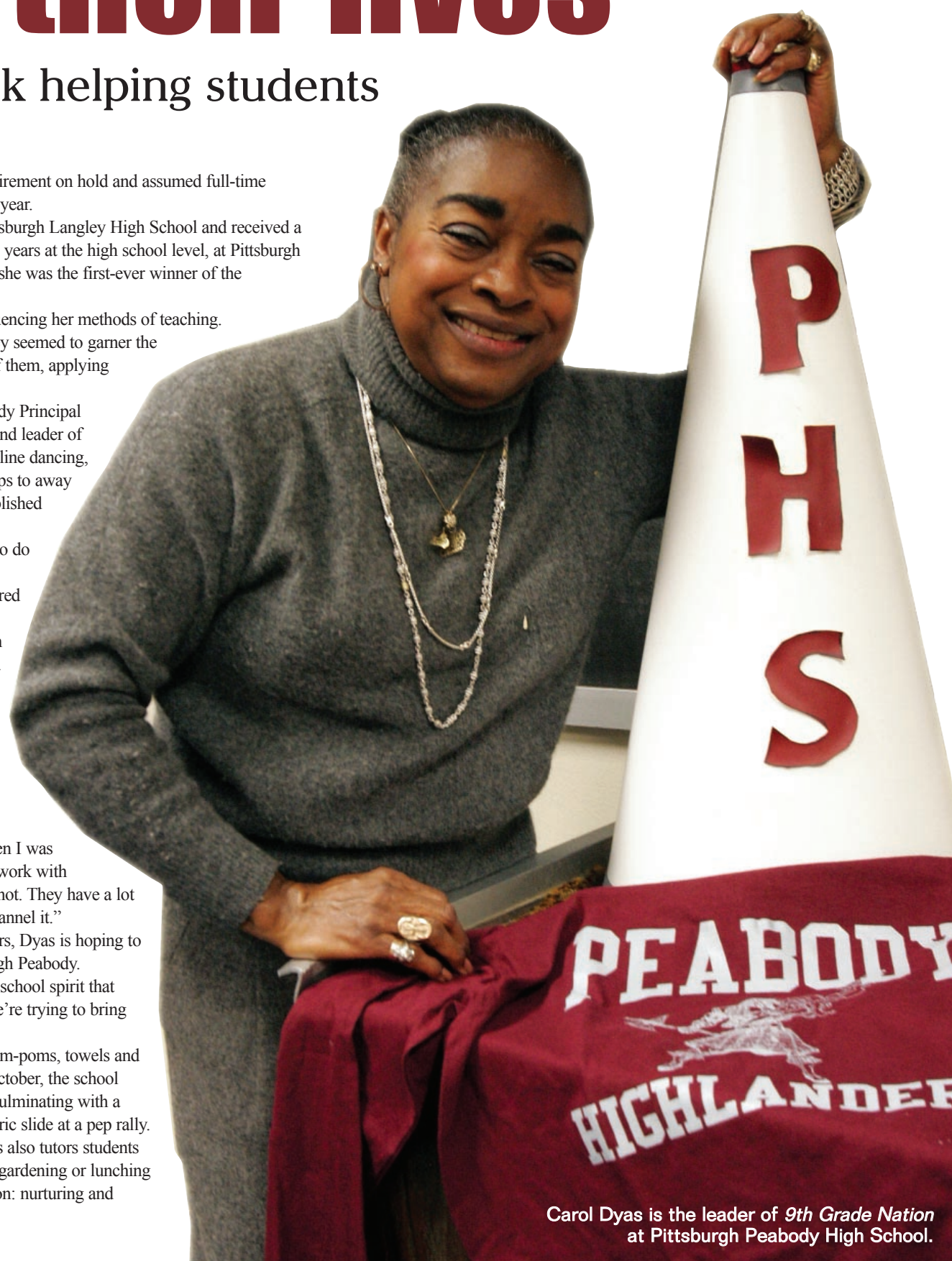
Beyond her work with the ninth-graders, Dyas is hoping to raise the overall level of spirit at Pittsburgh Peabody.

“At one time, Pittsburgh Peabody had school spirit that was the envy of the city,” said Dyas. “We’re trying to bring that back. ‘Bringin’ the body back,’ is our slogan.”

To promote a culture of school pride, Dyas ordered T-shirts, pom-poms, towels and other items celebrating the Pittsburgh Peabody Highlanders. In October, the school held a Spirit Week with special assemblies, contests and events, culminating with a homecoming dance. To the delight of students, Dyas did the electric slide at a pep rally.

In addition to her responsibilities as activities coordinator, Dyas also tutors students twice a week after school. Though she enjoyed her afternoons of gardening or lunching with friends in retirement, she is happy to return to her true passion: nurturing and educating Pittsburgh students.

“I firmly believe that every child can learn. This is my calling. This has been it for me. It’s been a long journey, but a rewarding one.”



Carol Dyas is the leader of *9th Grade Nation* at Pittsburgh Peabody High School.