PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS PROGRAM

$2.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help expand the district’s teacher effectiveness work

Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) today announced a new investment in its nationally recognized teacher effectiveness program, which utilizes successful best practices and strategies to assist teachers and school administrators in improving student achievement in the classroom.

Understanding the role effective teachers have in improving student success in the classroom, and the importance of the school system’s partnership with its teachers’ union, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has awarded PGCPS a $2.5 million grant to continue its work on how it develops and evaluates effective teachers.

“Improving teacher effectiveness is a national movement. Studies show, and we have learned, that the best support we can give our students is to ensure that there is an effective teacher in every classroom,” said Board of Education Chair Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq. “This program will allow us to work in concert with our teachers’ union to reexamine our teacher evaluation system and draw a link between teacher performance and student achievement as we ensure that every student graduates college- and/or career-ready.”

In partnership with the Prince George’s County Educators’ Association (PGCEA), the school district has begun making progress in improving its teacher evaluation system. The Framework for Teaching is a tool used to identify, name, and describe complex activities that teachers engage in each day in the classroom. The Framework became the basis of the new standards-based evaluation system for teachers participating in the Financial Incentive Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST) program, which provides financial rewards to teachers and administrators who work in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas.

“The FIRST program recognizes those educators who are engaging in innovative reforms to improve student achievement, which is what we are all about,” said Lewis Robinson, executive director of Prince George’s County Educators’ Association (PGCEA).
The FIRST program received national recognition in 2009 for improving student achievement – its first year of implementation. The program recognizes educators who assist students in meeting achievement standards in tested areas, participate in professional development, and undergo a rigorous evaluation system.

“Developing a fair and functional evaluation system will allow us to assess the effectiveness of our teachers and enable us to identify and strategically place our most effective teachers in front of the students with the greatest needs,” said Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., Superintendent of Schools.

“Effective teaching is more than ensuring that classroom objectives are met and students are promoted to the next grade. It means taking time and putting in the commitment to ensure that each student reaches his or her highest potential. Today’s investment from the Gates Foundation will allow us to continue this important work.”

“The local partnerships behind this effort in Prince George’s County Public Schools demonstrate the district and the education community’s commitment to its students and teachers,” said Vicki L. Phillips, Director of Education, College-Ready at the Gates Foundation. “Research has shown that an effective teacher is the most important school-based factor in raising student achievement, and a strong teacher evaluation system is a key element of any improvement plan.”

More information on the program and grant can be found on the school system’s Web site at www.pgcps.org.