A+ Schools Presents:
“Schools and Money: A Community Meeting”

A report on a community discussion hosted by
A+ Schools: Pittsburgh’s Community Alliance for Public Education

June 2008
A+ Schools
Schools & Money
Report

On June 9, 2008, 50 parents, grandparents, educators, students, residents and other stakeholders participated in A+ Schools' community forum to discuss School-Based funding in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The goal of the meeting was for parents and community members to learn about site-based budgeting and get their questions answered. This report summarizes the presentation as well as the questions and answers from the session.

The Program
The Pittsburgh Public Schools sent a number of administrators from the district to answer questions from the public on this topic:
- Dr. Linda Lane, Deputy Superintendent
- Dr. Barbara Rudiak, Executive Director, K-5
- Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Executive Director, Accelerated Learning Academies
- Dr. Jeannine French, Executive Director, K-8
- Mr. Howard Bullard, Executive Director, Secondary Schools
- Mr. Pete Camarda, Executive Director of Budget Development & Management Services
- Mr. Chris Berdnik, Chief Financial Officer

Dr. Linda Lane began the program with a Power Point titled “School Based Budget Development and Management”. Her presentation gave an explanation of school-based funding and information on Title I funding.

School Based Budget Development and Management
School-based funding can be separated into two parts: General Fund Site-Based and Title I. General Fund is funding related to basic education services. Title I is unique in that is covers supplemental communication and math instruction, parental involvement and can also be allocated based on free and reduced lunch eligibility thresholds.

The district follows a site-based allocation formula to determine how much funding each school will receive. The allocation formula is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X $ Basis for Allocation by Grade Span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Formula Driven Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ High Needs Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ School Size Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Magnet Programs Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Library Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Career Development Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Total Allocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each section of the equation contains a formula or process to determine the total allocation.

**High Needs Allocation:** Determines whether or not a school has a high needs population. That number is based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and the percentage of students not residing with both parents. The formula provides each school with $392 for each eligible student.

**School Size Allocation:** Provides $662 per student for the difference between the school’s enrollment and an enrollment of 300 students. It is used for schools that have less than 300 students.

**Magnet Schools Allocation:** Funds unique characteristics of magnet programs such as Creative and Performing Arts and International Baccalaureate.

**Library Allocation:** Used for elementary schools and provides a flat dollar amount of $2744 for students. The formula for sixth to eighth grade students in K-8 schools provides $7.47 per student.

**Career Development Allocation:** Provides an additional allocation per student enrolled in specific career development courses in secondary schools to defray the cost of consumables.

The General Fund site-based budget runs on a fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. The school budget follows the calendar year.

Position Budgeting and Control and Title I are separate entities in the school funding formula. In terms of general fund and Title 1 site based budgets, average salaries are used for budgeting purposes, not actual salaries. “An employee’s actual salary is irrelevant in the site-based budgeting process.” A school also has no financial advantage by choosing to retain staff with less seniority because of their lower salary.

Title 1 is a major Federal program funded under No Child Left Behind. It is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Division of Federal Programs. Here are a few of their initiatives:

- Supplemental communications and math education for low-achieving students
- Professional development
- Parental involvement

Schools must meet certain criteria to be eligible for Title 1 funds. Any school that has 75% or more of their students eating free or reduced lunch is eligible for Title 1 funding. The school also cannot have less than 35% of their students qualifying for free or reduced lunch or they lose their Title 1 funding.

Title 1 funding is allocated to schools as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>% Free and Reduced</th>
<th>K-5, K-8, Middle $ per eligible student</th>
<th>Secondary $ per eligible student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>75% - 100%</td>
<td>$780</td>
<td>$780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>60% - 74.9%</td>
<td>$325</td>
<td>$325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>35% - 59.9%</td>
<td>$225</td>
<td>$170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of eligible students is determined by multiplying the official free and reduced lunch eligibility percentage by the projected enrollment for the upcoming school year.

Supplemental education is also a part of Title 1 and is focused on assisting low-achieving students to help them meet educational standards. Professional development is also a component of Title 1. Schools that are not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are required to set aside 10% of their Title 1 funds for professional development. The Pittsburgh Public Schools have met that requirement in several of their schools by funding curriculum coaches for the schools. A portion of this cost is charged to the school’s Title 1 budget.
After the presentation, Dr. Lane and the other members of the PPS Team answered questions from the audience. The notes from the question and answer session can be found below.

**Question and Answer Session with PPS Administration**

**What can you tell us about the Act 339 and how it affects school budgets?**
Dr. Lane: We need to get away from stand-alone classes. It has to be a genuine program to receive funding. We have to make sure we've prepared our students with connections to higher education. We want them to support viable programs and jobs for these students. We have to work with them beyond education.

**My son is a student at Pittsburgh Allderdice. They are facing budget cuts due to enrollment numbers but many of us have rejected those numbers and find it impossible to accept the staff cuts. Allderdice has a ‘Superstar’ teacher who would never be allowed to leave a public organization. Others are staying; he has the least amount of experience and is being forced out. We cannot let him go! There has to be a way to keep him and other staff just like him. We have no tolerance of mediocrity! Please help! We will not accept that it has to do with the ‘unions’ or the rules. The teacher’s tenure should be based on merit.**
Dr. Lane: I wish I could tell you that we could fix it. The District has to be diligent around performance. It is not fair to fantastic teachers. But we don’t always blame the Teacher’s Union. It protects the rights of the teachers but does not address issues around performance. Administrators in the building had to sign off on this at some point.

**What will happen to developmental reading? Will there be extra reading time for those who need help?**
Dr. Lane: Read 180 will be incorporated into the middle school curriculum so that students can have it before high school. It is not being cut. Aid for that program is being increased.

**I understand how money is portioned out for each school. Linden Academy has high test scores and always has a long waiting list of kids who want to enroll. The District cut our funding below enrollment for this year. We had to apply for federal money for having a high number of students. We don't have enough funding for the amount of enrollment we have.**
Dr. Lane: The District holds Title 1 funds for class size deductions. We wait until we see the number of children in this classroom. Money comes from Federal Government; PPS passes out teachers. They are ‘stingy’ with class size reduction teachers.

Mr. Camarda: We have been working with the principals to do a better job of predicting these numbers. If predictions are made there are still some people who leave. But we have the option to lobby why we need it.

Dr. Rudiak: We often have to look at students moving to the next grade. Sometimes the waiting list comes in and students are counted in another school already. There are certain numbers that we work with as projected numbers for the district.

**What is the average number of students enrolled for the magnet programs?**
Dr. Rudiak: We look at the number of students moving on to the next grade and the number of students who are registered for the following year.
What is the enrollment estimate for the first through fifth grades for the next school year (2008-09)?

Dr. Rudiak: There is a formula that goes along with calculating those answers. We do know that Kindergarten funding is down 8%.

Mr. Berdnik: There is a ‘retention rate factor’ that fluctuates year to year in regards to enrollment. Some schools are stable, others are all over. We also look at the history of retention over several years. The birth rates 6 years ago versus now are very different. The projected estimate as a whole can be close to actual or far from it. We also have more schools serving English as a Second Language (ESL) populations. Schools like South Hills and Arsenal have large ESL numbers and it is often difficult to predict the number of students who will be enrolled. Kids move down across time and using history is important.

Dr. Lane: We also use ‘leveling’, pulling teachers out of schools because numbers are smaller. It can be worse than budgeting for smaller numbers. The Principal knows that if they get more kids after school starts then money is there.

Is there a date to reconcile these numbers?

Mr. Camarda: September 28 is the last day for reconciling numbers and it figures into 50 or greater students. It doesn’t adjust for under 50 students. Dr. Lane and the Executive Directors handle the numbers for the school and stay on top of it. It depends on the ‘Real Time Information’ system as well.

Dr. Lane: Starting this fall we will be able to change attendance in the first 3 weeks. We’ll be able to go right into computer and look at class sizes.

How much does it cost to educate from Kindergarten to High School?

Mr. Berdnik: The cost per pupil is $19,000 X 13 years in the system = $247,000 to educate each student.

I am not an educator, but I have four children. I believe there is a constant struggle between the School board and the parents every year. The quality of education in our schools is pathetic. Also, Clayton Academy opened prematurely. The teachers were not qualified to handle the students they would be teaching. There are a lot of parents interested in magnet programs. Some of our students would benefit more in those schools instead of being in Community Education Partners (CEP). Putting all of them in one school makes things worse. Is there a fear of it being devalued? Money would have been better spent by allowing more students into magnet schools. The teachers are ill-equipped. How much is spent on students? They are not learning.

Dr. Lane: The contract for Community Education Partners was drawn up as a private contractor. CEP did not go the right way. We do not look at site-based budget for these contracts. The numbers for the school show that things have improved. There is an academic and social return at home and at school. Some kids are ready to transition back to their schools and some are not ready. We were told that the first year of implementation is not easy.

Mr. Berdnik: The contract for CEP ramps up until enrollment is at 400 or more students. The program is more expensive than other schools because it has intense support. 433 seats are paid for under their contract.

Rogers CAPA and Pittsburgh CAPA have several adjunct professors at these schools. How does the Board determine their salary and how are they paid?

Mr. Camarda: This is based on total adjunct costs. The Creative & Performing Arts magnet consumes additional resources because it is a unique model. Rogers’ budget is $322,000 over the amount a normal middle school receives. An adjunct teacher in the magnet is paid for 21 hours.
PENNDATA has estimated that Special Education will have higher numbers and more restricted and segregated placement. Our district is going backwards from Tier III to Tier II. Parents are hearing that in the proposed budget they are cutting inclusion specialists. Can we get a copy of budget early enough to testify at meetings? How is administration paid? We hire more administration and give pay raises even though funds are low. What about Frick adding on a ninth grade?

Dr. Lane: Special education is set to be on the agenda for June. The public would have to give comment on June 16. Public discussion for Special Education would be during the May finance discussion. Special Education is a ‘work in progress’. There are figurations and divisions that need to be determined to move on to the next step. We are currently looking at a redevelopment of funds, especially local funds. The district also considers estimates of changes to enrollment.

Is it true that the District knew in December that inclusion specialists would be cut?

Dr. Lane: Not at that level. We cannot provide budgets to the public before the board. The discussion is usually at the Agenda Review meetings. The public hearing session is before agenda review. It is important to know that the site-based budget follows the fiscal year while the school budget is calendar year. It is also important in terms of content. There are two districts, Duquesne and Clairton, where 21% of their populations are enrolled in special education. Pittsburgh is at 19%. We also have twice the percentage of gifted to the statewide average. Penn Hills is a smaller district but has about the same percentage of gifted students. We are putting forth a great level of effort on this project. Inclusion is key. It needs more support. It is an add-on and expensive but it is needed.

I am a graduating senior from Allderdice High School and I have noticed drastic differences between the CAS and mainstream disciplines. CAS provides a great advantage. CAS students have counselors with an advantage over mainstream students. Teachers instructing in the mainstream classes have to use money out of their pockets to provide supplies for those students. Principals don’t know that students in many of these classes do large-scale projects. There are arguments all the time about whether or not the teachers will be reimbursed. Mainstream students are also treated as second class. They are given their second and third choice of electives but they are ill-funded.

Dr. Lane: The gifted program is supposed to have 18 students to each class. The Mainstream students should be enrolled in challenging classes as well. There has to be rigor in all of the programs. You are not the first to say that about the gifted program and that students who are left at the schools aren’t doing any work. The premise of the gifted program is that these students should already know the material being taught. Instruction time must go on for the other students.

In regards to Pittsburgh Promise eligibility, I know of a fellow student who came into the District in the 8th grade and he was told that he was 85% eligible. I know a few 9th graders who have the grades and were told they were not eligible.

Dr. Lane: You can give me the names of those students or give me phone numbers and I would be happy to look into it. I understand that this issue was brought up at a senior class meeting at Pittsburgh Peabody as well.
Peabody recently introduced an AP English course. Some students were enrolled and were not permitted to transfer out even after not performing well on the English portion of the PSSA. Not everyone has the skills to be in that class even though they might have performed well on the PSSA scores, including myself.

Dr. Lane: We are working to open more classrooms and provide more options so that all students have access to the classes they want to take and are not forced to take others.

Mr. Bullard: I think that you should be flattered that someone recommended you and thought highly of you to take that course. Should students be forced to take it and not do well? Not at all. But some students like you just need to be prodded a bit and have people believe in them.

**What's Next**

This report is available to all interested parties via A+ Schools’ website at [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org) or through a request made directly to A+ Schools.

A+ Schools in an independent community advocate for improvement in public education. Our 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. Our purpose is to be a community force advancing the highest educational achievement and character development for every public school student.

To find out more about A+ Schools and/or tell us what you think, please visit us on the web at [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org)
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