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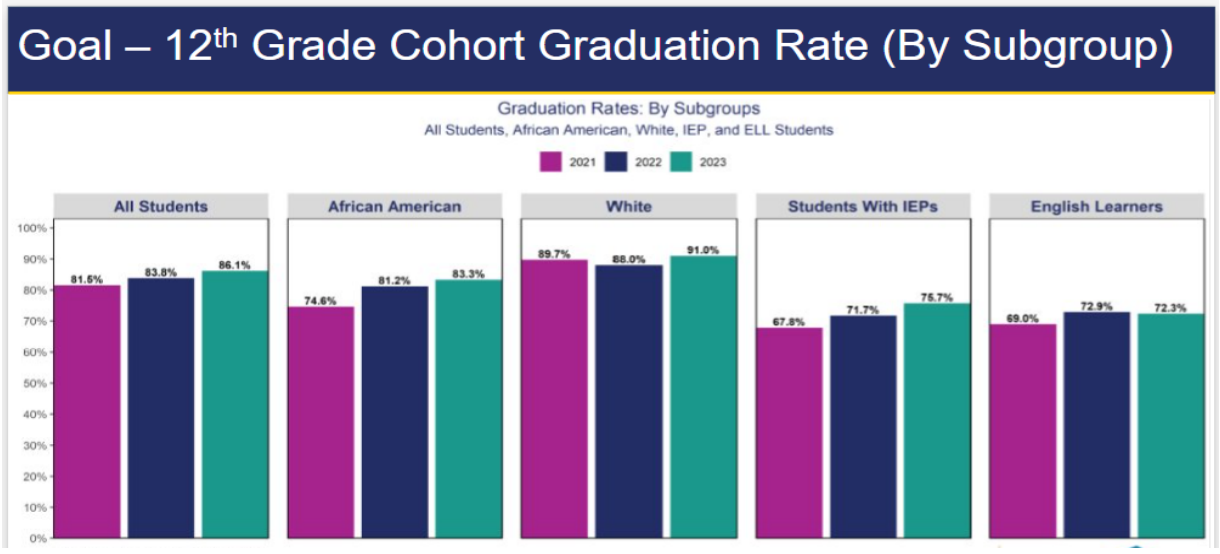
Superintendent Wayne Walters Shares Encouraging Trends as District Graduation Rates Continue to Climb

PITTSBURGH, December 4, 2024– Superintendent Dr. Wayne Walters today announced positive trends in 4-year cohort graduation rates across the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) over the past three years, based on state data. The 4-year cohort graduation rate measures the percentage of students who graduate within four years of entering high school. Rates lag by one year after a cohort's expected graduation date to account for credit recovery programs.

While the District still awaits 2024 graduation rates from the state, Dr. Walters highlighted results that show steady growth in graduation rates from 2021 to 2023. The District's overall graduation rate increased by 4.6 percentage points, rising from 81.5% to 86.1%. This progress exceeds the District's 2023 target of 82.9%, marking a significant milestone in the District's efforts to support student success.

"This achievement is a testament to the hard work of our students, the dedication of our educators, and the commitment of our entire school community to ensuring every student reaches their full potential," said Superintendent Dr. Wayne Walters.

In addition to overall gains, most student subgroups experienced increases in graduation rates, demonstrating progress in closing equity gaps. A detailed breakdown of subgroup trends was shared during tonight's Board Education Committee Meeting and is illustrated in the chart below.



Investments Driving Graduation Progress

Dr. Walters highlighted two key investments, one internal and one external, that are contributing to the District's progress in improving graduation rates.

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First, the District's recent financial investments have significantly improved student-to-counselor ratios, bringing them closer to the American School Counselor Association's recommended ratio of 250:1. The District has reduced its average ratio to no more than 350:1, a notable improvement from the previous 699:1. Second, the Pittsburgh Promise is funding Promise Coaches in four schools—Pittsburgh Carrick, Milliones, Perry, and Westinghouse. These coaches work directly with students to ensure they have a clear post-secondary plan upon graduation, further supporting the District's commitment to preparing students for success beyond high school.

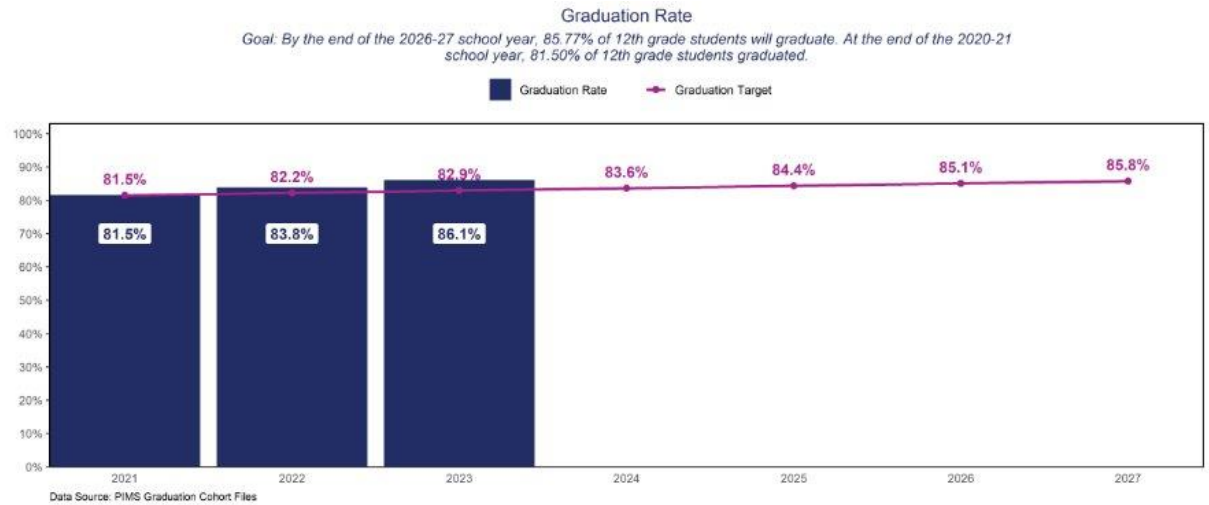
Strategies to Sustain and Accelerate Growth

Dr. Walters outlined three strategies the District's will implement to further reduce equity gaps and continue to surpass its' yearly targets.

- **Standardized Communication and Engagement**: Ensuring consistent communication about graduation expectations across all high schools.
- **Structured Documentation Process:** Monitoring student progress with actionable insights improved transparency and targeted interventions.
- **Graduation Mentorship Program**: Providing focused, immediate, support for seniors - particularly African American students, English Language Learners (ELL), and students with IEPs – through mentorship, family engagement, and celebrating progress.

"This presentation is more than just sharing data, investments, and strategic response, rather it's a commitment to a new way of governing our schools, focusing on transparency, accountability, and equity," said Dr. Walters. "We're working hard to adjust our practices based on the data we have and are doing everything we can to create a brighter future for each and every student."

The chart below details the District's yearly targets that build on the 2020-2021 baseline of 81.5 percent.



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