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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **PUSD AWARDED \$2.4 MILLION GRANT TO INCREASE GRADUATION RATES Federal Grant Will Support Dropout Prevention and Reduction Efforts**

**Pasadena, CA** – The Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) announced it will receive a three-year \$2.4 million grant from the United States Department of Education High School Graduation Initiative. PUSD will receive approximately \$800,000 annually to support dropout prevention strategies designed to increase PUSD's graduation rates by fifteen percent during the three-year period.

"This grant recognizes the comprehensive, strategic approach to improve graduation rates developed by PUSD's Dropout Task Force, as well as the breadth of community support and partnership to support students on their journey toward graduation," said Superintendent Edwin Diaz. "These funds will ensure our ability to maintain dropout prevention and reduction as a priority, even in the midst of our current budget crisis."

The grant was secured by the Pasadena Educational Foundation (PEF), a non-profit, community-based organization which supports educational programs at public schools in the Pasadena Unified School District.

The U.S. Department of Education's High School Graduation Initiative supports activities such as early warning systems designed to identify students at risk of dropping out, rigorous academic programs and support services to engage students and implement dropout prevention, credit recovery programs, and targeted re-engagement programs that identify out-of-school youth and encourage them to reenter school. The Initiative targets high schools with high dropout rates or middle schools that feed into schools with high dropout rates.

Grant funds will be utilized to establish and expand early intervention programs and strategies designed to identify at-risk students, prevent such students from dropping out before graduation, and develop activities and training to successfully encourage, engage, and support their ability to graduate high school. Strategies to accomplish these objectives will include: counseling and mentoring; coordinating alternative education systems and use of data; policy development and alignment; and training to utilize nontraditional models of engaging and advocating for high-risk youth.

Earlier this year, the PUSD Dropout Task Force, composed of board members, educators, and civic and community leaders, developed recommendations to reduce the dropout rate by 50 percent, many of which were incorporated into the grant application. Community organizations and committees closely involved in the project include the PUSD Dropout Task Force, Learning Works!, the Flintridge Center, Office of Creative Connections/All Saints, the Western Justice Center, and the City of Pasadena. Recommendations to increase the graduation rate have also been provided to PUSD by the League of Women Voters.

PUSD was one of only 29 state and local school districts nationwide to receive funding from the \$46.6 million High School Graduation Initiative grant program.

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