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**A+ Schools Releases 2010 Report on School Progress in Pittsburgh
*Despite Improvements High School Juniors Are Struggling, Achievement Gap Persists***

PITTSBURGH, PA – Nov. 15, 2010 – A+ Schools, Pittsburgh's community alliance for public education, today released its *Sixth Annual Report to the Community on Public School Progress in Pittsburgh*. The report provides parents, community leaders and others interested in public education with a fair and comprehensive look at the progress of each school in the Pittsburgh Public School District.

“Overall, we see progress in schools across the district. We have good examples of district and charter schools that are educating students to high levels. But there is much more work to be done, especially in our high schools,” said Carey Harris, A+ Schools executive director.

According to Harris, more students scored in the proficient and advanced ranges for reading, math and writing compared to four years ago — until they reached high school, where 11th grade scores declined. Students in grades 3-5 and 6-8 made the same or greater gains than students across Pennsylvania in all subjects. Although 11th graders across the state experienced a decline in writing similar to the district's students, they gained in math and reading — which was opposite of Pittsburgh's 11th graders.

The good news is that the achievement gap — the difference between the percentage of black and white students who scored proficient or advanced on the PSSAs — has narrowed, albeit slowly. Since the 2006-07 school year, the gap has narrowed in both reading and math and black student achievement has increased.

Still, Harris said she is troubled by the overall lack of progress in the high schools and the stubborn racial achievement gap. She also noted the continuing decline in enrollment — a loss of more than 3,000 students over the past four years.

“Gains made in earlier grades are disappearing in high schools. That threatens our youth's future prospects for achieving the Pittsburgh Promise, college or job training, and becoming independent members of our community. These issues deserve our urgent attention,” she said.

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Other findings in the report show:

- Magnet schools (whole school magnets) again had much higher percentages of proficient/advanced students overall, plus much higher percentages of proficient/advanced low-income and black students.
- Charter schools generally have higher percentages of black students who are proficient/advanced in both reading and math.
- High schools have the largest achievement gaps in the district.
- Schools with more stable populations are more likely to have higher achievement.
- Student attendance has a direct impact on student achievement.

Published annually, the *A+ Schools Report to the Community* provides information on PSSA achievement based on the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS), which analyzes whether or not selected grade levels in a school have made at least a year's worth of progress, regardless of the starting point. The A+ report also shows how students performed across the four PSSA score ranges by race and family income status.

Harris urged the Pittsburgh community to review the report as a tool for asking questions and seeking information about the quality of city schools. A+ Schools will mail the report this week directly to 20,000 city households with children enrolled in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and children ages 5 and under. In addition, the report will be available in local libraries, city schools and at elected officials' offices, or by calling A+ Schools. The report also can be accessed online at www.aplusschools.org.

Opportunities to Learn More

A+ Schools is offering tailored presentations to school and community groups interested in learning more about the report and how to use it. To arrange a presentation, contact A+ Schools at 412-657-1298, or visit the A+ Schools Web site at www.aplusschools.org.

A+ Schools is an independent community advocate for improvement in public education. Its vision is a community mobilized to improve public education to produce successive generations of young people who thrive and who build their families and futures in Pittsburgh. Its purpose is to be a community force advancing the highest educational achievement and character development for every public school student in Pittsburgh. For more information, contact A+ Schools at 412-657-1298 or visit www.aplusschools.org.

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