

FACE time

It is widely accepted that students whose parents are actively involved in their education typically achieve at a higher level. With that in mind, Pittsburgh Public Schools has enhanced efforts to engage parents.

FACE Coordinator Kellie Meyer works with student Christian Davis at Pittsburgh Montessori Pre-K.
PHOTO: JASON COHN



Changes make common sense

New standards designed to better prepare students for college, career



Jamir Barnes at Pittsburgh Langley K-8.

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Pennsylvania is one of 48 states that adopted the Common Core State Standards, which are designed to better prepare students with essential skills to succeed in college and their careers. The standards were developed nationally in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and content experts in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics and are more rigorous than the PA State Standards.

"There are some important aspects to Common Core that can contribute to students being successful in college and their careers," said Superintendent Linda Lane. "The standards are based on what we have heard from employers. People need to be able to work with each other and solve real problems."

Pittsburgh Public Schools has established a solid foundation for Common Core implementation. Full

alignment of the standards will be in place at the beginning of 2013/2014 school year.

Dr. Jerri Lippert, Chief Academic Officer said there are several streams of work ongoing in the District to effectively implement Common Core, including producing the right study materials, obtaining the proper textbooks, supporting teachers as they adapt to a new curriculum, and realigning assessments to reflect what is being taught.

Allison McCarthy, Director of Academic Initiatives, said the transition to the Common Core standards has been smooth overall, though there have been challenges, notably grade 5 math. "Some parts of the curriculum are fully aligned to Common Core and some are not," she said, adding that the high school and kindergarten math and grade 11 English are all proceeding well thus far.

See COMMON CORE Page 12



STATE OF THE DISTRICT

Pages 8-9

Our journey is guided by vision of success



DR. LINDA LANE

Over the past several years, Pittsburgh Public Schools has been on a journey toward Excellence and Equity for All. On our journey, we've endured some bumpy stretches and steep climbs. We didn't expect our path to be easy.

We knew we were blazing new trails in a changing world — where it's increasingly important to have more than a high school diploma to

succeed and where urban public education faces many challenges.

Even with those challenges, I remain hopeful and connected to a vision of success. After all, we live in Pittsburgh — a city where we have proven that virtually anything is possible, a city where pride and teamwork are in our blood. And our city school district is no different.

We have made unprecedented strides in working together — beginning with the partnership among teachers, administrators and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers to create a new teacher evaluation system and to apply for and receive a significant grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which helps ensure we have an effective teacher in every classroom every day. We also partnered with the mayor's office and the broader Pittsburgh community to create the Pittsburgh Promise®, a scholarship program that removes the financial barrier to post-secondary education.

These shining moments of exemplary teamwork have proven to me time and again that we can achieve anything, if we work together. However, we cannot stop there. We must continually strengthen our teams and align our efforts based on the most recent information about our schools.

Understanding the present to shape our future

This is why we're committed to publicly sharing the facts about our District and schools on an ongoing basis. We must build a foundation of understanding of the facts about our District to better inform the future. Releasing our State of the

District information in November and now the State of the Schools Report are deliberate steps forward in building understanding of our strengths and opportunities for improvement.

During our State of the District conversations, we introduced our three District goals of accelerating student achievement, eliminating racial disparities and becoming a district of first choice, and we began to outline how we're going to achieve those goals with your support.

The State of the Schools Report shows the progress each of

Are You In?

We plan to continuously improve the way we report on and share District and school-level data and information with you, so if you have suggestions or you would like to be involved in conversations about the future of the District, we want to hear from you. Please email us at envisioning@ppghoe.net. We hope that the more you know, the more you will want to help us work to continuously improve our schools. Thank you for all you already do to support our students and schools!

our schools is making in 12 specific areas — each tying to one of our three District goals. All of the information and materials from both the State of the District and State of the Schools can be found at www.stateofthedistrict.org.

While we are pleased that we now have and can share this level of data with parents and the community, the data does emphasize the variation in our schools and the need to eliminate this variation as we seek to imagine better outcomes for children.

Help us go farther, faster

There is an old saying that you probably have heard: If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. We want to and must go very far, and we need your continued support to help us get there.

We recently began a process to help us envision the future of the District — because we know that to reach our three goals we must ensure a future that provides a quality education for all our children and allows us to be financially sustainable. This is going to require bold thinking, new ideas and an openness to change ... from all of us.

We need you to join us in celebrating our successes and tackling our challenges. We are going to continue to work hard to bring different points of view together, so we can arrive at a collective vision for the future. We hope that you find this report as helpful as we do. We are using this data every day to help us make better decisions to support and improve all of our schools in ways they need it the most.

The State of the Schools Report highlights two areas where we need immediate help and support from our parents, families and the community — family feedback and student absenteeism.

While the report reveals many parents would recommend their child's school, it also reveals low parent participation in the survey. We need to hear from more of you. Our family survey is open until May 24. By now, you should have received a survey in the mail for each child, or you can take the survey online at www.ppsparentsurvey.com.

We also see percentages of chronically absent students (excused and unexcused absences) across all schools range from as low as five percent to as high as 60 percent. This is concerning because even the most effective teachers can't teach to empty chairs.

We are calling for parents, families and the community to "Be There" to help us get kids to school every day. Attendance is not only important for academic preparation, it is also necessary if students are to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement to achieve the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship, which we know is a real life-changer for our students.

Please join us as we join you in doing what is best for all kids.

Dr. Linda Lane is superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools

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STATE OF THE SCHOOLS REPORT

Reflective of the District's commitment to measure success by more than a single test score on a state assessment, Pittsburgh Public Schools first State of the Schools Report — inserted in this edition of *The Educator* — provides a comprehensive, 360-degree view of its schools. It is the first report of its kind for Pittsburgh Public Schools.

For the past several years, PPS has collaborated with teachers, administrators and parents to collect data on many components of school performance. The report, released online in February, shows the variations seen at each school on many different levels, and shares progress in several categories including: student academic growth, achievement disparity, absenteeism, and student, teacher and parent perception.

"We now have a wealth of useful, reliable information that we need to support our schools where they need it most," said Superintendent Linda Lane. "As part of our commitment to increased transparency, we are sharing this information with the public so they, too, can join us in celebrating our successes and tackling our challenges. This report clearly demonstrates we can't do this alone and that we greatly need the support of parents and families, particularly in the areas of feedback and attendance."

Reading the 2012 State of the Schools Report

The 2012 State of Schools Report is grouped by grade configurations and shares 12 selected data points from the 2011-12 school year aligned to the District's goals of accelerating student achievement, eliminating racial disparities and becoming a District of first choice. Ten key data points are color-coded to highlight successes as well as areas for growth. Green indicates desirable outcomes, yellow is in the middle range, and red indicates a definite need for improvement. Comparisons to 2010-11 achievement results are noted with arrows, symbolizing gains and drops in achievement in 2011-12.

"We organized the data points under our District's three goals to show if and how we are moving in

the right direction," said Deputy Superintendent Jeannine French. "Just like we use multiple measures to evaluate teachers, we cannot assess a school on one piece of data alone."

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Jean Siegel, parent

Parent Jean Siegel added: "It's giving us access to district- and school-level data we could not see before. I feel more engaged and involved and want to see reasonable plans developed from this data."

Lane said the data included in the report will be helpful for teachers, students and families.

"We know that this information does not reflect in totality what is happening in each individual school, but it does tell us where our students are, where we are seeing academic growth, and where we have teaching and learning environments that support positive outcomes," Lane said. "This report

highlights many factors that parents should consider when deciding on a school that's best for their child."

Highlights of the report

The 2012 State of the Schools Report illuminates both exciting examples of success as well as District-wide areas for improvement.

For example, the report includes promising data related to student academic growth across many of the District's schools. Measures of student academic growth take into account the progress that students have made throughout the school year, as opposed to achievement measures that only look at where students stand at one point in time. Together, growth and achievement measures tell a broader story than either can separately. Clear standouts for growth, noted with a star, are STAR schools Pittsburgh Brookline PreK-8, Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5, Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5, Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8, Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8, Pittsburgh Weil PreK-5 and Pittsburgh Whittier K-5.

The report also points to opportunities for improvement. Using information from annual surveys, it shows variations in perceptions among teachers and students across the District. Additionally, while the report reveals many parents would recommend their child's school, it reveals low parent participation in the survey. The report also highlights high rates of absenteeism across most schools, with percentages of chronically absent students ranging from as low as five percent to as high as 60 percent.

"For our District to move forward, we all need to work together," said Nina Esposito-Visigitis, president of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. "There is so much pressure on teachers; every child's future is in their hands. Parents need to be involved and make sure their children are in school so that our teachers can educate them."

"Our teachers can't teach to empty chairs," said Lane. "We need parents, families and the community to help us get kids to school every day."

2013 BOARD OF EDUCATION

On Nov. 1, 2012, The Pittsburgh School Board Reapportionment Commission approved the Reapportionment Plan for the nine election districts of the board. The new boundaries were to be used

in the May 2013 primary election for the odd-numbered of seats. Below is a list of each board member's district along with the schools that fall into each district under the Reapportionment Plan.

DISTRICT 1: Sharene Shealey- President



BIO: Sharene Shealey was elected to represent District 1 in 2009. Ms. Shealey is a resident of North Point Breeze and is employed as a chemical engineer and serves as an adjunct faculty member at CCAC teaching Introduction to Chemistry. She is the mother of four children. Committees chaired include: Education, Negotiations, and Right to Education Liaison.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Crescent Early Childhood Center, Pittsburgh Faison K-5, Pittsburgh Liberty K-5, Pittsburgh Lincoln PreK-5, Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-8, Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8, Pittsburgh Obama 6-12, Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6-12, Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center.

DISTRICT 2: Dr. Regina B. Holley



BIO: Dr. Holley was elected to represent District 2 in 2011. Dr. Holley, of Highland Park, is a long-time educator and school leader who retired in 2010 after 35 years with Pittsburgh Public Schools. She was principal at Pittsburgh Lincoln for 16 years. Committees chaired include: District Sustainability, Charter Schools Committee, Liaison – Title I.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5, Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5, Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5, Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8, Pittsburgh Spring Hill K-5, Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8, Pittsburgh Woolsair K-5, Pittsburgh Spring Garden Early Childhood Center.

DISTRICT 3: Thomas Sumpter- First Vice President



BIO: Thomas Sumpter was elected to represent District 3 in 2005 and served as both first and second vice president. Mr. Sumpter has served on the Negotiations, Government and Ad Hoc committees and has represented the board at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and Head Start Policy Council. A retiree, Mr. Sumpter is a married father of two Pittsburgh Public Schools graduates.

Committees chaired include: Education, Information and Technology, Board Effectiveness, PSBA Delegate, Head Start Policy Council.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Miller PreK-5, Pittsburgh Millions 6-12, Pittsburgh Science and Technology 6-12, Pittsburgh Weil PreK-5.

DISTRICT 4: William Isler- Second Vice President



BIO: William Isler was elected to the board in 1999. He has also represented the board as a Council of the Great City Schools Delegate. He has served as board president and is employed as president of the Fred Rogers company. Mr. Isler began his career as a teacher and administrator. He joined the Pennsylvania Department of Education, where he served as Commissioner of Basic Education and Senior

Program Advisor for Early Childhood Education. He is the father of a Pittsburgh Public Schools graduate.

Committees chaired include: Marketing and Communications/PR, Policy Manual, Government Relations, Finance, Right to Education, Personnel.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Colfax K-8, Pittsburgh Linden K-5, Pittsburgh Alderdice High School

DISTRICT 5: Theresa Colaizzi



BIO: Theresa Colaizzi, owner of a hair salon, has served on the school board in various capacities since 2001, including president and second vice president. She is the liaison to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees and a mother of two Pittsburgh Public Schools graduates.

Committees chaired include: Personnel, Government Relations, Negotiations, Business, and Audit.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Greenfield PreK-8, Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8, Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5

DISTRICT 6: Sherry Hazuda



BIO: Sherry Hazuda was elected to represent District 6 in 2007. She has since served as president twice. She is the mother of four children and grandmother of two. She is a resident of Beechview employed by a health care organization. Committees chaired include: Board Effectiveness, Communications/PR, Title I liaison.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Banksville K-5, Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5, Pittsburgh Brashear High School, Pittsburgh Brookline PreK-8, Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK-8, Pittsburgh Pioneer, Pittsburgh South Brook 6-8, Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8, Pittsburgh West Liberty K-5, Pittsburgh Whittier K-5.

DISTRICT 7: Jean Fink



BIO: Jean Fink was elected to represent District 7 in 1976. Ms. Fink serves as a delegate to the Council of Urban Boards of Education. She is the mother of six, grandmother of nine, great-grandmother of one. Committees chaired include: Personnel, Business Affairs, Education, Pupil Services, Strategic Planning, Facilities.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8, Pittsburgh Carriek High School, Pittsburgh Concord PreK-5, Pittsburgh Phillips K-5, Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5, Pittsburgh South Side Annex.

DISTRICT 8: Mark Brentley Sr.



BIO: Mr. Brentley was elected to represent District 8 in 1999. He currently serves a liaison to Minority Business Enterprises/Woman Business Enterprises. He is also a delegate to the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association. Mr. Brentley is the father of four PPS graduates and one current PPS student. He is the founder and chair of Take a Father to School Day, an initiative to

engage males who play a role in students' lives. Committees chaired include: Business Affairs, Head Start Liaison, Technology, Business/Finance. **SCHOOLS:** Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5, Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12, Pittsburgh Conroy, Pittsburgh Grandview K-5, Pittsburgh King PreK-8, Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8, Pittsburgh Oliver Citywide Academy.

DISTRICT 9: Floyd "Skip" McCrea



BIO: Mr. McCrea was elected to represent District 9 in 2001. He serves as a board delegate to the Safety & Security Committee. Mr. McCrea is a retired Pittsburgh firefighter and the father of one Pittsburgh Public Schools Graduate. Committees chaired include: Audit, Business/Finance, Student Services, Safety & Security.

SCHOOLS: Pittsburgh Chartiers Early Childhood Center, Pittsburgh Classical 6-8, Pittsburgh Gifted Center, Pittsburgh Langley K-8, Pittsburgh Morrow PreK-8, Pittsburgh Online Academy 6-12, Pittsburgh Perry High School, Pittsburgh Westwood K-5.

Thinking big to envision the future of the District

By MEAGHAN CASEY

You've probably heard the story. Urban public education is facing many challenges – enrollment decline, increasing costs, decreasing budgets and major technology needs – to name a few. What you might not have heard, however, is that Pittsburgh Public Schools is tackling these challenges head on.

"I believe problems have solutions, but sometimes we need to think differently to find the answers," said Superintendent Linda Lane. "As a District, we have a 100-year history of educating students and with that, plenty of lessons learned. Yet, we also know that to remain viable for the next 100 years, we must dream big and work together to envision a new future for the Pittsburgh Public Schools."

Looking toward the future, Pittsburgh Public Schools has three ultimate goals: to accelerate student achievement, to eliminate racial disparities in achievement and to become a District of first choice.

"While we strive to reach our goals, we know we must also do so in a financially sustainable way," Lane said. "We are not seeing this as a short-term fix, but as a long-term solution."

While Lane believes the solutions lie within the District's staff, families and key community members, she understands that finding those solutions will be a process. To help facilitate the envisioning process, the District received two grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Fund for Excellence, which allowed the District to contract with two consulting firms, FSG and Bellwether Education Partners.

Recognizing that this was a big project that was going to be more work than the District staff could tackle on its own, the foundation community provided the grants to assist with the technical support needed to ensure this effort is a success. After working with the District and its community partners, the consultants will make recommendations, which will require a majority vote of the Board of Directors before adoption.

"We know that we need to begin to think differently about our finances if we are to achieve long-term stability," Lane said.

Currently, the District's 2013 budget represents a 1.5 percent decrease from 2012, but does not offset increasing expenditures. The budget includes an operating deficit of \$9.9 million. At the end of 2012 the fund balance was \$85.9 million. It is expected to decrease to \$76 million at the end of 2013. The deficit is predicted to increase each year, with the District running out of money in 2016 if changes are not made.

"We must find ways to generate revenue, leverage technology as a way to control costs, and provide schools that attract our families and meet their needs in ways we may not have done before," said Lane, who is reimagining a District that cost-effectively:

- ◆ uses technology to deliver high-quality content and frees up monetary and human resources;
- ◆ has a consumer-oriented focus that provides a great service to students and their families;
- ◆ has well-structured partnerships with nonprofits, health and human resource agencies, higher education, and early learning providers;
- ◆ delivers academic content in a variety of models to meet the needs of all of its learners; and
- ◆ uses data relentlessly to inform improvement efforts for the strongest possible student results.

"We're very optimistic we can achieve these goals," said Cate Reed, director of strategic initiatives. "By acknowledging our obstacles and addressing them head-on, we can come out on the other end stronger."

The District's Envisioning process will include multiple opportunities for community engagement and input from an advisory committee, as well as focus groups, public meetings, listening sessions and social media conversations. Learn more by visiting www.pps.k12.pa.us/envisioning



David Wise at Pittsburgh Millions 6-12.

With eliminating the achievement disparity as one of its overall goals, the District is keeping

AN EYE ON EQUITY

BY PAUL HALLORAN

One of three overall goals of Pittsburgh Public Schools is to eliminate the achievement disparity between white and minority students. Fifty-five percent of the District's student population is African-American, and those students are often achieving at a lower rate than other students in key areas, which is why the District is focusing on equity.

"There are schools where African-American students are doing well, with very effective teachers," said Dr. Pedro Noguera, a New York University professor who has been working with the District on the equity issue for more than a year. "We need to shed light on that success and build on it throughout the District."

Viola Burgess, executive director of equity said the District has adopted five strategies to address the equity issue: empowering effective teachers; enhancing curriculum relevance and fidelity; addressing culture; improving support to schools; and engaging families and the community.

"We looked at our data and tried to determine what we need to do differently and better," Burgess said.

One of the indicators for student achievement is Promise-Readiness, and that is an area where significant work needs to be done to achieve equity. In 2011-12, 68 percent of white students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise® scholarship, while only 26 percent of African-American students overall and 18 percent of African-

American males were Promise-Ready.

To specifically address that issue, a "We Promise" Summit was held on Jan. 17 at the Greenway Professional Development Center. Approximately 150 African-American male 11th-graders who are not Promise-Ready but have the capability to become eligible were invited to the event, which featured Noguera as keynote speaker, University of Pittsburgh academic counselor Charles Small and about 50 other role models — all African-American men.

It was a powerful event, even if the students — who have a GPA of 1.49-2.49; but need at least a 2.5 to qualify for the Promise — may have been skeptical at the outset.

"By the time they left, there was a clear attitude shift," said Superintendent Linda Lane. "One teacher said she saw a side of kids that she had never seen before. It was as good as anything I've been involved with as far as engaging kids. The men who participated were fabulous, and excited about it."

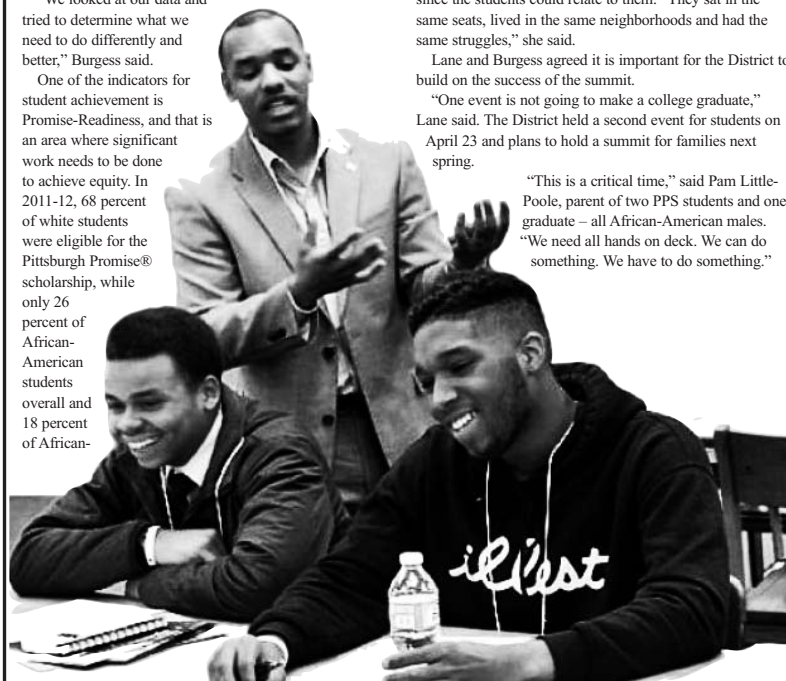
Burgess said the role models were the key to the event since the students could relate to them. "They sat in the same seats, lived in the same neighborhoods and had the same struggles," she said.

Lane and Burgess agreed it is important for the District to build on the success of the summit.

"One event is not going to make a college graduate," Lane said. The District held a second event for students on April 23 and plans to hold a summit for families next spring.

"This is a critical time," said Pam Little-Poole, parent of two PPS students and one graduate — all African-American males.

"We need all hands on deck. We can do something. We have to do something."



Pittsburgh Milliones finds keys to Success

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Pittsburgh Milliones 6-12 (UPrep) was very much a school in transition in 2011-12 when, as part of the District's consolidation plan, it absorbed three additional school communities.

"We had four different school cultures and philosophies," said Pittsburgh Milliones Principal Derrick Hardy. "We had to identify one common culture."

To provide the same opportunities and give all students the chance to achieve, change was needed. After a challenging year of adjustment, Pittsburgh Milliones adopted the Success Schools reform model used at schools across the country.

"It places a priority on student leadership," Hardy said. "It inspires teachers to use their training to identify who the natural leaders are among the students in their classroom, then give them as many incentives or leadership opportunities to win them over and have them spread the (desired) school culture."

Hardy said the idea is to identify students who command the respect of their peers. The student leaders at Pittsburgh Milliones, a school of 600 students, are called Wildcats, and there are no more than 20 per grade level. "You want to be strategic in who they are," Hardy said.

Another key to success at Pittsburgh Milliones is the division of the school into four floors of approximately 150 students. Each floor has a teacher who is a team leader and serves as a liaison for the principal to the rest of the staff on that floor. "That reduces the fire-extinguisher role of the principal," Hardy said.

One of the reasons Pittsburgh Milliones turned to the Success Schools model is how effective it is at Clayton Academy, an alternative school for students in grades 6-12 who have had behavioral issues in regular public schools.

"If an alternative school can be successful with Success Schools, we can, too, by replicating their leadership model," Hardy said.

Halfway through the school year, the results have been even better than the principal had hoped.

"This school has completely transformed," Hardy said. "Teachers can now go to work preparing students for graduation and beyond. Stabilizing the school culture and behavior is 50 percent of the work. Providing rigorous instruction in every single classroom is the other 50 percent."



Tyrell Hughes in English class at Pittsburgh Millions 6-12.

STAR SCHOOLS SHINE BRIGHT

By PAUL HALLORAN

Everyone wants to be a STAR, and in Pittsburgh Public Schools, they have that chance.

Students and Teachers Achieving Results (STAR) is a program that awards school-level staff for their students' gains in achievement. The distinguishing characteristic of STAR is that schools are ranked according to how much growth students show, as opposed to ranking simply by using their attainment on standardized tests.

"This allows us to understand where schools rank compared to other schools in the state," said Josh Aderholt, director of the STAR program for PPS, noting that a school's STAR index is based in part on Value-Added Measures, which take into account a number of factors such as students' prior performance, socioeconomic status and special education designations.

To qualify for STAR status, a school has to rank in the top 15 percent of schools statewide based on growth. If fewer than eight PPS schools qualify, schools may achieve STAR status by ranking in the top 25 percent of schools statewide and as one of the top eight schools in the District.

In 2011-12, six schools ranked in the top 15 percent statewide for growth: Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5, Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5, Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8, Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8, Pittsburgh Whittier K-5 and Pittsburgh Fort Pitt K-5 (which is now closed). Pittsburgh Brookline PreK-8 and Pittsburgh Weil K-5 qualified by ranking in the top 25 percent statewide. The schools were recognized at assemblies in November.

All staff members represented by the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) at schools achieving STAR status are recognized with financial compensation. Teachers at STAR schools receive \$6,000, while paraprofessionals, therapists and clerical staff receive \$2,000. The awards are paid for in part with a multi-year grant from the federal Teacher Incentive Fund. Each year, the District's share of the compensation, which was 20 percent this year, increases.

"Everyone at the school was really excited," said Pittsburgh Dilworth Principal Dr. Monica Lamar. "Our teachers work really hard to see that students are receiving a high-quality education."

Lamar attributed her school's success to several factors, including the fact that all students are exposed to the arts, taking classes in art and music. "That provides an expressive outlet for children," she said, adding that there is also a physical-education component through the intramural sports program.

Lamar said there is a culture at the school that "being smart is a great thing. Our gifted program is onsite, and that also enriches students' educations." As for the monetary award, Lamar said teachers weren't expecting it, but it was "good for the staff to receive a reward for a job well done."

Aderholt stressed that all District schools are eligible to qualify for STAR status, including three schools that primarily serve students with special needs: Pittsburgh Conroy, Pittsburgh Oliver Citywide Academy and Pittsburgh Pioneer. Teams of teachers, principals, PFT and District staff developed criteria by which the special schools could be judged for the purpose of achieving STAR status, which all three schools did.

At Pittsburgh Conroy, a school with 165 developmentally disabled students ranging in age from 5 to 21, the criteria included attendance, Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) results, behavioral



Alexandra Demchak at Pittsburgh Whittier K-5.



Jayda Salters and Devon Johnson at Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5.

and vocational rubrics, and overall assessments at the beginning and end of the 2011-12 school year, according to Pittsburgh Conroy Principal Rudley Mrvos.

"I'm very pleased for the teachers and paraprofessionals who received recognition," Mrvos said. "This is a great opportunity for our staff to show the gains and accomplishments of our students. It has been a good experience for everyone."

The establishment of the STAR schools program is part of the District's Empowering Effective Teachers plan and was included in the contract that the District and PFT signed in 2010, according to Aderholt.

The second group of STAR schools will be recognized in the fall using data collected over two school years (2011-12 and 2012-13). Learn more about STAR Schools at www.pps.k12.pa.us/discoverpps.



Ahveon Gonzales and Milten Strouthers at Pittsburgh Weil K-5.

Tripod survey: listening to students

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Often, the simplest solutions are the ones staring you in the face. That can be said in classrooms throughout Pittsburgh Public Schools, where teachers are turning to their students to better assess and improve their own teaching practices.

To facilitate feedback from students, the District has introduced a survey that is used nationwide to provide teachers with valuable information to guide continuous improvement. Piloted in 2009 and implemented District-wide last year, the Tripod student survey is a research-based, classroom-level analysis and reporting system developed and refined by Dr. Ron Ferguson, an economist and senior research associate at Harvard's Weiner Center for Social Policy. The Tripod surveys and analysis methods have helped more than 300,000 students across the country communicate about their classroom experiences.

The grade-specific survey asks students to give feedback on specific aspects of the classroom experience, organized around seven elements, or seven Cs, of teaching practice:

CARE - My teacher in this class makes me feel that s/he really cares about me.

CONTROL - Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.

CLARIFY - My teacher explains difficult things clearly.

CHALLENGE - My teacher wants me to explain my answers - why I think what I think.

CAPTIVATE - My teacher makes learning enjoyable.

CONFER - My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.

CONSOLIDATE - My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.

"We're not asking students to rate professional practice," said Dr. Mary Wolfson, Tripod and Value-Added Measures project coordinator. "It's about specific classroom experience. Our teachers have really been engaged in the story the survey has told and appreciate being able to reflect on their specific strengths, as well as areas for improvement."

"One of the areas I learned I needed to improve upon was consolidating," said Paul Ronevich, a science teacher at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy 6-12. "I never took the time to say, 'this is what we learned today.' This year, I've taken a little more creative approach to summarizing the lessons at the end of each class, and engaging students in that."

Ronevich, who is in his sixth year in the District, is teaching sixth-grade science this year, and is looping, or continuing on with the same set of students next year in grade 7.

"This survey definitely will be useful in the years ahead," he said. "After this year, I'll have my sixth-grade data, and I'll be able to better tailor my teaching methods to meet the needs of this specific group of students. It's very valuable to get their

perspective, and I think it's important that their voices are heard."

The first round of surveying for the 2012-13 school year was administered over a three-week period in November and December. The next round began on Feb. 25 and continued through March 22, to ensure that multiple data points are available over time.

"We have teachers who are big proponents of Tripod and others who don't trust it as much," said Nina Esposito-Visgitis, president of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. "We want them to feel comfortable with it. In an age of accountability, we want people to feel as comfortable as they can with the measures (of evaluation) we have chosen."

For Beth Ann Hope, a seventh-grade Reading/English Language Arts teacher at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, the experience has been positive.

"Getting the students' input makes a difference in terms of how you think about your practice," said Hope, who has been in the same classroom for the past 24 years. "I tell my students, 'This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers; this is for me.' I've made a more

conscious effort to meet the individual needs of my students as a result. I think the key to effective teaching is developing relationships and giving your students structure as well as care. I want to provide an environment I'd want my own children to be in."

The survey questions are tailored for grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-12. Early Years (K-2) surveys contain fewer questions and answer choices. Similarly, elementary (3-5) surveys use more simplistic language to measure student perceptions. Secondary (6-12) surveys are designed for older students and include more items and greater depth.

This year's survey results will be reported to teachers by Cambridge Education early this summer. These reports include comprehensive views of classroom responses to survey questions, in addition to graphical views anonymously comparing scores across classrooms. They will provide teachers with concrete, quantitative information about their students' perceptions, and how those compare against other students in other classrooms. Cambridge also provides District-level and school-level reports. To watch a video on Tripod visit www.pps.k12.pa.us/videos



Parents: The District is anxious to hear your opinions

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Pittsburgh Public Schools is seeking input from one of its most important constituencies - parents, and now is the time for parents to make themselves heard.

Created in partnership with the Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee, the Parent Engagement Survey was designed to help District officials better understand the thoughts and views of their interactions and experience at the school and District level.

A parent survey had been administered annually since 2007, but it was redesigned last year in response to parent feedback to focus on specific school experiences rather than District-wide issues. Since the redesign, the response rate has increased from 11.7 percent to 14.9 percent, with more than 4,000 parents participating in 2012.

"Parents want to be heard, and through the survey, they can get their thoughts and concerns on record," said Errika Fearby Jones, Special Assistant to the Superintendent.

In last year's survey, 74 percent of parents who responded agreed they felt satisfied with their child's social and academic progress, and 69 percent would recommend their child's school. The majority also agreed they felt welcome in the school building, with 74 percent making visits at least three times last year. While most were aware of the District's bullying policy, half wanted more information on preventing bullying. Another 29 percent wanted more frequent communications about their child. Other questions addressed topics such as discipline, quantity of homework, student opportunities, disruption strategies and parental recommendations.

"Before the survey, there were a lot of anecdotal stories and examples of problems with parental engagement at the school level, but it was difficult to do anything about it without hard data," said Hill Jordan, co-chair, Parent Survey Sub-committee, Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee. "Of course, our biggest issue is that some of the most important data needs to come from the parents who are least engaged, and we need to make even more of

an effort to reach out to them."

Superintendent Linda Lane said it is important for parents, especially those who may not be as engaged, to trust the District.

"We have to make sure the first contact we have with parents is positive," Lane said. "We need to build relationships to encourage them to become engaged."

The survey results from last year have been shared with individual schools and are helping to shape local school improvement plans. "I think it's been helpful in changing the mindset of some principals and teachers," Jordan said.

"Schools are reviewing the data with parents and coming up with ways to improve parent engagement," Jones said. It is also creating positive change at the District-level. Based on last year's survey results, District staff partnered with parents to create a parent focused bullying prevention toolkit that will be completed and distributed in time for next school year.

The 2013 Parent Engagement Survey is available online at www.ppsparentsurvey.com, and also has been mailed to families. The deadline to respond is May 24, 2013.

FACE

Coordinators help to enhance engagement

By PAUL HALLORAN

It is widely accepted that students whose parents are actively involved in their education typically achieve at a higher level. With that in mind, Pittsburgh Public Schools has enhanced efforts to engage parents.

As of last fall, every school in the District has a Family And Community Engagement (FACE) coordinator. The FACE coordinator role is held by a school-based teacher or professional staff. They receive a stipend to work an additional 15 hours per month and participate in up to 15 hours of training and/or meetings.

"Their job is to support the principal in improving parent engagement at the school," said Erika Fearbry Jones, special assistant to the Superintendent.

Because every school community is different, the responsibilities of the FACE coordinators could include: creating newsletters or providing content for existing newsletters; holding workshops and training sessions for parents and community members; assisting teachers and school staff in communicating academic expectations; maintaining a school bulletin board or website; establishing a system for parents and community members to share feedback with school staff; promoting the Parent Perceptions Survey; and sharing best practices.

"Every (FACE) coordinator is assessing his or her school, based on an engagement checklist, to determine what to work on first," Jones said. Each school's checklist should be completed in collaboration with the input of staff, parents and, where possible, community partners.



Mara Plunket at Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-8

Prior to this year, only the accelerated learning academies had full-time parent engagement specialists. Now, every school has a FACE coordinator.

"We had varying degrees of success with the parent engagement specialists," said Superintendent Linda Lane. "We realize that parent engagement has such value, and we wanted to have it in place at all schools. This is a different model."

Kellie Meyer, a PreK and kindergarten teacher at Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-8, shares the FACE coordinator role with Cherise Mann, the social worker at the school. Meyer said the position is a work in progress.

"It's going very well," she said. "Through trial and error, we're already learning some things we would change for next year."

Among the initiatives Meyer and Mann have put in place are a parent bulletin board with information on how parents can help their children succeed, a resource bookshelf that includes books on helping children succeed at school and at home, and automated phone calls to parents with important announcements such as PTO and PSCC (Parent School Community Council) meeting dates.

"The challenge is to reach out to all parents and try to find

TIME

different options to get them to the school," Meyer said.

Lynette Wright is a parent of a student at Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5 and a member of the Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee. She was part of a group that provided input into the development of the guidelines and job description for the FACE coordinators.

Wright said the FACE coordinator at Pittsburgh Allegheny, Laurie Williamson, is using the District's engagement checklist that is based on guidelines for what good family engagement should look like. Williamson combined the views of the principal, teachers and members of the school's PSCC.

"It is a work in progress, but there is a lot of potential. One positive is that it's going to be consistent across all schools," said Wright.

Tiffani Best, PTO president at Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5 who also has a child at Pittsburgh Obama 6-12, said there is a very good relationship between the parents at Fulton and FACE coordinators Sonia Brown and Sharon Bellotti.

"We meet twice a month to share ideas and plan things," said Best. "We have good communication; we e-mail and text. They come to the PTO meetings. Everything we do, we do together."

All agree the biggest challenge facing the FACE coordinators is getting to all parents, not just the ones who want to be engaged.

"We know we have parents we don't reach," Lane said. "We need to work on strategies to engage unengaged parents and help them realize it's their school, too. The FACE coordinators can help us do that."

From the perspective of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, having the FACE coordinators in place is a positive.

"I am so impressed with their enthusiasm," said Nina Esposito-Visgitis, PFT president. "They are very excited to be doing what they're doing. It's very important for us that teachers have stepped up to take the lead."

Teacher effectiveness brought into focus

Last summer, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed Act 82 of 2012, a comprehensive education reform bill that—by law—requires that teacher evaluation be based 50 percent on observation and 50 percent on student outcomes, starting with the 2013-14 school year.

"Unlike most school districts, Pittsburgh Public Schools had been working on improving its teacher evaluation system since 2009," said Sam Franklin, executive director of the Office of Teacher Effectiveness. "We were in a fortunate position to be ahead of the curve as it comes to this new legislation, which requires teacher evaluation to be based on multiple measures."

In fact, the legislation is very consistent with where Pittsburgh Public Schools is heading in terms of evaluating teacher effectiveness.

"The legislation provides some flexibility to districts to propose their own unique evaluation tool, as long as it fits within the 50-50 teacher observation/student outcomes framework," Franklin said. "We're in a position to be the first district in Pennsylvania to do that."

Franklin stressed that the motivating factor for the District and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers is not simply complying with the law; rather it's about putting the information into the hands of teachers and helping them perform better for their students.

"The District needs to provide the supports that our teachers need to improve

their practices, and our teachers need to use their data to inform their own professional growth," Franklin said.

PFT President Nina Esposito-Visgitis said teachers are adjusting to the new evaluation tools, and are generally in favor of them.

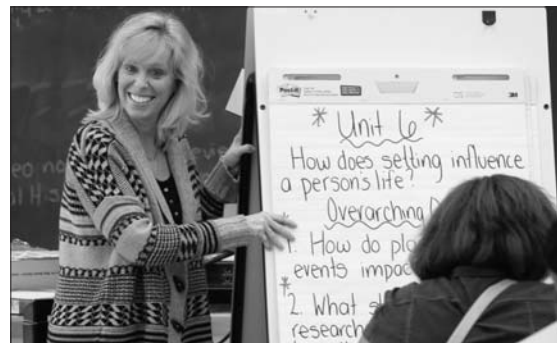
"We continue to want to have the most effective and fair measures for evaluating teachers," Esposito-Visgitis said. "It's a big culture shift. The entire way of looking at the practice of teaching has changed. We want to make people feel as comfortable as we can with the measures we have chosen."

Patti Camper, principal at Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, perhaps best summarized the new teacher-evaluation system in Pittsburgh Public Schools, "Now, it's a 3D image where as it used to be just a snapshot."

"It gives you avenues to proceed," Camper said. "You can see where your strengths and weaknesses are by using the RISE rubric and student survey (tripod). I think the majority of teachers appreciate having the data. Sometimes the hardest part of getting better is taking the first step and acknowledging you need to get better."

Superintendent Linda Lane said the opportunity for professional growth for teachers is the most important aspect of the evaluation system.

"If teachers want to get better at their craft, they have to know where they are," Lane said. "It gives them a picture on which to base some determinations on how they can improve, and we know that even the highest performing teachers have room to improve. We all do."



Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 teacher Beth Hope leads a discussion.

Journey has been marked by collaboration, growth

In 2009, Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, and approximately 120 teachers and administrators began a journey to develop new ways to identify and respond to differences in teacher effectiveness.

This unprecedented, collaborative approach was founded on the belief that a collaborative design process would result in a professional growth system that supports, empowers and recognizes teacher practice. What the team quickly recognized was that just as in other complex professions, there's no single tool that can do justice to the work teachers do.

The first tool to be implemented was the Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE). RISE is a program that defines effective teaching and prescribes an evaluation process that focuses on planning and preparation, classroom responsibilities, teaching and learning, and professional responsibilities. With RISE, teachers are active participants in the evaluation process.

The journey continued with the adoption of value-added measures (VAM). A VAM score is determined by calculating the difference between a student's predicted outcome on an assessment—based on achievement history and other characteristics of the student and school—and their actual outcome. This score helps to identify a teacher or school's contribution to student academic growth.

Finally, the District turned to its students. The Tripod student survey asks students to provide feedback on how they are experiencing their classrooms and about their levels of engagement in their own learning through the 7 Cs (described on page 6).

Discover PPS: New website launched

Pittsburgh Public Schools has launched a new and improved website, redesigned to be more user-friendly. It features added video content and a new tool, Discover PPS.

Through the Discover PPS tool, parents can enter their home address and find and compare schools within the closest proximity. Statistical information is provided about each school from state assessment results and the District's State of the Schools report.

"It gives a snapshot of important data," said Phillip Cresswell, the District's web technologies administrator.

It replaces the former "Find a School" feature, which directed parents to a listing of schools by street.

"We really engaged our parents and listened," said Cresswell. "This is much more interactive and makes it easier for them to find what they're looking for."

To move forward with the redesign, the District solicited input from the Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee and set up the following goals:

- ◆ to increase the accuracy and availability of information at both the District and school-specific levels;



www.pps.k12.pa.us

- ◆ to streamline information and maintain only the most relevant and important content;

- ◆ to increase the engagement of users with dynamic and response-oriented content, including discussions, ratings and social media;

- ◆ to prioritize accurate and specific calendaring at all schools and for all district events; and

- ◆ to organize content into more logical and user-specific ways for an improved experience.

"We live in such a connected age, and our content needs to reflect the experience and information that our users are demanding," said Cresswell. "The changes are impactful and inclusive of our community and schools in developing the types of tools that prove we are a District of First Choice."

The new site, which launched on March 22, is broken down into a suite of primary channels:

- Who We Are
- Our Schools
- Our Results
- Why PPS?
- Academics
- Supporting Students
- Forms and Resources

Parents are more connected than ever

New this year, the Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) provides parents and students secure access to attendance, grade and assignment information in a real-time atmosphere.

The tool, which launched Feb. 1, is being piloted in nine schools and will expand District-wide next year.

The PIV is not meant to replace direct communication among students, parents and teachers; rather, it is serving as an additional resource to help families gain the skills, knowledge, tools and strategies they need to support, encourage and inspire students to "Dream Big" and "Work Hard" on their way to a successful future.

The advantage of the PIV is that assignments and performance results can be viewed as soon as entries are made by teachers into their electronic grade books. Parents will also have the option to receive grade and attendance summary notifications, either daily, weekly or multiple times during the week.

"We're trying to help parents be better informed about the academic performance of their children," said Peggy Shields, Director of Instructional Technology. "It's especially useful for parents living out of

state or abroad — maybe overseas in the military — to participate in their child's education."

"Parents have been wanting this, and I'm so excited we can deliver," said Errika Fearby Jones, Special Assistant to the Superintendent. "It's an opportunity to see live views of students' data, from test results to grades. They no longer have to wait for the next report card. It's a direct

form of parent engagement."

Hill Jordan, parent of two PPS students, said with the implementation of the PIV, parents have every opportunity to be involved and engaged in their children's education. "I'm glad the District is doing this," Jordan said. "We know there are parents who are not doing what they should be and want to blame the teachers (for their children's academic performance). There

are no excuses anymore."

Parents in participating schools can access the PIV through the ePromise icon on the District's newly launched website, www.pps.k12.pa.us



ePromise / PIV PPS
 Your student's achievement. At your fingertips.

ePromise / PIV PPS - What are the differences between these tools?

Pittsburgh Public Schools believes that the more our parents know about their students and schools, the better our students can be supported outside of classroom. Real-time information is important so that parents are more aware of assignments, absences and the course information for their students. With The Pittsburgh Promise, data about grades and attendance are more important than ever. This is true for current year information but also historic information. Since the District maintains decades of data, it can easily be overwhelming for parents when accessing that information. To simplify the ability for our parents and guardians to access information on our students, Pittsburgh Public Schools manages data in 2 parallel systems - active year information and historic information.

Parent Internet View (PIV) - This is *active year* information, which includes the day-to-day changes in grades, assignments, attendance, discipline and schedules.

ePromise - This is *historic years* information includes the reported data that District shares with the State and The Pittsburgh Promise on enrollment, final grades, official attendance data and official enrollment information for all of our schools and students.

Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) Web Access

Parent Internet Viewer (click to access)

The PIV provides parents and students access to attendance, grade and assignment information in a real-time web tool. Please note that the PIV only provides unofficial progress information. Official end-of-term grades are mailed home. Please refer to the mailed report cards for official grades.

Passwords are provided and managed by your local school. In the 2012-2013 school year, the following schools are piloting PIV with all other schools becoming available and online in the 2013-2014 school year.

Current pilot schools:

- Pittsburgh CAPA
- Pittsburgh Carmalt
- Pittsburgh Classical
- Pittsburgh Brashear
- Pittsburgh Obama

ePromise Web Access

ePromise Student History (click to access)

ePromise is a tool that Pittsburgh Public Schools initially developed to house to manage the online Magnet Lottery application. This tool is used yearly by parents to complete and submit their applications for any of our magnet schools. To extend the use into more of informational hub for parents, ePromise has grown to include the officially captured historic information on all of our students that is useful to gauge Pittsburgh Promise eligibility.

Passwords are self-serviceable within ePromise by entering in some basic information. Name, Child's data of birth, Student ID (available on report card) and your Address. Using this information, ePromise authenticates a new users and issues a requesting parent an account. This same name and password, also work then for the PIV tool outlined to the left.

Items that ePromise has has available within it include:

- **Historic Registration** - outlines and tracks all schools and

iPads: the new pen and paper

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Gone are the days when a pencil and paper ruled the classroom. Today, increasing numbers of students and teachers are relying on the latest technology to enhance learning.

To better meet the demands of a 21st-century education, the District's Academic Office and the Office of Information & Technology collaborated on a school-based iPad Initiative that was launched at the start of the school year. Through the initiative, the District purchased 6,000 iPads through a five-year lease, which have been distributed to 24 schools: Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5, Arsenal PreK-5, Arsenal 6-8, Banksville, Beechwood, CAPA, Carmalt, Colfax, Concord, Conroy, Dilworth, Fulton, Greenfield, King, Liberty, Linden, Miller, Montessori, Obama, Perry, Phillips, Schiller, Sunnyside and Whittier.

The schools were selected to participate in the initiative through a competitive request for proposal process.

"We wanted schools to demonstrate their desire to participate rather than push these devices into the schools," said Peggy Shields, director of instructional technology. "They had to outline what their educational needs were and how this technology would help them meet their goals in terms of increasing instructional strategies and teacher effectiveness and increasing students' ability to be Promise-Ready."

The 24 schools each received 210 iPads or enough to meet one-third of the student population, whichever number was higher. In addition, 15 iPads were provided to both Pittsburgh Concord and Pittsburgh Arsenal K-5 for students in the English Second Language (ESL) program, and 320 iPads are being used in autistic support classrooms across the District.

"These ESL and Autistic Support programs were not part of the RFP process but due to the impact this technology could have on these students, the District felt it was important to have these devices in the hands of these students," said Shields. "We had one French-speaking ESL

First-grader Jordan Daugherty and speech teacher Nancy Prisby at Pittsburgh Conroy.



student, who was able to go from writing only two sentences in English to four pages because of the iPad. Another, a fourth-grader who is blind and transferred here speaking only French Creole, has been able to use the iPad to communicate by using a braille keyboard."

Across the city, teachers are beginning to utilizing the new technology for SMART Board integration, assessment tools, iBooks, iMovies and a variety of other educational

apps and features. The primary goal of the initiative is to improve student achievement and to realize efficiencies in the delivery of instruction and instructional resources.

Mark Campbell, the District's chief information officer, was a major proponent of bringing in iPads rather than investing in more desktop computers. Campbell, who is a mentor to an eighth-grade student at Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8, received some valuable feedback that supported his vision.

"We were talking about PCs and the student told me, 'they're for old people,'" said Campbell. "The students enjoy using technology as part of their learning experience. Our teachers have found innovative ways to integrate the devices during instruction again, enhancing the learning experience."

The accessibility that comes with mobile technology also made it an attractive option.

"iPads allow educators to use classroom space in different ways, mobile technologies create classrooms without walls," Campbell said.

"That's one of the major advantages," Shields said. "Students can use them at their desks and they can move around the building with them. And the versatility and amount of apps that are available are extending the classroom experience and allowing teachers to do things they wouldn't normally be able to."

As part of the contract, an Apple representative is working full-time in the District this year, providing professional development and training. The contract also included 160 MacBook Pro laptops for synchronizing iPads, as well as storage carts.

Through a certification process this summer, 20 District employees will become trainers and carry out the professional development in the coming years.

Campbell said in the future the District will continue to work toward leveraging technology to create innovative learning environments for 21st century learners.

NEW WAY TO LEARN

Online Academy offers students an alternative way to go to school

By PAUL HALLORAN

Christina Mattiello was seeking an alternative to the traditional school setting for her two children. She found what she was looking for at the Pittsburgh Online Academy.

Launched at the start of the 2012-13 school year, the Online Academy is open to students in grades 4-12. As indicated by the name, all instruction and learning are done via the Internet, through a partnership Pittsburgh Public Schools has with Waterfront Learning.

"I like it for a number of reasons," Mattiello said. "I like that I can check their work at any time, so there's never a surprise at the end of the quarter. I like the way they can review lectures and that they are not stuck in a rigid schedule."

The District started the Online Academy in an attempt to give families an alternative to cyber charter schools, which last year attracted almost 800 students from Pittsburgh, representing a cost of more than \$11 million to the District.

"We could compete with the brick-and-mortar charter schools, but we weren't able to compete with the online charter schools," said

Mark McClinchie, the principal of Pittsburgh Online Academy. "And the numbers of students going the cyber charter route kept going up — from 30 in 2001 to 789 last year.

The challenge for the District was to create an online school whose students would be eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship, which students at cyber charter schools are not. Once the concept was established, the next task was deciding how to best implement it.

"We didn't have the resources to build all the courses, so we decided to enter into the partnership with Waterfront," McClinchie said, adding that Waterfront provides the courses, technical support, administrative support and student supports. It costs the District \$3,500 per student, or about 73 percent less than it costs for a cyber charter school placement.

Instruction through the Online Academy follows an asynchronous model, meaning there is no "live" instruction online; rather, students watch recorded lectures and

complete a variety of exercises and

quizzes. Each lesson takes an hour, and the average day consists of six lessons.

"It teaches them to be responsible for their work," Mattiello said of her daughter, Cheyenne Flint, a high school junior, and son, Shane Flint, a ninth-grader. "They can keep track of their progress and, if they are falling behind, they have a chance to catch up."

If a student has a question or needs help, he or she can e-mail a teacher and get a response within 24 hours. Mattiello said her daughter has actually gotten a call from a teacher in response to an inquiry.

McClinchie, a former principal at a public charter school as well as Pittsburgh Weil PreK-5, also monitors students' progress from his office at the Pittsburgh Greenway Professional Development Center. He said there is a three-tier

intervention process for students who do not keep up with their work: a reminder to follow the schedule, a requirement to come to Greenway three times a week, and a plan to return to a brick-and-mortar school.

Upon enrolling in the Online Academy, students and parents attend an orientation to learn about the equipment (a laptop is provided by Waterfront), how to contact teachers and how to resolve technical problems. Parents are encouraged to put students on a schedule and make sure they adhere to it, McClinchie said.

In addition to the Promise, Pittsburgh Online Academy students are eligible to participate in sports and other after-school activities at their neighborhood school.

For more information visit www.pps.k12.pa.us

Dorian Holland is a student in the Online Academy.





Members of the first graduating class at Pittsburgh Sci-Tech.

Sci-Tech to graduate first class

By PAUL HALLORAN

When the first graduates of Pittsburgh Science & Technology Academy receive their diplomas this spring, they will do so not only as students, but also as pioneers.

The Class of 2013 will be the first class to graduate from Pittsburgh Sci-Tech, a magnet school that opened as a grade 6-9 school in the fall of 2009 and has added one grade per year, becoming a 6-12 school last fall.

"Overall, it has been very exciting to grow the program every year," said Pittsburgh Sci-Tech Principal Robert Scherrer. "We added one grade every year and we also got smarter every year."

The Sci-Tech curriculum is geared to students who have an interest in concentrating on the STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and math. Each school day consists of four academic periods and an activity period, and every student takes at least two STEM courses every day.

"It's a school where kids have a tremendous opportunity," said M.J. Tocci, parent of two Pittsburgh Sci-Tech students and the school's mock trial coach. "It has been an amazing experience for both kids."

Tocci, an attorney who is the co-founder and director of the Heinz Negotiation Academy for Women at Carnegie

Mellon University, said her son, senior Sam Rest, and his classmates were thrust into leadership roles from the first day the school opened.

"Because they were always the oldest class, they were instantly put in the position of needing to be leaders," Tocci said. "Each year, they had to provide leadership. They had nobody to show them the way, so they had to figure it out."

There were some advantages to being the first class. For example, on a mock trial team, 10th-graders typically only can be witnesses, then they can advance to playing the role of lawyer in their junior and senior years. At Pittsburgh Sci-Tech, some 10th-graders got to be lawyers right away.

"They got a very different kind of experience," Tocci said. "It was a real plus. In some ways, the kids had to take charge of their own education. While it could be frustrating at times, it was a really good experience."

There are 59 seniors in the Class of 2013 and 510 students overall. Most students are accepted in either grade six (approximately 50) or grade nine (50 new students in addition to the 50 current eighth-graders). There is a weighted lottery in which applicants can gain points for scoring advanced or proficient on state assessment exams or being eligible for free or reduced

lunch.

"Our goal is to create a student population that is similar to the demographics of other schools in Pittsburgh," Scherrer said. "We can do this work with all kids, not just a specialized group of students."

Scherrer attributes the school's success to the caliber of the faculty.

"We have a very collaborative staff," he said. "They are very clear about the high expectations we have for students. They come up with solutions, not excuses, and they are willing to learn from each other. A school like this doesn't work without excellent teachers."

Tocci, whose daughter Zoë, is a freshman, concurs.

"The teachers are amazing," she said. "When I have been dissatisfied with something, I have been able to talk to the principal and teachers, and I have felt good about it."

Tocci said another benefit Pittsburgh Sci-Tech offers is opportunities for students outside the classroom. Her son, whose concentration is life sciences, has been working in a lab at the University of Pittsburgh for two years alongside Ph.D. candidates doing cancer research.

"He's doing real research with phenomenal mentors," she said. "Kids are doing some very innovative things."

Conservancy helps schools create natural learning environments

CONSERVANCY: From Page 16

specifically designed for handicapped students, an alcove with three steel drums for music classes, planting beds that are accessible to students and a shade structure to block the sun.

PPS Chief Financial and Operating Officer Peter Camarda said the District has greatly benefitted from the partnership with the

Conservancy.

"We are very appreciative of the work of the Conservancy and the foundations that support it," Camarda said. "The site improvements have been very well received and appreciated by the community."

Wagner said volunteers from school communities and other organizations have

played an integral role in the Schools Grounds Greening Project, with almost 1,200 volunteers participating thus far. For example, students from Carnegie Mellon University assisted with the green space at Pittsburgh Sci-Tech, while a neighbor helps maintain the garden at Pittsburgh Minadeo. Other noteworthy projects include

Pittsburgh Roosevelt, where old green space was converted into new play space with a maze and reading area, and Pittsburgh Fulton, where an outdoor teaching space was created.

For more information visit www.paconserv.org

Changes make common sense

COMMON CORE: From Page 1

In high school math, the Common Core standards in geometry were adopted last school year, while Algebra I and II were put into place this year, as were kindergarten and grade 5 math and grade 11 English, Lippert said. By next fall, all English courses in grades K-11 will be fully aligned with Common Core.

"We really do want teachers and parents to buy in," Lane said. "It's a change that will help make the curriculum more engaging for students and more enjoyable for teachers. The more interesting it is, the easier it is to get to students."

"Teachers can go deeper into a topic and give students more rigorous materials," Lippert said. "Four years ago we adopted a new teacher-evaluation system that focuses on how we go about teaching. The 'how' is very important in Common Core — how you go

about getting kids to be critical thinkers. Our curriculum lent itself to the principles of Common Core."

"We're not throwing out everything we have done before; we're building on the foundation we already have," McCarthy said, adding that the implementation of Common Core will help the District fulfill its three overall goals: accelerating student achievement, eliminating racial disparities, and become a District of first choice for families.

The Common Core standards are designed to prepare students to apply the knowledge they have obtained, rather than simply passing a standardized exam. For example, Lane said, "students need to be able to make the leap from doing math on a worksheet to using math in the real world. That can make a difference."

Keystone Exams replace PSSA

This school year, at the high school level, the state began to transition from the PSSA exams to Keystone exams, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. This change impacts students in grades 8-12. The biggest difference is that the Keystone exams are designed to assess how much knowledge a student has in specific content areas and are administered when a student completes a particular course rather than being given to all students at one grade level.

One other key distinction is that if a student fails to pass a module of the Keystone exam, he or she does not have to retake the entire test. By 2014-15, the PSSA exams in grades 3-8 will all be aligned to the Common Core standards.

This year, students will take the corresponding Keystone at the end of the year when enrolled in the following courses: Algebra I, English II and Biology.

Students in grades 10-11 will have to take a Keystone even if they have previously taken these courses. For example, an 11th grader who took English II last year will take the Literature Keystone at the end of this school year.

"The Keystone exams are a way to make sure we are aligning the curriculum to the Common Core standards," McCarthy said. "We are doing everything possible to support teachers and students in this transition."

This year, graduating seniors will have to earn 26.5 credits, complete an academic-based graduation project and demonstrate proficiency in math, reading and writing on the PSSA, according to McCarthy. For students currently in grades 8-11, the Keystone exams will become part of the graduation requirements instead of PSSA starting next year.

Summer Dreamers combines academics, fun

Heading into its fourth year, Pittsburgh Public Schools Summer Dreamers Academy offers the summer fun a child wants — and the summer learning a child needs. All grade K-8 campers will work on reading, writing and math skills that will help them succeed in school.

But Summer Dreamers is not school as usual. Campers will participate in fun and interesting academic classes and take part in exciting enrichment activities. Children can design their own video games in a computer lab, explore the waterfronts of the city on a bicycle, or learn to play golf.

"I'll be a better reader, and I'll know all my questions on my test," said fourth-grade camper Tylen Patterson.

There is no cost to attend Summer Dreamers Academy. Transportation is provided to campers living more than 1.5 miles from their assigned site, and all campers will receive breakfast, lunch and a snack. Based on parent feedback, Summer Dreamers has undergone some modifications this year that include adding two sites and grouping students by grade level as well as geography.

After consolidating from 14 sites in 2011 to three last year, five sites will be used this summer — four for students in grades K-5 (Pittsburgh Carmalt, Classical, Faison and Millions [UPrep]) and one for grades 6-8 (Pittsburgh CAPA).

Summer Dreamers will serve the same number of students as last year, when 4,043 students applied for approximately 2,600 slots. The criteria remain unchanged for students in grades K-2 and 4-8: First preference is given to students who have scored basic or below basic on their 2012 PSSA (grades 4-8) or January 2013 DIBELS (K-2) exams and who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Second preference is given to students who have scored basic or below basic on the PSSA or DIBELS or who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. If any spots remain, they are given to students who do not fall into either category.

Starting this year, if a child is accepted to Summer Dreamers based on the admission criteria, his/her siblings in the same household will also be accepted to the program.

Also new in 2013, Pittsburgh Public Schools and Summer Dreamers Academy are participating in a summer learning research study with the Wallace Foundation and RAND Corporation. As part of the study, no enrollment preference will be given to any student currently enrolled in third grade. All third-grade applicants will be admitted by a lottery, with each applicant having an equal opportunity to be selected.

The study will evaluate the effectiveness of summer learning programs in Pittsburgh and other cities. The foundation, working with the RAND Corporation, will conduct a two-year study of approximately 300 Pittsburgh

third-graders who attend Summer Dreamers and compare their academic performance with students who applied but could not participate.

"Research shows that over the summer children can lose, on average, one month of what they learned in school," said Eddie Willson, director of operations for student support services. "The study will help us learn how the Summer Dreamers Academy can help students do better in school. We're excited about being able to benefit from the information and data we receive."

Summer Dreamers Academy is funded by grants from the Fund for Excellence, Wallace Foundation, Walmart Foundation and federal Title I funds.

Summer Dreamers daily schedule consists of four blocks — two academic and two activities. This year, all students will have academics in the morning and activities in the afternoon.

The academic blocks consist of literacy and math. The literacy section will again be based on a National Geographic content-based literacy curriculum, while the McGraw-Hill Number Worlds curriculum will serve as the foundation for the math instruction. The lessons, which will align with the District's core curriculum, are fun and engaging, in keeping with the feel of Summer Dreamers.

"Teachers and students like the content-based literacy with National Geographic," said Christine Cray, project manager for Summer Dreamers, noting that middle school students read novels and historical fiction, while elementary students read books about science and social studies. There is also a writing component that will be incorporated into the activity periods.

There are approximately 25 different activity options, which vary by site and age group. In an effort to improve daily attendance, there will be incentives for the grade levels, sites and individual students with the best attendance. Parents will be contacted when students are absent.

This year's Summer Dreamers Academy will run from July 1-Aug. 7. The program runs Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (No session on July 4.) This year the Summer Dreamers Academy received a remarkable response and reached its enrollment targets by the May 3 deadline for all grades except grade 3. The hope is to increase third grade participation in the camp and summer learning research study. A lottery, not a tiered preference system, will apply to third grade students. A new sibling preference policy is also in effect this year. More information is available on the Summer Dreamers website at www.pps.k12.pa.us/summerdreamers or by calling the Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920.



Scenes from the 2012 Summer Dreamers Academy, above and below.



2013 Summer Program Descriptions

Early Intervention Summer Program: Serves preschool children who demonstrate a delay in at least one area of development — cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional, self-help, hearing or vision. Students are eligible based on needs identified in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The services are designed to help children become more independent and prepared for kindergarten, and they will focus on the areas of delay identified in the IEP. Speech, occupational and physical therapy, vision and hearing services are provided by specialists. The Early Intervention Summer program will take place at Pittsburgh Conroy, Pittsburgh Classical and Pittsburgh Millions on Tuesdays and Wednesday from 9 a.m. - 2:15 p.m. from July 2 to August 7.

Extended School Year (ESY): The Extended School Year Program provides special education and related services to qualifying students who have Individual Education Plans (IEP's) beyond the 180-day school calendar. Interruptions in special education programming may result in children with disabilities losing many basic skills. ESY services are provided to prevent this loss.

ESY programs will be held at Pittsburgh Gifted Center, Pittsburgh Oliver Citywide Academy, Pittsburgh Conroy, and Pittsburgh Pioneer. The Extended School Year Program will run from July 9-26 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Neighborhood Learning Alliance: The Neighborhood Learning Alliance provides Summer Programs for all students, grades 9-12, needing academic support or credit recovery. Come join us June 17 to August 2, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at one of our summer programming locations: Pittsburgh Carrick, Pittsburgh Allderdice, Pittsburgh Perry, Pittsburgh Millions 6-12, or Pittsburgh Sci-Tech 6-12. The program offers NovaNet credit recovery, academic support, food, and fun.

All students, K-5, are welcome to join NLA's Summer Programming. Come join us from June 24 to July 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at one of our summer programming locations: Concord, Lincoln, and Weil. We will provide academics, recreation, food, and fun to all participants!

The AP Summer Academy: The AP Summer Academy is meant to prepare students for the Advanced Placement courses they will enter in the fall of 2013. The program provides students with the pre-requisite skills needed to be successful in these college level courses. Carnegie Mellon University will host this summer's AP Academy which will run from July 15 to August 2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The IBDP Summer Program: The IBDP prepares 11th and 12th grade students for the International Baccalaureate courses they will enter at Pittsburgh Obama in the fall of 2013. The program provides students with the pre-requisite skills needed to be successful in these college level courses. The IBDP program will be held at Pittsburgh Obama in two sessions from 9:00am to 12:00 pm. Session one will run from June 18 to July 1 and will cover IBDP Mathematics, Math Studies and History. Session Two will run from July 8 to July 19 and will cover IBDP English, Physics, and other subjects.

Summer Dreamers Academy: A free summer learning camp designed to engage students in learning and fun during the summer months. This summer, we will hold the Summer Dreamers academy at: Pittsburgh Carmalt, Pittsburgh Classical, Pittsburgh Faison, and Pittsburgh Millions for students in grades K-5 and at Pittsburgh CAPA for all students in grades 6-8. Summer Dreamers runs from July 1 to August 8 (there is no camp on July 4). Please visit: www.pps.k12.pa.us/summerprograms

PITTSBURGH DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

Learn about our schools by visiting the District's new web tool — Discover PPS — at www.pps.k12.pa.us

K-5 Schools

Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5

Molly O'Malley Argueta, Principal
810 Arch St., 15212
412-323-4100

Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5

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

Pittsburgh Banksville K-5

David May, Principal
1001 Carnahan Road, 15216
412-571-7400

Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5

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

Pittsburgh Concord PreK-5

Jessica Colbert, Principal
2350 Brownsville Road, 15210
412-885-7755

Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5

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

Pittsburgh Faison K-5

Lou Ann Zwierzyznsk, Principal
7430 Tioga St., 15208
412-247-0305

Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5

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

Pittsburgh Grandview K-5

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

Pittsburgh Liberty K-5

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

Pittsburgh Lincoln PreK-5

Deonne Arrington, Principal
328 Lincoln Ave., 15206
412-665-3980

Pittsburgh Linden K-5

Victoria Burgess, Principal
725 S. Linden Ave., 15208
412-665-3996

Pittsburgh Miller K-5

Dr. Margaret Starkes-Ross, Principal
2055 Bedford Ave., 15219
412-338-3830

Pittsburgh Minadeo PreK-5

Melissa Wagner, Principal
6502 Lilac St., 15217
412-422-3520

Pittsburgh Phillips K-5

Martin Boonstra, Principal
1901 Sarah St., 15203
412-488-5190

Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5

James Nath, Principal
Primary Campus (PreK-1)
200 The Boulevard, 15210
412-885-7788
Intermediate Campus (2-5)
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 Weil PreK-5

Holly Ballard, Principal
2250 Centre Ave., 15219
412-338-3840

Pittsburgh West Liberty K-5

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

Pittsburgh Westwood K-5

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

Pittsburgh Whittier K-5

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

Pittsburgh Woolsair K-5

Lisa Gallagher, Principal
501 40th St., 15224
412-623-8800

K-8 Schools

Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8

Kevin McGuire, Principal
Primary Campus (PreK-2)
2429 Charcot St., 15210
412-488-4700
Intermediate Campus (3-8)
2500 Jonquil Way, 15210
412-488-3641

Pittsburgh Brookline PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh Carmalt PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh Colfax K-8

Adam Sikorski, Principal
2332 Beechwood Blvd., 15217
412-422-3525

Pittsburgh Greenfield PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh King PreK-8

Jennifer Mikula, Principal
Shana Nelson, Principal
50 Montgomery Place, 15212
412-323-4160

Pittsburgh Langley K-8

Rodney Neccial, Principal
2940 Sheraden Blvd., 15204
412-778-2100

Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh Mifflin PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-8

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

Pittsburgh Morrow PreK-8

Alivia Clark, Principal
1611 Davis Ave., 15212
12-734-6600

Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8

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

6-8 Schools

Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8

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

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8

Patti Camper, Principal
220 40th St., 15201
412-622-5740

Pittsburgh Classical 6-8

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

Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8

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

Pittsburgh South Brook 6-8

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

Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8

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

Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8

Dr. Michele Holly, Principal
7100 Reynolds St., 15208
412-247-7870

6-12 Schools

Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12

Melissa Pearlman, Principal
111 Ninth Street, 15222
412-338-6100

Pittsburgh Milliones 6-12

Derrick Hardy, Principal
3117 Centre Ave., 15219
412-622-5900

Pittsburgh Obama 6-12

Dr. Wayne Walters, Principal
129 Denniston Ave., 15206
412-622-5980

Pittsburgh Sci-Tech Academy

Dr. Robert Scherrer, Principal
107 Thackeray St., 15213
412-325-7620

Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12

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

High Schools

Pittsburgh Allderdice HS

Melissa Friez, Principal
2409 Shady Ave., 15217
412-422-4800

Pittsburgh Brashear HS

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

Pittsburgh Carrick HS

Dennis Chakey, Principal
125 Parkfield St., 15210
412-885-7700

Pittsburgh Perry HS

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

Special Schools

Pittsburgh Conroy

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

Pittsburgh Gifted Center

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

Pittsburgh Oliver Citywide Academy

Davis Lott
2323 Brighton Road, 15212
412-323-3115

Pittsburgh Pioneer

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

Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center

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

Clayton Academy

Howard Bullard, Principal
1901 Clayton Ave., 15214
412-586-3481

Early Childhood

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 Homewood E.C. Center

7100 Hamilton Ave., 15208
412-325-4291

Pittsburgh McCleary E.C. Center

5251 Holmes St., 15201
412-325-4291

Pittsburgh Spring Garden E.C. Center

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

COMMENCEMENT SCHEDULE

PETERSEN CENTER	SOLDIERS & SAILORS
ALLDERDICE: Friday, June 7 ☞ 6-7 p.m.	CAPA: Friday, June 7 ☞ 4:30-5:30 p.m.
PERRY: Saturday, June 8 ☞ 10-11 a.m.	OBAMA: Friday, June 7 ☞ 6:30-7:30 p.m.
CARRICK: Saturday, June 8 ☞ 12:30-1 p.m.	WESTINGHOUSE: Saturday, June 8 ☞ 4:30-5:30 p.m.
BRASHEAR: Saturday, June 8 ☞ 3-4 p.m.	SCI-TECH: Friday, June 8 ☞ 7-8 p.m.
MILLIONES: Saturday, June 8 ☞ 5:30-6:30 p.m.	

AROUND PITTSBURGH SCHOOLS

Districtwide

In November, **Pittsburgh Public Schools** (PPS) held the first State of the District event. At this public event, Dr. Lane and a group of panelists discussed the District's strengths and opportunities for growth in the following areas: Effectiveness, Equity, Satisfaction, Achievement and Envision the Future. This meeting was the beginning of an ongoing conversation with the public about the District. To further this conversation, PPS also released the State of the Schools Report online in February 2013. A copy is enclosed for your review. The State of the Schools Report allows parents and students to see their individual school's strengths and areas for growth for the 2011-2012 school year.

High Schools

Pittsburgh Brashear is preparing to celebrate the accomplishments of its entire senior class through this College & Career Declaration Ceremony. The ceremony, which will be held on May 15, will allow each senior to declare what his/her plans are after high school. Also, the students of Pittsburgh Brashear were able to participate in a reality television show this winter. The USA Network brought "The Choir" to the school and brought students together through music. Students signed up and practiced several songs together before putting on a final performance. A number of students and staff members participated in the show, which is set to air this spring.

Pittsburgh Perry students accompany Pittsburgh Pirates Andrew McCutchen to the 77th Annual Dapper Dan Dinner. The Dapper Dan Charities were founded by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editor Al Abrams in 1936. It is one of the oldest non-profit and fundraising community sports club in the world, and the oldest in Western Pennsylvania. The foundations raise money for its charities primarily through the annual dinner.

Students at **Pittsburgh Alderdice** have helped their school reach the #12 spot among the region's top 50 schools! The SAT scores of Pittsburgh Alderdice students have helped them rank in the top 20

schools in Pittsburgh. There are many reasons that PPS students' scores are going up-the biggest one is preparation. Pittsburgh Public Schools students are given the opportunity to take the PSATs in 10th and 11th grade to help them better prepare for the SATs.

6-12 Schools

Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12 honored teacher Cynthia Werner in December because she engages her students as individuals. Mrs. Werner, an English teacher at Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12, approaches her lessons in many different ways, engaging students in learning that extends beyond the pages of a book. Acknowledging that students can sometimes feel disengaged from literature set in different time periods or that covers topics with which students are unfamiliar, Werner always tries to supplement her lessons with films, guest speakers, or field trips to ensure her students can connect with the subject matter.

Three passionate seniors at **Pittsburgh Obama 6-12** are hard at work leading high school students across the state through Youth and Government Pennsylvania. In April 2012 at the Capitol in Harrisburg, Erik Rauterkus, was elected youth governor of Pennsylvania; Ben Junker became the organization's lieutenant governor; and Anna Vitti, editor-in-chief of the press corps. Pennsylvania's Youth and Government program is designed to engage young students in service and to raise political awareness.

6 - 8 Schools

Pittsburgh Sterrett kicked off the 2012 - 2013 school year with an amazing partnership with The Frick Art and History Museum in Point Breeze. The community partnership began in October 2012, between Pittsburgh Sterrett and the Frick. Student sessions will wrap up in May, and conclude with a reception at The Frick for students and parents of the participants in early June 2013. The Frick's program School to Museum (SCHMUS) offers a variety of observation and writing exercises, designed to increase students' ability to translate sensory observations into written form. Related art projects allow students

to make connections between observation, reflection, writing and art, and encourage them to experience museums as places of learning, self-reflection and enjoyment. Sessions are typically held from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8 is partnering with Positive Spin and Free Ride through the MGR Foundation for a year-long program aimed at improving bike safety and student awareness of the benefits of exercise. 15 Students in grades 6-8 participate in the program weekly and are also working to refurbish bikes that will be their own at the end of the school year.

At **Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5**, children are the producers of new technological expressions. Through collaborative work with Children's Innovation Project (a project of CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University), K-2 children are designing their own circuits, creating inventions with motors, inventing new types of switches, reading and writing schematics, debating about parallel circuits, taking apart electronic toys and imagining how devices in their lives work. This work will continue to grow during next school year (2013-14), adding Carlow University and ASSET to a growing list of partners (The Sprout Fund, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh).

K-5 and K-8

Students from **Pittsburgh Arsenal K-5** enjoyed a special holiday treat from the staff of the Education Partnership. Each student received a box containing a wealth of school supplies right before the winter break. The Education Partnership is a nonprofit organization that focuses on getting classroom supplies to teachers and students who need it most.

Pittsburgh Colfax has partnered with Carnegie Mellon University and the East End Youth Project to provide an afterschool program for students in grades 3-8. Each Tuesday, sixth-grade students from Pittsburgh Colfax attend Carnegie Mellon University as part of the CMU Science Squad with science teacher Mr. Wolfe. The partnership with the university is aimed at apprenticing young scientists. Students in primary and middle grades are practicing for the city Chess

tournament in the spring.

Pittsburgh Fulton's student and staff celebrated Mardi Gras the week of February 11-15, 2013. Pittsburgh Fulton is a French emphasis school, so it was a school wide educational experience and celebration. Students were exposed to Mardi Gras traditions and customs in French-speaking countries as well as the United States, particularly New Orleans. French, art and social studies classes were involved. As part of the experience, each grade level was named as a Mardi Gras "krewe." Homeroom teachers presented a social studies lesson concerning Mardi Gras and their grade level krewe. Each homeroom decorated their door to depict their krewe and a door competition occurred with winners in each grade level of the most artistic and creative doors as well as the doors which best depicted the krewe and Mardi Gras in general. The homeroom door winners will receive a "krewe" party for all their hard work.

Recently four students from **Pittsburgh Linden** entered the National Adoption Month Poster Completion. After their hard work was presented, the judges took careful consideration of all poster submitted and gave the top awards. Richayla Kostyal, Megan Levik, Quinn Dowd, and Jeanille Polozoff all placed in the top honors for the 5th grade entries, winning first, second, third and honorable mention. All four girls attended the award ceremony at the Family Law Center in November. These fifth-graders decided to participate because they wanted to make other kids feel better by brightening up the court house with their posters. They also felt that doing this would be a great experience.

For the second year in a row, **Pittsburgh Mifflin** held its week long anti-bullying event. The activities were planned and organized by Mutual Love and Pittsburgh Mifflin's PSSC Anti-Bullying Committee. This year they kicked off the week on Jan. 21 with a day-long celebration. It included various family centered activities in the Hazelwood community. The day concluded with a celebration dinner attended by 100 adults including Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, PA State Representative Jake Wheatley, Keino Fitzpatrick from A+ Schools, as well as community leaders. The

efforts of Pittsburgh Mifflin and the Anti-bullying committee were honored with an official proclamation from Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. The anti-bullying theme was carried out throughout the remainder of the week at Pittsburgh Mifflin. Activities included; theme dress days, motivational speakers, and a performance by Native American dancers. Parents were also invited to attend a "Winter Wonderland" family school night where they enjoyed dinner, entertainment, and educational activities. The week successfully showcased the efforts to strengthen community ties and partnerships while supporting the anti-bullying initiative.

Special Schools

At **Pittsburgh Minadeo**, the talent and dedication of the music teacher Adrienne Davis-Kelly has not gone unnoticed. When faced with fewer resources to support the arts program, Davis-Kelly reached out to Carnegie Mellon University for a partnership that offered our students additional instrumental instruction through CMU students majoring in music. This partnership was successful and resulted in a fantastic choral and instrumental holiday performance. Several alumni even attended the concert and surprised Mrs. Kelly with a beautiful rendition of a holiday classic, Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire. Pittsburgh Minadeo wants to thank all our music teachers who continue to dedicate their time and who provide quality music and instrumental instruction to our students through the arts.

On Jan. 29, the **Pittsburgh Gifted Center** hosted the Elementary Expo of Student Work. More than 300 people attended the event. The families enjoyed dinner and student projects from the classes, Cool Chemistry, Junior Park Rangers, Kastles, Kings and Kamelet, Alternative Art, Skill Builders and Zoo-nopoly. Proud students showed off projects that were completed during the first semester. Students at The Gifted Center complete work one or two levels above their current grade level using process skills and the newly adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards.

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2013 - 2014 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

August 20, 2013 - First Day for School-based Staff (Clerical Day)

August 21, 2013 - District wide Professional Development

August 22, 2013 - Clerical Day

August 23, 2013 - School Professional Development

August 23, 2013 - First day of School, 9th grade students only*

August 26, 2013 - First day of School* (except Kindergarten students)

August 29, 2013 - First day of Kindergarten

September 2, 2013 - No School - Labor Day

September 5, 2013 - No School

October 14, 2013 - Parent Teacher Conferences grades K-5, K-8, 6-8 only.
(No school for all K-5, K-8, 6-8 Schools)

October 17, 2013 - 1/2 Day - Early Dismissal

October 18, 2013 - Parent Teacher Conference Day 6-12, High School and Special Schools
(No school for High School, 6-12 and Special Schools)

November 5, 2013 - No School - Election Day (School Only Vacation Day)

November 11, 2013 - No School - Veterans Day (All Schools and PPS Employee Vacation Day)

November 28, 2013 - No School - Thanksgiving Vacation
(All Schools and PPS Employee Vacation Days)

November 29, 2013 - No School - Thanksgiving Vacation
(All Schools and PPS Employee Vacation Days)

December 23, 2013 to January 1, 2014 - No School - Winter Vacation
(PPS Employee Days include 12/24, 12/25, 12/31 1/1)

January 20, 2014 - No School - Dr. King Day
(All Schools and PPS employee vacation day)

January 21, 2014 - No School (School only vacation day)

January 22, 2014 - No School (School only vacation day)

April 11, 2014 - 1/2 Day Early Dismissal

April 14, 2014 to April 18, 2014 - No School - Spring Vacation (PPS employee Day- 4/18)

May 26, 2014 - No school - Memorial Day
(All Schools and PPS employee vacation day)

June 9, 2014 - Last day of school



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A NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Grable Foundation and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy involvement lead to new School Grounds Greening Project for 57 schools.



By PAUL HALLORAN

While what goes on inside Pittsburgh's school buildings is obviously paramount in the development and education of students, learning is not confined to behind the walls.

Thanks to an ongoing partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Pittsburgh Public Schools students are benefitting from outdoor classrooms, reading areas and natural play spaces that are enriching their educational experiences.

"We have a long relationship with Pittsburgh Public Schools, primarily through the Grable Foundation," said Judy Wagner, senior director of community gardens and greenspace for the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. "For many years, we worked on a variety of projects, mainly installing flower beds at schools. By the time the flowers were blooming, the kids were home for the summer."

The Grable Foundation asked the Conservancy to rethink its involvement with the schools and to come up with some new ideas. That led to the Schools Grounds Greening Project, which was started in 2008.

"There has been an effort to improve the landscaping around schools and create green space that students can use every day, instead of the typical asphalt playground with a jungle gym," Wagner said. "It's not possible at all school sites, but we have tried to add special spaces as much as we could."



In the last five years, the Conservancy has provided improvements at 57 Pittsburgh Public Schools, planting more than 9,700 trees and plants, creating 18 outdoor classrooms, five natural play spaces, four quiet reading areas and 16 food-garden beds. The Conservancy has also installed one rain garden (at Pittsburgh Allderice) and a sensory garden at Pittsburgh

from six other school districts pay tuition to attend the school.

Due to the severe handicaps of the students, more than 95 percent of whom are confined to wheelchairs, even a handicap-accessible playground would not be practical for most Pittsburgh Pioneer students, Kunst said.

"Three years ago, we started to explore what we might be able to do with the vacant backyard," she said. "We visited other schools and playgrounds and decided we wanted a sensory garden."

The school received a \$100,000 grant from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust that it used to contract with MTR Landscape Architects. Kara Roggenkamp of MTR was the point person on the project and took the time to understand exactly what the school and parents wanted.

"She totally got what we were trying to

“ Students are involved in maintaining the green spaces. ”

Pioneer, a school for students with multiple disabilities.

"Students are involved in maintaining the green spaces," said Nyia Jones, outreach assistant at the Conservancy. "They are inquisitive; they want to learn about plants, trees and shrubs. There is an educational piece as well as the environmental piece."

While there are many success stories that have resulted from the partnership, the sensory garden at Pittsburgh Pioneer is near the top of the list, according to Principal Sylvia Kunst.

"Our school is on the cutting edge of providing programs for multiple-disabled students," Kunst said, adding that the school provides occupational, physical and speech therapy, adaptive physical education, and vision and hearing therapy. Students

do," Kunst said. "She put together a plan and worked with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to make it a reality."

The result was a sensory garden divided into areas for quiet, activities, ball playing, and studying. There are paths that wind through the garden, benches that are