

# Roosevelt's contract a vote of confidence

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Over the objections of two school board members who consider it premature, the city school board Wednesday night approved a three-year contract extension for Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

Roosevelt, 51, of Squirrel Hill, was hired in August 2005 for three years. He was initially paid \$165,000, and now makes \$180,000 after receiving a \$15,000 raise for meeting the school board's performance objectives.

Under the extension, Roosevelt will remain with the Pittsburgh Public Schools until August 2011. He could make as much as \$240,000 in his sixth year if he meets the board's performance priorities each year.

Citing Roosevelt's academic reforms, board member Mark Brentley Sr. said, "I think it's a little premature. We don't know if what has been put in place is working or not working."

He and board member Randall Taylor were the only school directors who voted against the extension.

Board member Patrick Dowd cited Roosevelt's balanced budget, reorganized central office and the elimination of thousands of empty seats in the district's schools as accomplishments. "Those are not small matters," he said.

Afterward, Roosevelt said it will take three years to judge the success of his academic reforms, including a new reading curriculum and eight schools with a longer school day and school year.

Under the contract, the district will pay up to \$12,492 a year for a life insurance policy chosen by him and \$40,000 a year into a retirement fund.

His pay, though, falls below national averages. In 2004-05, the most recent year for national statistics, the average salary for a superintendent in a district with 25,000 or more students was \$179,774, according to the American Association of School Administrators. That's about what Roosevelt makes now.

Pittsburgh -- which has 29,000 students -- is among 66 members of the Council of the Great City Schools, a Washington-based group of some of the nation's largest school districts. Among its members, the average pay for superintendents was \$207,547 in 2006.

The earliest Roosevelt can make that is 2008-09 if he meets all the board's priorities.

"He's doing a terrific job," said council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "The school system should want to keep him for as long as possible and provide every inducement to make sure he stays and continues to grow in the job."