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Pittsburgh Schools Use The Summer To Prepare For The Future

By Stacy Andell

This summer Pittsburgh Schools Superintendent Mark Roosevelt announced the creation of the

Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force. The Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will be comprised of education professionals, private foundations, business professionals, parents, and community members. The Task Force will investigate the current practices in the Pittsburgh Schools and determine what the best approach to high school reform should be. Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will be responsible for evaluating and ultimately redesigning Pittsburgh Schools' high schools as part of Pittsburgh Schools' "Excellence for All" reform plan. The "Excellence for All" plan aims to improve the academic performance and increase graduation rates in all Pittsburgh Schools.

The most important goal of the "Excellence for All" reform plan is to increase the graduation rate by 10 percent by the end of the 2008–2009 school year. Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will spearhead reform so that high school students will have the opportunities to succeed after high school. The main tenet of the "Excellence for All" reform plan is that all students no matter what their age, experience or background can achieve quality education. The Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will evaluate education in high schools based on six main principles. These principles will be used to guide the changes in the high schools: personalized learning environment; academic engagement of all students; empowered educators; accountable leaders; engaged communities and youth and an integrated system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment supports.

Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force Members and Funding

The Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will be led jointly by Jan Ripper, Principal on Special Assignment for high school reform and Dr. Lynn Spampinato, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability. Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will visit and observe techniques used in nationally recognized high schools in urban centers around the US to determine which techniques would be beneficial to Pittsburgh Schools. Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task Force will be funded mainly through a grant of \$255,000 from the Fund in Excellence in the Pittsburgh Schools. The Fund in Excellence in the Pittsburgh Schools is a recently created by a local foundation. The inaugural event for the Pittsburgh Schools High School Reform Task

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Force will be a meeting with renowned educator Dr. Willard R. Daggett, President of the International Center for Leadership in Education.

The current members of the Task Force are: Dara Ware Allen – Executive Director, YouthWorks, Inc.; Seppy Basili – Senior Vice President, Kaplan K12 Learning Services; Dr. Charles Blocksidge – Vice President of Organizational Development/Frieda G. Shapira Center for Learning, Community College of Allegheny County; Susan Brownlee – Executive Director, The Grable Foundation; Honorable Kevin E. Cooper – Pittsburgh District Judge; Joseph Dominic - Director, Education Program, The Heinz Endowments; George Gensure – Executive Board Member and Staff Member, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers; Dr. Cecilia Griffin Golden – Chief Executive Officer, YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh; Ruth Howze - PPS Parent Representative; Rufus Jordan - Executive Board Member and Staff Member, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers; Jeffrey Laurenson - PPS High School Teacher, Brashear High School; Dr. Alan Lesgold - Dean, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh; David J. Malone –

President and CEO, Gateway Financial; Chairman of PA Workforce Investment Board; Dr. Indira Nair – Vice Provost for Education, Carnegie Mellon University; Ronald D. Painter – Chief Executive Officer, Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board; Jeanne Pearlman – Senior Program Officer for Education and the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation; Gregory K. Peaslee – Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Construction and Property Management, UPMC; Douglas Silinski – PPS Parent Representative; Linda Serody – PPS Parent Representative; Gregory R. Spencer - President and CEO, Randall Enterprises, LLC; Former Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, Equitable Resources, Inc. ; Michael T. Thorson – Former Principal of Creative And Performing Arts (CAPA) High School; Doris Carson Williams - President, African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania; and Yolanda C. Wilkins - PPS Arlington Academy (ALA) Teacher; Former PPS High School Teacher

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Stacy has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on Pittsburgh schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk–12.com/Pennsylvania/Pittsburgh/index.html>

Seattle Schools Participate In Washington Assessment Of Student Learning

By Stacy Andell

Washington Assessment of Student Learning is Enacted for the 2006–2007 School Year

The class of 2008 in all Seattle Schools will be required to pass the 10th–grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning, this will be the way that most students will earn the Certificate of Academic Achievement, one of the four new statewide graduation requirements. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning report will indicate a student's performance in reading, writing and math with science being in a separate report. Most students in the Seattle Schools will, of course, be very successful on the three sections on their first try but for those students who may have difficulty

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meeting the standards, there will be opportunities for them to receive assistance. These programs will help the students in the Seattle Schools achieve scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning while furthering their education.

Seattle Schools Establishes Programs to Aid Students on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning

The Summer College is a ground-breaking collaboration between Seattle Schools, three Seattle Community Colleges and the City of Seattle. The Summer College is designed to offer those students who need remedial help for high school students. The Summer College program will last five weeks and will be conducted on the campuses of the three community colleges. This will not only give the students the help they need but provide an early introduction to life on a college campus. Those students who have scored Level 2 or below on at least one section of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning will be eligible for the program.

A second program created by the Seattle Schools in order to offer assistance to students is the Extended Learning Summer Semester. These programs are intended to provide students with the opportunity to improve their reading, mathematics, and writing skills before retaking the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. A for credit program will be offered for ninth and tenth graders during the summer at Ingraham, Franklin and West Seattle high schools. These courses will not only be offered in math and reading but also in social studies, language arts, science and health. Students will need to be referred by their high school counselor before they can participate in this program. This is a solid program but may not suit all students.

There are several other programs that are being developed by the Seattle Schools for the 2006–2007 school year. All of the high schools in the Seattle Schools system are adding some kind of student assistance to help them do their best on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. Several high schools have added a seventh class period that will be used for help or remedial work. Tutoring sessions in math and literacy and classroom tutors have been set up at most high schools. Seattle Schools are instituting intensive instructional periods, Evening School programs, Contract Learning and the Digital Learning Commons in an effort to provide programs that appeal to students' different learning styles and schedules.

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more on Seattle schools visit

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