

#1

Karen Sloan

Parent

#2

Lily Allman

Student

This proposal has the biggest impact on elementary students, but the board,ers,nor the superintendent made it a priority to consult with us about the future of our education. Dozens of k-5 students alone have been speaking at public hearings and to our legislators in harrisburg about ways to help PPS for over a year. We have been attending countless public hearings and have given you the opportunity to partner with us in our education but we have yet to be heard. Don't mistake our age for incompetence. Our elementary school students understand a lot more than you give us credit for. I have had the direct benefit of a fantastic STEAM program that has helped to grow my critical thinking skills, my ability to solve real world problems, and more for the last 6 years.

I fully understand access to this program is a privilege not every student has and I agree this is a huge problem that needs to be fixed. However, this proposal misses an enormous opportunity to truly address this inequity. The proposal, as it stands, lowers the bar for elementary students. This doesn't make any sense. If you want to provide the best education for us, we shouldn't be taking away opportunities for elevated programming. Instead, we should raise the bar so that every student has access to the best programs we already offer. It feels like you didn't think out the proposal enough and just said "Good enough,next issue." Leveling our K-5 schools to the lowest standard isnt real equity, it's just doing the bare minimum. That's equality, not equity. I'm 11 and I can tell the difference, you should know better. I believe expanding STEAM to every

K-5 is a better way to raise the bar to the highest level. Real equity is providing every student access to the highest quality program and the support they need to succeed.

Speaking of access, how does creating education deserts, making it harder for families to get to schools and increasing our walk and bus times improve access. I can't speak for every kid at PPS, but,as a northsider, this proposal is just trash. I would like to see you guys walking up one of our hills after school with a heavy backpack, and barely any walkable sidewalks on a good day. Now let's add my asthma, a heat advisory day or snowy day, or heck, even an air quality alert day and see how you do. Now, let's imagine your parents who live in Spring Garden with only 4 buses per day, and they need to pick up their sick kid from King. Yeah right. Even if you gave us buses, which you already don't have enough of in the first place, or changes to a whole other part of the city to try and make it easier, all of this makes it harder for us and our families to make it to and from school. The goal of all of this should be to make it a more equitable system that gives us maximum access to high quality education. This proposal missed the mark on all fronts. I say this a lot, but it's apparently not enough, do better.

One last thing. You need to bring back the virtual testimony option. Removing this option, now of all times, is beyond wrong. It is downright cowardly and your actions say you don't want to hear from us. It's already a school night, the first day of school, and you are telling us the most accessible way to hear from all of us isn't available anymore? My dad is out of town and can't be here tonight. Some kids don't get off the bus until 5:30 and don't have the time or transportation to get here in time. This is just wrong. Do better.

#3

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent

First, I would like to address the issue of the virtual option being removed from the community. This is the most blatant and reprehensible act of suppression I have had the horror to witness in my 14 years with PPS. Gene Walker, I am talking directly to you because you are the one that has the unilateral power to change this and you made the decision to do this. You could have reinstated this at any time and you made the conscious decision, regardless of people begging you to do something, to silence people. This is a shameful decision that undermines any efforts to engage with the community in general, much less on the first day of school and directly after proposals were introduced that impacts tens of thousands of students, teachers, families and community members. If any of you support this decision to silence constituents and directly impacted people, you don't have to sit there and listen. You can step down and let someone else sit in that seat that is willing to do the job you were elected to do. Full stop.

Secondly, this proposal is missing far too much info for the community to give feedback.

2. How much does this base proposal cost? This was started for budget concerns but they haven't told us even a range of what this would cost. Right sizing last time cost \$79 million dollars & this plan is bigger than that one because we need to expand several buildings.
3. What is the difference between feeder zones and attendance zones? We have parents assuming that their attendance zone will stay the same as our current feeder zones but we don't actually know if that is true. Does this proposal take people away from their current feeder zone to put them into another one based on transportation time? For example, I live in the northside but there aren't enough buses to get our kids to school (especially now that an education desert is created for much of the northside) and PRT doesn't reach most of us. Will our attendance zone be changed to an East End school feeder because it's easier for buses and PRT to go there or are we staying in the northside? It gets even cloudier for the other areas of the city.
4. Transportation and walkability weren't even factored into this proposal. Just because a school is within a couple miles of another school doesn't mean that there is easy or safe access to those schools. The proposal also completely disregarded people with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged families without access to transportation. That alone makes this plan a non-starter. You cannot expect our students to be fully supported if they don't have access to get to school and their families don't have access to support them in school.
5. What will be our goals for class sizes? Why can't that be released? They need to know what they expect to put in a classroom if they have already calculated capacity.
6. What is the plan for all the schools and programs not addressed in the proposal? Why were they left out? Are we cutting community schools?

4. Why are we lowering the standard of education in our K-5 schools instead of elevating all students to our highest academic standards, like the STEAM program, and giving all students the support they need to get there?

I have so many other questions and concerns too but there isn't enough time to hash them out. Even if we got these answers in the final proposal, the community doesn't have the opportunity to give feedback before you vote on the resolution to start the closure process, according to the current timeline. We are doing all we can to help and we keep getting shut out. It is disrespectful and harmful to our students, families and communities.

#4

Katy Rank Lev

Parent

Hello. I want to begin with an apology to my children's teachers since I will not be able to fill out the back to school forms tonight given this trip in to Bellefield. I was one of the 46 people who commented about equity in the town halls conducted by the consultants. I'm back with more comments in that vein, since the current proposal has some gaps in that regard. It's ableist and not equitable to remove the ability to testify virtually at these public hearings.

I was very glad to hear some board member feedback during the proposal presentation, particularly the comments from Mr. Barker about community schools and the proposed closure of Manchester elementary.

Right now the plan creates school deserts for elementary children in huge chunks of the city. While it might be true that there are only a few miles between schools, we locals know this is Pittsburgh, and a mile in the south hills is not the same as a mile in East Liberty or Fineview.

I have a seventh grader at CAPA right now, and I would never want him to be part of a plan that pulls Manchester children from their neighborhood school and has them busing past their former school filled with magnet students. We lived a hilly mile away from Rogers when that building was closed as a performing arts middle school. I don't need to remind you that it now houses a charter school. I'm curious what metrics were used to close Rogers and what metrics suggest trying again in another neighborhood would work better.

I also have questions about turning Sterrett into a regional middle school. It sounds an awfully lot like Reizenstein, which was closed for "right sizing" and is now land for luxury condos whose residents' children would attend Colfax, based on my understanding of the plan.

Ultimately, the proposal will cause massive disruption for our children and the children with the most disruption are the ones with fewer resources to begin with. There is so much more to say, but please know that I also support what Martha Reicks will say in her testimony in a few speakers. Thank you for reconsidering most of this proposal.

#5

Hallie Pritts

Parent

#6

Nina Louise Dagavarian

Student

#7

Martha Riecks

Parent

#8

Karen Cornell

Parent

#9

Steven Winslow

Parent

#10

Shirley Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

I have followed the public hearings regarding the unfair treatment of former Montessori teacher Ms. Stephanie Lapine by principal Kellie Meyer. Throughout my 41 year career with PPS, I too was subjected to principals like her. Why is she not held accountable? The parents/guardians and students have voiced their concerns about Kellie Meyer and all you do is "conveniently transfer" Ms. Stephanie Lapine to another school. Kellie Meyer should be placed on special assignment and prohibited from working in any school. She should re-evaluate her career in education. Schools do not need toxic principals like her. The Montessori students and parents/guardians deserve better! Don't give up the fight to get Ms. Stephanie Lapine back to Montessori where she belongs!

Ms. Rita Porterfield, I always take notes whenever I am in a meeting. For some reason, Kellie Meyer has a problem with notetakers.

Carrick High School has a very small percentage of black teachers. "Research shows when a Black student has one Black teacher by third grade, they're 13% more likely to enroll in college. With two Black teachers, that jumps to 32%. For Black boys from low-income households, their on-time high school graduation rates soar by almost 40%." (Word In Black, May 8, 2024) **BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!**

Computer Applications should be a mandatory business elective class for all incoming freshmen. During my time at Carrick, some English teachers, CTE ITL, and CTE Director have indicated the importance of this class. Freshmen are not getting the necessary skills in middle school. When it is time to do a project, some of them are lost. While at Carrick, I have helped students many times navigate through the necessary software to complete their projects. Quite often teachers

require students to do projects that utilize Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. These skills are beneficial to students beyond high school.

#11

Melinda Mix

Teacher/Staff

#12

Becky Mingo

Community Member

#13

Jennifer Haven

Community Member

#14

Sara DeLucia

Parent, Community Member

Hello, I am Sara DeLucia. I am a resident of Friendship / Bloomfield neighborhoods and an active member of the Friendship Community Group.

Most importantly, I am a parent of three children, all are PPS students in CAPA high and middle schools, and Montessori.

I know that change is hard and we are facing difficult decisions. I believe change is necessary and the overall proposal to streamline and strengthen neighborhood schools is appropriate.

For as long as my children have been PPS students, the wait list at Montessori has been well over 30 children. This data is the voice of the community telling PPS that our children want Montessori education. Please consider this - families want public education and want Montessori, the program and the Friendship building. The current proposal listens to the community and expands the desirable programs at CAPA and SciTech (both with long wait lists). Please do the same with Montessori.

The historic Friendship school building is worth saving. Having a sense of purpose in an aspiring building molds our children to think differently. Let the community help fund the upgrades to anchor our community space where learning is fostered in a historic space.

thank you

Sara DeLucia

#15

Kathleen O'Brien

Parent

Dear Pittsburgh Public School Board,

Before you decide on school closures please come to our outlier neighborhoods and navigate traveling to the proposed schools via public transportation, you are all welcome to come to my house and navigate "getting" to school on time with the busses from Spring Hill on the northside. You must experience getting off the hill, because then you will see that if you do choose to close Spring Hill Elementary you will be hurting families in the community by making life significantly harder. Spring Garden, Troy Hill and Summer Hill are in the same situation regarding transportation as Spring Hill. Our communities are not easily accessible, and even when everything is going smoothly there are bussing challenges whether it is Port Authority or a yellow school bus. Often buses don't show up, and it's a problem. If kids can't get to school parents find schools their kids can get to. We chose to live on Spring Hill, but many families are there because a voucher was accepted, and it was the only option. Many households who can afford it have a car for anyone who can drive on Spring Hill, it's nearly impossible to do most things without a car on Spring Hill. You can't just go to get groceries, pick up your kid from school when they are sick, do an after-school program.... Everything has to be planned out and takes significantly longer if don't have a car up here. Our family was down to one car earlier in the year, and it was exhausting and put so much stress on our family. We struggled to get to work, doctor appointments, and getting groceries. Our family is incredibly fortunate to have two cars usually, many families with young children do not have that privilege up here.

Before the Pandemic, when my son was going to Dilworth Traditional Academy, I often drove kids to school from my general area to Dilworth because the bus never came, and the parents had to get to work. I know a few of the parents tried to work with PPS bussing, and it was never fixed. Those parents ended up pulling their kids from Dilworth and going to a charter school specifically because they could get their kids to school. It didn't matter if the school was better, it wasn't, all that mattered was they could get there.

If you close Spring Hill Elementary you will be putting a whole school into the position of choosing between going to public school, which is difficult/impossible to access by public transit

Or going to a school that they can get to. Not considering bus routs regarding the closing and reconfiguring of Pittsburgh public schools is just wrong. The Proposal that was put forth fails to address Pittsburgh's topography, economics, infrastructures and seems to put the burden on already marginalized communities. When I dug into some data that was available regarding the demographics of the 9 schools that were suggested to close, the first thing I saw was this was affecting black, poor, and disabled students the most. The logical outcome of not being able to get to a public school easily is to find a school that can be gotten to easily. From this limited view of information that is accessible, this all seems like a shady way to push undesirable kids out of the district into charter schools, which

seems to be the opposite of what the board is saying out loud and I hope the opposite of what the Board wants. I do believe that we all want what is best for kids and families at PPS.

Spring Hill Elementary should not be closed. The school is small, but the community is small. Because of the topography of spring hill and spring garden it is unlikely that the educational needs of the community will outpace the size of the school. Converting spring hill into a true community school would better serve the PPS families on Spring Hill because honestly, they need something better.

I'm sharing bus schedules from my house to ATA to give you an idea of transportation from this community. We are not at the top of the hill and it's still hard. I wish I could speak to all the outlier neighborhoods that will be affected by your decision, but I only really know our struggles with getting to school and what we have experienced regarding transportation. I can also speak to my neighborhood, people who don't go to PPS will still not be going to PPS if the schools merge. The only people who will be affected by these closures are the people who need the schools most. Having an old small school that parents can access is meaningful to my community, parents having the ability to be involved in their child's school helps the kids, Closing Spring Hill Elementary will disproportionately negatively affect people who need the school. Please don't Hurt these families, find another way to make the school and PPS Better.

Facts about Spring Hill,

Elevation 1066 ft

Spring Garden

Elevation 748

From Spring Hill to Spring Garden there is a change of 300 ft in less than a mile walking distance.

Bus route from 925 Haslage Ave to ATA:

Options:

1. 8:28 AM

925 Haslage Ave

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Walk



About 6 min, 0.2 mi

8:34 AM

Itin St + Goehring (all ways to get here are bad, one is down a very steep hill that is one lane and no sidewalks and a blind sharp turn, the other is down epic Pittsburgh stairs that are always overgrown and tick-infested, the stairs are on the rock face next to the landslide. Stairs have been mentioned in "Death Stairs" Multiple times because they are truly terrifying.)

6Spring Hill to Downtown

?

4 min(8 stops)· Stop ID: 2822 (is on a corner with no sidewalk, just 2 street connecting and a retaining wall)

Information

Information

8:38 AM

East Ohio St + James

If you are disabled or with a small child this is not doable and will prevent parents from being able to pick up their children if they are sick. Only option if you dont have a car is to call an uber or something.

?

About 11 min, 0.5 mi

8:49 AM

Allegheny Traditional Elementary Academy

810 Arch St, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Another option is to coneect down town and ride a bus up closer to ata.

8:17 AM

925 Haslage Ave

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Walk

?

About 12 min, 0.5 mi

8:29 AM

Spring Garden Ave + #1036

7Spring Garden to Downtown



4 min(7 stops)· Stop ID: 2881

Information

Information

Information

8:33 AM

East Ohio St + James

Walk



About 11 min, 0.5 mi

8:44 AM

Allegheny Traditional Elementary Academy

810 Arch St, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Cost: \$2.75

Tickets and information

[Pittsburgh Regional Transit - Ticket information](#) - 1 (412) 442-2000

8:17 AM

925 Haslage Ave

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Walk This is walking down the Entire hill to spring garden, Iten does not have usable sidewalks, most people walk in the street because it is safest, additionally people speed and it is over grown with ticks because of the high deer population in the area.)



About 12 min, 0.5 mi

8:29 AM

Spring Garden Ave + #1036

7Spring Garden to Downtown (the seven buss from spring gRDEN COMES A TOTAL OF 2 TIMES IN THE MORNING AND 3 TIMES IN THE EVENING. THERE IS NO OTHER BUS ACESS FOR FAMLIES in spring garden)

?

4 min(7 stops)· Stop ID: 2881

Information

Information

Information

8:33 AM

East Ohio St + James

Walk

Families still have to walk making it inaccessible to anyone who is not in good health)

?

About 11 min, 0.5 mi

8:44 AM

Allegheny Traditional Elementary Academy

810 Arch St, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Cost: \$2.75

Tickets and information

[Pittsburgh Regional Transit - Ticket information](#) - 1 (412) 442-2000

- [Ticket information](#) - 1 (412) 442-2000

8:19 AM

925 Haslage Ave

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Walk

?

About 23 min, 0.9 mi

8:42 AM

Cedar Ave + Suismon St

54Oakland-North Side Allegheny Center Via Penn Av-Main St

Have to walk down the whole hill and cross the highway. Often times homeless people are camped out at this corner. Its not safe for any one who is vulnerable. I walk it often, but I do not have limited mobility and am 47. My son is 13 and feels very unsafe walking threw this area by himself due to drug paraphernalia and the occasional person having a crisis.

?

3 min(2 stops)· Stop ID: 2596

Information

8:45 AM

Arch St + North

Walk

?

About 2 min, 0.1 mi

8:47 AM

Allegheny Traditional Elementary Academy

810 Arch St, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Cost: \$2.75

Tickets and information

[Pittsburgh Regional Transit - Ticket information](#) - 1 (412) 442-2000

Spring Hill, Summer Hill, Spring Garden, and Troy Hill are just as difficult to get off of.

Spring Hill bus #6 and Troy Hill Bus #4 are often late or no-shows. The buses are canceled on game days. My family can not use them to get to school because they aren't reliable.

Spring Garden Bus #7 only comes 3 times during the morning. 5:57 am, 7:07am, and 8:17 am then 4:00pm 5:10 and 6:pm

54 to Oakland is just pointless to get to ATA

Sincerely,

Kathleen O'Brien

#16

Rita Porterfield

Parent

#17

Jude Porterfield

Student

Dear School Board,

I am very sorry, but it was just too much for me to speak to you after my first day of second grade. I needed to take a break for myself, and I just couldn't speak. I only have a few words now. I want to keep my Montessori school where it is and not move to Linden. More than anything, I still want my teacher -- Miss Lapine -- back. It seems like school board members come first and teachers come second. But teachers and students should come first. Otherwise, the rest of your plan to close schools has me speechless. Yes, me, totally speechless.

Sincerely,

Jude Porterfield

#18

Laura Chu Wiens

Parent

#19

Holly Munson

Parent

#20

Brandi McNeill

Student, Parent

#21

April Clisura

Parent, Other School Bus Driver

#22

Diana Ames

Community Member

#23

Craig Elias

Community Member

#24

Ben Brewer

Parent

#25

Sarah Zangle

Parent

#26

Lauren Abt

Parent

#27

David Abt

Parent

#28

Judith Toure

Community Member

Dear Dr. Walters and Board Members,

My name is Judith Touré, and I'm the mother of a student who attended Taylor Allderdice, I'm professor emerita of educational leadership at Carlow University, and I'm a resident of Friendship and served as Chair of the Friendship Preservation Group's Education and Youth committee from 2006-2012. In this letter, I address the ERS Facilities Utilization proposal submitted to PPS Board this month.

First, I commend ERS for suggesting that certain magnet programs remain in place, along with efforts to increase equitable access to all children in PPS. Increasing and sustaining equity in resources, learning opportunities, and educational outcomes is one of the stated features of the Facilities Plan, evidenced by the recommendation that algebra be taught to more than the current 10% of middle schoolers.

One problematic proposal, however, is the reduction from 54 to 40 school buildings.

This means closing 26% of current schools in a disruption for children, families, communities, transportation systems, teachers, and school leaders, even if implemented over 2-3 years. Key Question #2 guiding this effort asks, "What changes will provide more opportunities, more resources, and more access for our students?" Access and racial equity must be woven throughout this plan before it is finalized.

I am concerned that in presenting the school portfolio plan, Mr. Trawick-Smith of ERS, as described in Public Source on Aug. 13, 2024, said "the proposed school closures would impact a higher share of the district's Black and Latinx students compared to its white and Asian students." He added, "We are disproportionately impacting students of color, in certain places."¹ No disproportionate impact is acceptable, contradicting any efforts toward foregrounding equity and access, regardless of race.

The ERS recommendation to move Pittsburgh Montessori from its building in Friendship to Linden School in north Point Breeze, on the border of Squirrel Hill, is one

¹ <https://www.publicsource.org/pps-facilities-closures-magnets-education-pittsburgh/>

such place. Friendship was ranked in 2016 as the second most diverse neighborhood out of 88 in the city of Pittsburgh.² The school itself welcomes a diverse student population at 34% students of color; with its location adjacent to other diverse neighborhoods such as Garfield and East Liberty, that percentage could continue to grow. Pittsburgh Montessori is 3rd highest among K-5 schools in academic outcomes in our district, with 77% of students proficient in reading and 47% in mathematics. Why disrupt excellence?

Moving Pittsburgh Montessori to a predominantly white neighborhood, ranked 66 out of 88 by Public Source for diversity in our city, would counter the first of Twelve Recommendations³ based on the PPS Strategic Plan for optimizing the use of district facilities, the one that states “creating safe, modern, and effective learning environments to ensure equitable access.” In fact, such a move may decrease access for students of color and lower SES families, raising questions about gentrification of the district. It makes more sense to maintain Pittsburgh Montessori in its current location, an architectural jewel in our city dating from 1899, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

According to the Facilities Plan Powerpoint, “Linden is ADA accessible and has an elevator and an outdoor play area. It could be renovated to better accommodate a Montessori program.” Pittsburgh Montessori also has an elevator and a playground and already accommodates a Montessori program! The playground has been partially maintained by the Friendship Community Group and is popular with children in the community.

I respectfully propose that you, PPS Board members and administration, maintain Pittsburgh Montessori in Friendship to ensure equitable access, undertaking an effort with the school community and the broader Friendship, Garfield, and East Liberty communities and civic-minded foundations to renovate this historic school, developing it into an innovative, environmentally and educationally forward institution. Let’s work together to rebuild Pittsburgh Montessori as LEED-certified and ADA compliant, in its nationally recognized building.

² https://www.publicsource.org/what-data-and-residents-tell-us-about-pittsburghs-most-and-least-diverse-neighborhoods/#.V_-hK-ArLIV

³ <https://www.pghschools.org/about/superintendent-of-schools/facilities-utilization-plan-new>

Thank you, Dr. Walters and the Board, for seeking community feedback on this ambitious facilities proposal and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Judith

Judith Touré, Ed.D.

#29

Thistle Elias

Community Member

#30

Alisha Howie

Community Member

#31

Andrew Bryk

Community Member

#32

Darlene Yanakos

Parent

#33

Kara Britanik

Parent

I'm here today to express my concerns about the recently proposed base scenarios presented by ERS. While I appreciate the effort to address our district's challenges, I believe the current proposal falls short for students and their families, PPS staff, and the community. A collaborative approach, tapping into the expertise and experience of stakeholders in our District would've been a better method than outsiders, proposing cookie-cutter changes with an ill-informed approach.

After listening to the consultants' presentation a couple weeks ago, I was left with a myriad of thoughts, feelings, and questions about their role. They lacked subject matter expertise when they were asked seemingly simple questions, like what the ideal class size or school size is. They didn't make clear that they had done their research on the city, or listened to any of the feedback that was given to them from the community. ERS didn't even present meaningful data that they collected from the town halls or any of the surveys. It shouldn't be surprising that all the comments from the town halls fell into 8 theme areas because those were the categories you asked us to choose from on the worksheet. They didn't present an analysis of the comments, or show how the comments shaped their proposal - it was just a tally of how many were collected in each theme area. I'm pretty sure my 5yr old could have come to the same conclusion. And after all the reassurance we were given that they would consider past closures and the communities that have been impacted in the past, they still proposed a plan that disproportionately impacts black and brown communities.

They also didn't collect their own data on the current state of affairs - they just used the flawed and outdated data that was given to them by the district, and didn't attempt to verify that the information was accurate. So it seems like the base scenarios they presented could have been put together from Day 1, without all the rigamarole. Given these shortcomings, I'm finding it difficult to justify the expenditure on their services.

Another thing that has stuck with me was when Mr. Trawick-Smith said that the district *could* save some money, but that's not the reason to take on this work. But isn't that the whole reason Dr. Walters brought forth the Facilities Utilization plan? Because of the expected budget deficit in the next few years? At the most recent Budget Workshop, Mr. Joseph indicated that the 2024 budget was improved from original projections. Since that meeting, the state has also allocated an additional \$8.5M to PPS for next year's budget, and the the district has received the Renew America's School award, for up to \$15.3M in funding for much needed building updates. So how does this additional revenue impact our budget outlook? And how does it factor in to the need to rethink our current portfolio? More importantly, how does ERS's proposed plan affect the budget? I didn't see one slide, or hear one word about how much their proposed plan would cost or save the district. Shouldn't that be top of mind if we're facing a looming budget deficit?

And finally, there has been a lot of talk about declining enrollment, and families leaving PPS for charter or private schools, or moving out of the city entirely. If we know that is a big problem, has anyone, the district or the consultants, conducted a root cause analysis to

determine WHY these families are leaving? How can we improve our programs to try to bring people back to PPS if we don't know why they're leaving in the first place?

Dr. Walters talks a lot about "placing students at the forefront of all decisions", "equity, excellence & efficiency", and "students first, always in all ways." Yet this proposal does not at all reflect those sentiments. It significantly impacts communities that are already marginalized, it suggests getting rid of the Magnet programs, rather than improving upon them, and in some cases, may actually make it harder for students to get to school if they have to travel farther. It also does not address the issue of declining enrollment. In the words of Dr. Walters, "there comes a time when courageous leadership is necessary," and I urge you to be courageous in this moment and reject the plan that was presented to you as is.

Instead, let's take a reflective and collaborative approach. Our district has a history of successful community-led initiatives, such as the Woolslair community's innovative approach to keeping their school open. I recommend that you::

2. Engage in meaningful dialogue with the community
3. Consider our ideas and vision for the district's future
4. Explore collaborative approaches that tap into the expertise and experience of local stakeholders

Don't waste any more of our money on a consultant that doesn't care about us. Let's work together to create a plan that truly puts our students first and reflects the values we all share for our district's future.

#34

Charlie Britanik

Student

Hello. My name is Charlie. I am a Kindergartener at Pittsburgh Montessori. I want to tell you about my school. I like my school because I have a nice classroom, and my teachers help me learn. I like having my specials so much. Art is my favorite. All the kids in Pittsburgh should have a Montessori school to go to.

I like where Montessori is now because it is really close to my house. I like all the green grass at my school because it is beautiful. The playground is good because I love all the slides. I really like garden class because sometimes I get to try the foods in the garden.

If you close Montessori, I would not go to any other school. I only want to go to Pittsburgh Montessori. Please keep it open forever. And please make more Montessori schools around the city that are close to other kids houses.

Thank you everybody, for listening to me. I will be here all week.

#35

Maryellen Hayden Deckard

Parent

#36

Kario Thompson

Parent

#37

Chela Sanchez

Parent

#38

Jessica Merlin

Parent

#39

Amanda Comeau

Parent

#40

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher

Good evening. I am a parent of 4 PPS students at Manchester, Schiller, and Perry.

To start, I am still furious and heartbroken about the decision to move our Manchester principal to Sci Tech. I don't know much about our new principal, but I do know that certain parents had the audacity to tell me how happy they were to be getting our principal who sounded so wonderful because some of them really weren't happy with their former principal. You know what that sounds like to me? Sounds like you had an issue with unhappy parents at one of your "premier" magnet schools – you know, the ones you over-resource to keep white and privileged families in the district at the expense of other schools and students – and you solved your problem on the backs of Black and brown and poor students at a school you've been closing by attrition for decades. Congratulations. At least you're consistent.

And here's another indication of your consistency on this point: the proposal to close Manchester and move CAPA 6-8 into the Manchester building. It's offensive on every level. Director Barker said it well after the proposal presentation, but it bears repeating – The idea of sending neighborhood students away on a bus, renovating the building, and then bussing other "specialer"? students in is so insulting that I can't believe it even got put on the table. And please spare me the idea that we'll be able to accommodate more students if CAPA has more space: the entire point of a school like CAPA is the scarcity and exclusivity (it has the most selective criteria for entrance of all our magnets). The current building is only 75% enrolled, so if you wanted to make this opportunity available to more students, you'd be doing it now. So please don't promise that more neighborhood kids will get to go to CAPA when our schools have art, music, and band once every 6 days, and that's IF we have a teacher, and many families can't afford outside private or group lessons and students may struggle to get a portfolio together or navigate the application process at all. CAPA is already one of the newest buildings in the district, it has ample resources, and serves a majority white and non-eco dis population – it doesn't need even MORE resources to be poured into it.

At present, this proposal is nothing but a school closure plan. We have heard nothing about how this will affect teacher and staff jobs, how exactly this will improve the educational delivery and experience for our students, what new programs would be available or current programs improved, or *any* specifics about what actual students, families, and communities might get out of this plan. We have to keep hearing from the consultants that they can't answer our questions because "that depends on the budget" or "the District has to decide that." If the proposed plan is supposedly going to offer more opportunities at the remaining schools, then tell us how.

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- How all students will now have access to exceptional and frequent
- arts education, including art, music, instrumental, dance, etc. (few kids will learn how to play an instrument with group instruction once every 6 days).

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- How all students will now have access to algebra 1 in 8th grade.
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- How all students will now have access to exceptional and more frequent
- language instruction (few kids will learn a language in middle school going to class once every 6 days).
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- How all students will now have access to abundant, interesting,
- and fun elective courses.
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- How all students will now have access to restorative practices
- so we aren't constantly exposing them to harmful exclusionary and punitive punishment that we call discipline that makes them more likely to drop out or become entangled in the criminal legal system.
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- How all students will now have access to extensive and culturally
- responsive mental health supports.
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- How all schools will now be invested in as community hubs with
- inherent and incalculable value to their communities not just businesses to be run efficiently (hint: children and education will NEVER be efficient).

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You have to tell us something other than what schools you are going to close, consolidate, or reorganize! How can you possibly ask us to support a plan that closes our schools but offers us nothing but empty platitudes about what *might* happen if we do? Speaking is not doing; saying is not acting. People are past the point of blind trust in vapid promises made by folks in decision-making positions that have continually harmed their students and abandoned their communities in the past and the present. We must do better. Our kids (all of them) can't wait any longer.

“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose education is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do this. Whether we do it or not must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not done it so far.” – Ron Edmonds, educator

**Although I don't agree with much that has come from the “effective schools” movement that Edmonds spearheaded, I still think these words should convict us. It may not be our fault that we have fallen short of educating so many children, but it IS our responsibility to do something about that.

Emily Sawyer

#41

Kim Daelhousen

Teacher/Staff, Community Member

#42

Shannon Striner

Parent

#43

Marisa Flem

Parent

#44

Marianne Holohan

Parent

#45

Susan Stowe

Community Member

Good evening.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of the Friendship School.

My name is Susan Stowe.

I am an artist, an educator, an administrator, daughter of a Montessori and Head Start teacher, a parent, and a homeowner.

I have been a Friendship resident since 1989. In the early 1990s, my husband and I were part of a neighborhood volunteer group that helped restore the playground at Friendship School. Since 1995, we have owned a house a block away from the school and, in 2013, we continued our investment in the community by purchasing a commercial property on Penn Avenue.

We are pleased that our taxes have supported our neighborhood school, our polling place.

Our daughter, Rachel, now 22, grew up playing with her friends at the school; my husband taught several kids to ride their bicycles, running alongside them as they wobbled and wove around the building exterior.

Now, you are seemingly compelled to rip this educational and community anchor—a landmark for all who visit—from our Friendship corridor.

I ask that you please reconsider depriving the Friendship-Garfield-Bloomfield collective community of yet one more walkable school.

Thank you.

#46

Ghadah Makoshi

Parent

#47

Jacob Tanenbaum

Parent

#48

Sarah Caldwell

Parent

#49

Lars Munson

Student

#50

Tayveon Kevin Smith

Parent

#51

Lucy Alton

Parent

#52

Pam Harbin

Community Member

#53

Ashley Hezel

Parent

#54

Jennifer Rose

Parent

My name is Jennifer Rose. I live on Shady Avenue where North Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze converge with my husband, Chris and our two children, Thatcher (starting 3rd Grade) and Delphine (starting Kindergarten). We purchased our home specifically so that we could send our kids to Colfax from Kindergarten through eighth grade. Our son has attended Colfax for two years and we have had an overall positive experience.

Colfax has an active PTO, great teachers and our kids have made friends with a bright and diverse group of children. We all take pride in our neighborhood school. As an added bonus, for families with two working parents (like us), kids are able to take “the walking bus” to the Jewish Community Center for after school care. Other children make use of a school-based after school program and many families have formed their own walking bus of sorts and after school the neighborhood is filled with elementary and middle school aged children walking home together. Big siblings help little siblings and it is one of the elements that make Squirrel Hill so special.

Colfax K-8 is objectively successful too. According the US News and World Reports, Colfax is the top PPS elementary school and the 2nd best middle school.

We have carefully reviewed the Facilities Utilization Plan, and it appears that, with respect to the Allderdice feeder system, the district is retaining all the buildings currently in the feeder pattern. I understand that the District is facing declining enrollment and believes that it needs to close schools, however the necessity to save costs by closing buildings does not exist in our feeder pattern.

With respect to the Allderdice feeder, it seems the only goal of this plan is to eliminate the K-8 model and change all schools to K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 to provided uniformity across the

districts. Those who attended Colfax would go to either Greenfield or Minadeo for K-5 and Miflin K-5, Greenfield K-5 and Minadeo K-5 would then attend Colfax 6-8 and then that group would attend Allderdice HS. Since this realignment does not close any buildings, the assumption would be that this realignment would increase educational opportunities for children. What data does the District have that this change will benefit the students in the Allderdice Feeder Pattern? Is there any merit in uniformity in a district of our size, when one size can't possibly fit all?

Under the current K-8 model older students look out for younger students and older students rise into higher grades with a sense of stability. The current model at Colfax helps particularly vulnerable pre-teens and young teens to stay young a little longer. Moreover, with four middle schools combining into one, where will all these children fit? Will Colfax again become the overcrowded building of yesteryear that caused a loss of enrollment at the school pre pandemic?

My concern is that the District is proposing to destroy an established neighborhood school system without justification. Can the District state that those currently attending Colfax K-8 will benefit from these changes? I don't think the District can make such a statement, for the following reasons:

5. **Loss of a Sense of Community.** Children attending Colfax live and play near Colfax even when it is not in session. It sits directly opposite a wonderful park (Blue Slide Park) that has become an extension of the school. Almost every other school district in Allegheny County sends

children to local schools for elementary school and then consolidates for middle school. Why is PPS even considering sending Squirrel Hill/Shadyside/Point Breeze elementary school students over an interstate to another neighborhood?

6. **Loss of Opportunities for Elementary Students.** My family has helped chaperone class trips to the Frick Museum, Blue Slide Park and the Environmental Center on Beechwood Boulevard. Will those opportunities still be available if this plan goes forward? It seems certain that K-5 will no longer be able to walk to these events. What will be gained other than an unreliable bus ride?
7. **Unnecessary - Colfax already is K-5 and 6-8.** Colfax is essentially two schools. There are two separate buildings. Elementary (K-5) children are in the older building and the middle school children are in the newer building in the back. The two buildings are connected by a bridge. Only the cafeteria and gym are shared. Why change

anything? If the District needs to get rid of the K-8 model, then call Colfax two schools.

8. **Overreliance on Busing when Busing is Scarce.** Both Greenfield and Minadeo are on the other side of 376, so walking and taking a bike to school are no longer an

option. My other, related concern, is that the District is struggling to provide busing as it is. When we enrolled our son in first grade, due to busing and driver shortages, the District moved the walking threshold from 1 mile to 1.5 miles. In other words, we lost our ability for our children to take a bus to/from school. Though we aren't on a bus, it seems that there are still busing issues because, as of last year, we frequently got messages on talking points that the "Blue bus was running late" or the "White bus wasn't going arrive today - - all kids would have an excused absence." How can the District be confident that it is going to be able to provide busing to the Squirrel Hill/Shadyside/Point Breeze children on a consistent and reliable basis to

Greenfield? Is the District considering issuing these kids a city bus pass to provide required transportation as has occurred in other districts?

5. **Linden, Sterrett and Liberty Do Not Appear to Factor into this Plan.** If looking purely at neighborhood boundaries and the utilization of buildings, Liberty, Linden and/or Sterrett operating as K5 schools for those North of 376 with Colfax as their middle school and Minadeo and Miflin operating as K5 schools with Greenfield as their middle school makes significantly more sense. The loss of the Sterrett building to form the Westinghouse middle school and the loss of the Linden Building for the Montessori program is also a factor that should be considered. Especially when both schools are walkable for many families in Squirrel Hill, Shadyside and Point Breeze.
6. **Losses to Private and Charter Schools.** Has the District investigated how many students would elect to attend private school if this plan moves forward? Has the District considered the increased costs of busing *those* children to private schools if this plan goes forward? This, on top of increased busing in our area.
7. **Loss of Afterschool Care.** As noted earlier, for working parents, the JCC provides a “walking bus” from Colfax to the JCC. Has the District worked with the JCC to ensure that this would continue, moving forward.

In short, we chose to move to the city and send our kids to PPS based on the understanding that we would be able to send our kids to two neighborhood schools, Colfax and

Allderdice. Frankly, we feel like the rug has been pulled out from under us and, after reviewing the proposal, still do not understand why. We respectfully request that the Board publicly announce, as soon as possible, that the Facilities Utilization Plan will not move forward with respect to Colfax and the Allderdice feeder system, or at the very least modify its plan to retain neighborhood schools for those north of 376 in the Allderdice feeder pattern by creating a middle school at Colfax with a combination of Liberty, Linden and/or Sterrett as its elementary feeders and a middle school at Greenfield with Minadeo and Miflin as its feeder elementary schools. This modification would retain neighborhood elementary schools, change to a separate middle school model, prevent a massive busing disaster and retain the sense of community currently present in our area.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rose

#55

Jazlynn Worthy

Parent

#56

Jamai Mcclary

Parent

#57

Annette Hall

Parent

Good evening, Pittsburgh Public school board

At this point, I'm extremely disappointed in every single member of the board.

Every single one of you says, they want to hear from the public, the community, the parents the students But yet you all continue to take away access to be able to do that.

Covid time sucked. We all know that but one thing it did do was it opened her eyes to different ways to reach out to the community and to hear from community members that can't make it to these public hearings in person.

Now again every single one of you turns around and says how important it is for people to come out and speak up but not everybody has access to transportation childcare to get to these meetings while others are busy with work and after school activities with there child and honestly today it's the first day back to school every single year I takeoff so I can be home with my kids when they get home from the first day to hear how their day was With their new teacher and their new school I'm here after that first day of school to help them decompress from a long day as these transitions from summer to back to school time can be difficult for some kids.

It seems like there was no consideration of these factors when all of you voted to get rid of virtual testimony.

You also voted to get rid of virtual testimony one of the most important times while you are working on the facility utilization plan and school closures. Truly as a Pittsburgh public school parent this shows you really don't wanna hear hear the voices of the community members because you're just made it harder.

For me, I can't make a lot of these meetings and have to attend virtually because I work a full-time job but sometimes I get stuck 60 hours a week at a time my work is lengthy and I cannot make these meetings work. so in a sense I get punished for being a hard-working mom and don't get to have a voice how far is that?

Also I can't request off to come to a hearing my mom duties.

Yes my children came and testified multiple times but now they're struggling to be in larger groups to be public hearings and speaking out due to incident they were in.

But you just took away their voice by taking away virtual hearings because they can't attend right now You took away my voice as a parent as a mother as a community member that's concerned about what's going on.....

Dr. Wayne Walters I personally spoke to you at the back to school event telling you how important it is to have these virtual hearings. And your answer was just to email your testimony and you promised they would be read ?

How do I know that? How does anybody know whether you all have actually read these emails?

We don't ever get a response honestly, how are we supposed to trust anybody on the board or you, Dr. Wayne Walters because we've been lied to you all definitely haven't been transparent and now you've taken our voices away??

Do you have a response to this? Do you have a good answer to why taking away virtual testimony is a good thing? You can attend virtually the \$250,000 consultant company can attend virtually but yet parents community members students cannot see a problem with that?? I do !

Maybe one day will actually get a response to these emails, but I doubt it heck I don't even know if you've made it to the end of this testimony! If you did, I'd love to hear back to why everybody thought it was a great idea to get rid of virtual?

Now onto this plan and the community sessions I for one don't trust that you were generally getting communities input the last Community Engagement sessions were very leading questions that you all brought up and literally information that we were only allowed to talk about that you guys lead these meetings into Community Engagement

You have made a rush plan and a consultant company even said this plan was rushed. A lot of data is not completely accurate because of not having the information

Elementary school students still have yet to be contacted. My daughters have offered multiple times to sit down and speak with the board.

And honestly, they're disappointed because that has yet to happen. Their voices are just left out these Elementary School. Kids are the future of Pps remember that!!!

There will not be a day I don't fight for my girls and all of their other classmates Proposed plans will not do much good without true Community Engagement without speaking to these students who it really affects!!!

I truly hope to hear from any of you board members!

Sincerely

Annette hall

#58

Chyann Duke

Parent

#59

Nakia Street

Parent

#60

Vernon Jamison

Parent