

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Creating a Positive Peer Culture and Promoting Student Empowerment

Proposal



Pittsburgh Public Schools
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OVERVIEW:

Pittsburgh Public Schools is requesting the submission of a proposal to provide student academic and behavioral support at Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6 - 12. More specifically, the school seeks support in an effort to create and maintain a positive peer culture that encourages student empowerment to ensure academic success.

THE COMMUNITY

Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School serves the community of Homewood, a predominantly African American neighborhood of Pittsburgh, officially divided into three areas: Homewood North, Homewood South and Homewood West. The school itself is located in the Homewood West section of the community.

The 2000 Census indicates that the demographics of the entire Homewood community reflect a 98% African American population. The overall population has declined just over 25% over the past 13 years and continues a downward trend. As the population has declined, crime rates have increased.

According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics Program, the National Average Crime Risk Index is 100. In the Homewood community, the numbers are as follows:

- Overall Crime Risk 244
- Murder Risk 274
- Rape Risk 204
- Robbery Risk 460
- Assault Risk 284
- Burglary Risk 187
- Larceny Risk 211
- Motor Vehicle Theft 273

A report generated by Allegheny County states that in 2007, 145 Homewood youth were referred to the Allegheny County Juvenile Court Probation Office. “The ratio of youth involved with the juvenile court to all children in Homewood”, says the report, “is approximately double that of the City of Pittsburgh.”

Unemployment in the community is just over 11%. In Homewood South, 33.5% of the population lives below the poverty level. In Homewood West, that number rises to 35%. In Homewood North, those living below the Federal poverty level is 43%.

CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6–12 is a neighborhood, comprehensive 6–12 institution that offers a variety of courses designed to meet the needs, abilities, and interests of its approximately 600 students. The school was built in 1917 to honor George Westinghouse, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Historically, the school boasts an impressive number of successful alumni. In fact, the school displays a “Wall of Fame” highlighting successful graduates.

In recent years, however, Westinghouse has seen a steady decline in academic achievement, school culture and overall school pride. The school is now viewed as under-performing when compared to other schools in the District.

In the fall of 2011, the District made an effort to rejuvenate the school and expanded Westinghouse from a high school to a 6-12 school, renaming the school "Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy". At this time, the building offered single-gender classes. This initiative was, however, quickly revisited and in November of that same year, a new principal took control of the building. The Board of Education also then announced that all single-gender classes would be ended by February of 2012. In the 2011-2012 school year, student perceptions relevant to the classroom experience were collected via the TRIPOD survey. The results indicated that Westinghouse was rated by those students to be in the bottom third of all Pittsburgh Public Schools of similar configuration. Staff perceptions of the school's teaching and learning conditions were also measured through a survey process in the 2011-2012 school year. The results indicated that Westinghouse was in the bottom third of all Pittsburgh Public Schools relevant to teacher perceptions.

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, administrative changes again occurred. A former secondary administrator in Erie, PA, was hired and appointed to turn around the achievement data and perceptions of the school.

ACADEMICS

The Keystone Exams, administered in grade 11 in 2012-2013, reflected the following:

- 9.2% of students scored at or above proficiency levels in Algebra 1
- 32.3% of students scored at or above proficiency levels in Literature

The Pennsylvania State System of Assessment, administered in grades 6-8 in 2012-2013, reflected these results in reading and math:

- Grade 6 – 8.5% at or above proficient in reading; 15.2% at or above proficient in math
- Grade 7- 22.4% at or above proficient in reading; 33.7% at or above proficient in math
- Grade 8 – 50.9% at or above proficient in reading; 38.1% at or above proficient in math

In terms of academics and attendance, students are categorized into four groups as follows:

- College Ready (≥ 3.0 GPA and $\geq 95\%$ attendance)
- Graduation Ready (≥ 2.5 GPA and $\geq 90\%$ attendance)
- At Risk (≥ 2.0 GPA and $\geq 80\%$ attendance)
- Critical (< 2.0 GPA OR $< 80\%$ attendance)

At the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year, only 17% of seniors were considered to be Graduation Ready. Additionally, according to an Allegheny County government report, dropout rates for Westinghouse High School are double those of the state and nearly four times higher than in all Allegheny County schools.

ATTENDANCE

Student attendance remains an issue of primary concern. Students missing more than 5% of the school year are categorized into three distinct groups: those missing 5-10% of the year are considered to be “at-risk”; those who miss 10-20% of the school year are considered to be “chronic”; those who miss more than 20% are considered “severe”. In the current 2013-2014 school year, for the most recent 20 days, the overall attendance numbers reflected the following:

- 18.6% of students were considered to be at risk.
- 26.4% of students were considered to be chronic
- 28.6% of students were considered to be severe

Year to date attendance data is as follows:

- 23.2% of students are considered to be at risk.
- 30.2% of students are considered to be chronic
- 22.3% of students are considered to be severe

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Pittsburgh Public Schools and Pittsburgh Westinghouse seek to address the following, in direct relation to District goals:

- Accelerate Student Achievement
- Eliminate Racial Disparities
- Become a District of First Choice
- Develop a Student-focused Culture

SCOPE OF WORK

Through awarding of this contract, the District seeks to:

1. Offer administrators and teachers at Pittsburgh Westinghouse numerous opportunities for focused professional development, during not only the school year but also the summer.
2. Assist administrators and teachers at Pittsburgh Westinghouse to develop increased rapport with students and families.
3. Assist with the development and implementation of student leadership opportunities.
4. Offer administrators and teachers at Pittsburgh Westinghouse strategies to respond to student confrontation and behaviors.
5. Assist with whole-school development of behavioral expectations for students.
6. Support administrators and teachers to develop enhanced opportunities for organizational communication.

7. Encourage and support increased parent engagement, social skills and coping skills development through counseling sessions, group guided discussions, and one-on-one sessions.
8. Provide in-house support to the whole school in terms of basic logistics.

PROJECT SUPPORT

Pittsburgh Public Schools will provide support to the consulting firm by providing existing plans and data and assisting with all initiatives.

PROPOSAL DETAILS

All submitted proposals must include the following:

- A brief profile with general information about the firm/consultants.
- A concise written statement to demonstrate the firm's understanding of the project and scope of services.
- A list of project deliverables to be created with a detailed timeline and overall project completion.
- A proposed budget for the project.
- Credentials and qualifications of key personnel who will take responsibility for working directly on this project and the key contact person.

TIME FRAME

Submissions are due no later than December 30, 2013. The selected applicant must be prepared to commence work on January 23, 2014 with completion to be scheduled for no later than September 30, 2014.