Pittsburgh Public Schools to Launch Online Idea Exchange
*Parents, Teachers and Community Members Urged to Use Their Voices to Improve Education*

PITTSBURGH, July 30, 2013—In order to provide high quality schools where all students succeed, Pittsburgh Public Schools is partnering with New Voice Strategies to launch an online forum. The forum called a VIVA (Voices Ideas Vision Action) Idea Exchange™ allows parents, teachers and community members to share their ideas about improving teaching and learning environments and student experiences. The Idea Exchange is a way to hear from everyone committed to accelerating student achievement, eliminating racial disparities and making Pittsburgh Public Schools a District of first choice.

“We are in the midst of a planning process that is challenging District officials and the broader Pittsburgh community to think differently about how we deliver education and boost student achievement in light of continued enrollment decline, increased costs, flat revenue projections and strong state-level support for more school choice,” said Superintendent Linda S. Lane. “Our goal is a school system that provides high quality learning experiences for our students and positive teaching environments for our educators. We want to know what people think the District should do to ensure that happens.”

The first stage of VIVA Pittsburgh involves an open forum for people to share their ideas and solutions on a specific education policy question. For example, the following questions will be asked: What should Pittsburgh Public Schools do to ensure high quality schools that prepare ALL students - both academically and non-academically – to succeed in all aspects of life. Participants can post an idea, comment on someone else's idea or vote an idea up or down.

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Since there are different perspectives on how education should be delivered, we created different forums to engage and exchange ideas. One is for teachers; the other is for parents and community members. This is just one of many ways we are engaging the public to provide input and explore various approaches to improving how we educate our children. Most recently, we conducted a survey to seek community feedback. The information collected is used to assist in future decision making.

After this collaborative brainstorming, a small group of participants, identified based on the intensity of their participation, are invited to join a Writing Collaborative tasked with turning the ideas into a set of actionable recommendations and workable solutions. During the third and final phase, members of the Writing Collaborative will present their ideas directly to Pittsburgh Public Schools leadership.

To share your ideas for re-envisioning Pittsburgh Public Schools, join the conversation today! Log onto the VIVA Pittsburgh Idea Exchange at http://vivapittsburgh.mysocialsphere.com

About New Voice Strategies
New Voice Strategies is a neutral, nonprofit third party dedicated to strengthening the link between policy and practice by creating peer collaborations online. Through its VIVA Idea ExchangeTM, taps the power of the Internet to build networks for social change. In a short time, a large group of individuals are empowered to collaborate, imagine a better future, and create an action plan to make that vision reality. As a final step, New Voice Strategies connects them directly with decision-makers interested in and empowered to make change. To learn more about New Voice Strategies work on education policy, visit http://vivateachers.org

About Pittsburgh Public Schools (Envisioning): Pittsburgh Public Schools has an urgency to think differently about how it delivers a 21st Century education to all students – especially during a time when revenues are flat and expenditures are increasing. The District faces the challenge of closing a $50M budget shortfall while ensuring that the structures are in place to support its vision that 80% of Pittsburgh Public Schools students earn a post-secondary degree or workforce certification. In January 2013, the District embarked on a large scale visioning process called Envisioning Education Excellence: A Plan for All of Pittsburgh's Students to address the current state challenges and future goals of the District. To learn more about the District’s envisioning work, log onto http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/envisioning

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