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BUSINESS

MARCH 30-APRIL 5, 2011

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Lane: Prepare students for jobs

by Christian Morrow

Courier Staff writer

Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Linda Lane has a lot on her plate. She is working to eliminate a seemingly intractable racial achievement gap, trying to get all 2500 district students "Promise Ready," and she's trying to do it facing a \$34 million budget gap.

"Of course with all that, I thought of the old Chinese curse, 'May you live in interesting times,'" she said to a near full house at the African American Chamber of Commerce Power Breakfast March 25.

In her typically positive conversational tone, Lane gave a PowerPoint presentation on how the district will be focusing on improving teachers' abilities to get results.

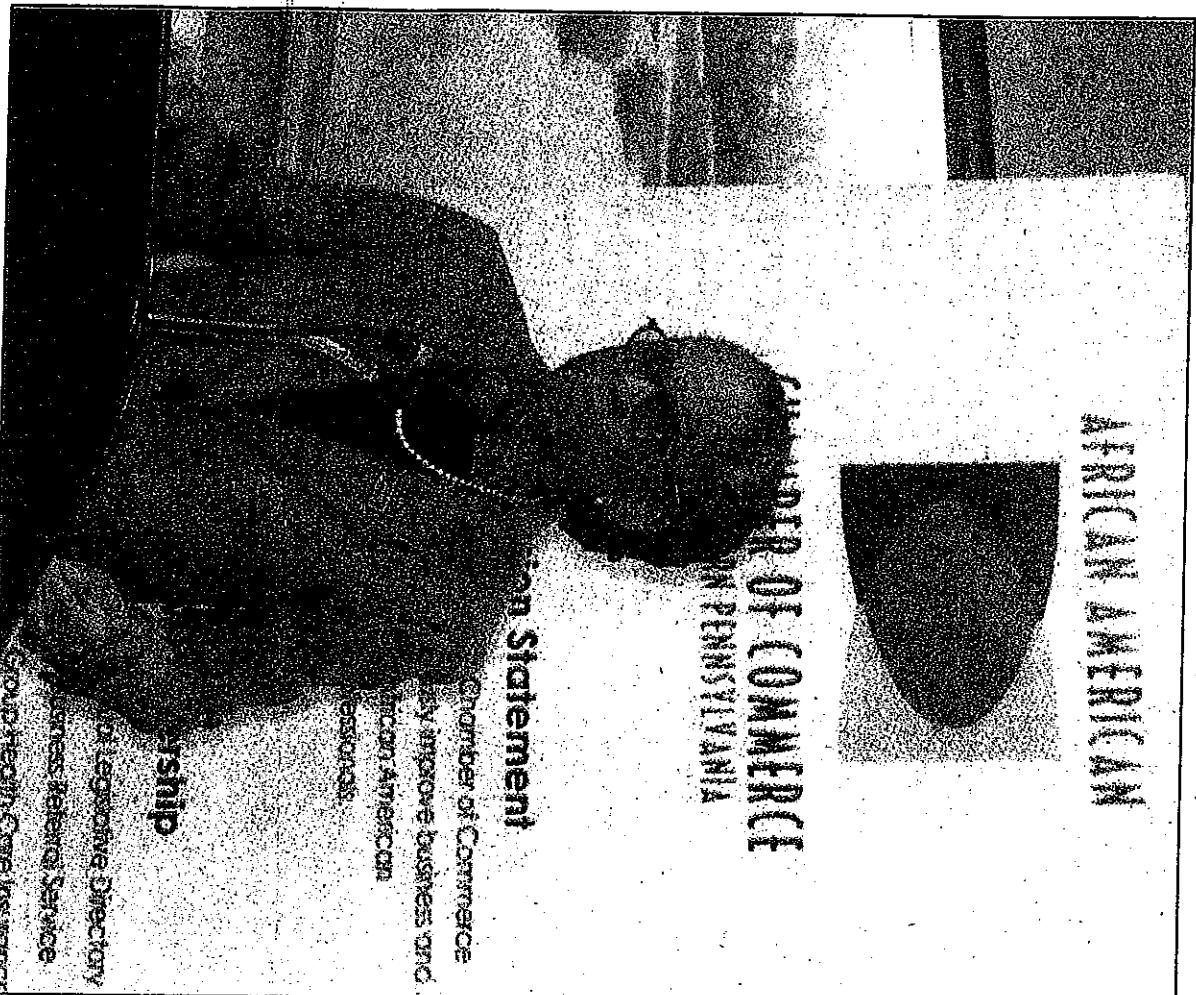
"We have physical problems and we used to be you could come out of high school and make a good living. Those jobs are gone. These kids need something after high school to take advantage of the opportunities out there."

Lane encouraged the audience to support the district's Pittsburgh Promise program, as the district focuses on getting students "promise ready" rather than college ready. The Pittsburgh Promise provides scholarship grants for eligible students for not just two- or four-year colleges, but also technical and trade schools. Though the shift in focus is designed to help the city and region by providing the workforce emerging businesses will need, Lane's presentation did not specifically focus on business opportunities with the district.

She did, however, remind chamber members of the district's upcoming business "extravaganza."

"Our session on doing business with the district is April 4 at the Pittsburgh Federal on of Teachers building (10 South 19th Street) on the South Side," she said. "It's designed to help small businesses, particularly minority-and women-owned business enterprises, do business with the district by making sure they have the correct certifications and are in our system."

Lane did not address the projected \$34 million cut in state funding to the district's budget, or how such cuts might affect business opportunities. Nor did any chamber member ask about the cuts during the very brief question and answer session after her presentation.



THE TOUGH GET GOING—New Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Linda Lane says the district will overcome budget challenges during the African American Chamber of Commerce Power Breakfast March 25. (Photos by J.L. Martello.)

She did note the Pittsburgh School Board voted to cut \$45 million from the capital budget, which will definitely limit construction and related supply contracting. "The \$45 million in cuts is really only a \$3.6 million savings," she said. "We were going to borrow that money anyway, so all we're really saving is interest."

When asked by the New Pittsburgh

Courier if the cuts could mean a greater

number of services or vendor contracts

being outsourced, Lane said she did not yet know.

"I really don't know the size of our vendor pool or our requirements," she said. "Overall, I think we'll be looking at everything. So it's possible. Bad things can lead to good things."

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)