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For Immediate Release ★ January 25, 2010

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Cincinnati Public Schools to Boost Minority Inclusion in Construction Projects *Superintendent Ronan to Outline Steps at Tonight's Board Meeting*

Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan said she will report during tonight's Cincinnati Board of Education meeting the steps she is taking to improve the inclusion of African-American businesses and workers in the district's Facilities Master Plan.

"The numbers of African-Americans and most other minorities participating in our school building program are absolutely too low," Ronan said. "Over recent days, many in the African-American community, among others, have stepped forward to offer their assistance. I am deeply thankful for their outreach and their ideas, which helped us move to action and solutions."

Ronan said she would lay out several steps the district plans to take in response to community concerns about a lack of minority inclusion in the district's \$1 billion construction program to build new and completely renovated schools for CPS' schoolchildren:

- **Complete an internal audit** begun 10 days ago of the district's construction inclusion numbers and tracking process, and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the numbers are reliable going forward;
- **Restructure the district's supplier diversity program** to provide more direct oversight by the construction experts in the CPS Facilities Department;
- **Hire a supplier diversity outreach coordinator** as part of the district's Facilities Master Plan team with responsibilities to recruit African-American businesses and monitor bidding processes, payrolls and the validity of "good faith efforts" to include minorities in construction contracting and work forces;
- **Require general contractors to name subcontractors** at bid day and not permit changes without district permission;
- **Work with community members**, clergy, union and merit shop contractors to sign and enforce a local-hire agreement pledging to hire at least 40 percent of construction workers among people living in the school district and another 40 percent from Greater Cincinnati;

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- **Investigate partnering with the African-American Chamber of Commerce** to address African-American inclusion on a regional basis and for third-party tracking; and
- **Continue to reach out, listen to and learn from** the experiences of African-American contractors to gain a better understanding of any problems they may be encountering.

"I consider these steps a beginning, not an end, of our efforts to greatly improve African-American inclusion in CPS construction," Ronan said. "I am convinced that we will learn and become more effective as we go along."

She noted there was "tremendous urgency" to improve quickly because the district's Facilities Master Plan is about two-thirds completed.

"At the same time," Ronan noted, "the solutions we forge could provide a model for other construction projects in our community, such as the Banks and the casino, which are just beginning."

The Board of Education meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. today at the district's Education Center, 2651 Burnet Avenue in Corryville (45219).

