

Public Hearing Feb 24, 2025

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Vote NO on Anti-democratic, Anti-community Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) “Policy Diet”

Parents, families, staff, and the community are unaware this Board adopted a [Student Outcomes Focused Governance Implementation Plan, 6 months ago, on 8/28/24](#). Among the many items on the Implementation Plan timeline, the Board must approve a **“Policy Diet.”**

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS - Implementation Plan Overview			
Segment	Date Range	Key Activities	Key Accomplishment
Discovery (Norming)	Now - July 2024	(1) Schedule Kickoff Training - COMPLETE (2) Review draft implementation plan - COMPLETE (3) Finalize and adopt Implementation plan - IN PROCESS (4) Complete Kickoff Training - COMPLETE	Development of Shared Language & Foundation
Development (Establish Clarity)	Aug 2024 - May 2025	(1) Train and align staff on framework - COMPLETE (2) Design FY25 Supt Evaluation Process - COMPLETE (3) Establish Work Structure (Full Board or Committee) FALL 2024 (4) Practice Board Progress Monitoring (5) Conduct Agenda Analysis & Redesign SPRING 2025 (6) Plan Community Listening Program (7) Execute Community Listening Program to Identify Vision / Values (7) Draft Board Goals (Vision) and Guardrails (Values) (9) Receive and incorporate additional community feedback (10) Establish Key Interim Goal & Guardrail Measures	Provisional Adoption of Goals & Guardrails Practice & Incorporate Monitoring Process with FY25 Goals Official Adoption of Goals & Guardrails, alongside Interim Goals & Guardrails (Target Feb 2025)
Development (Establish Processes)	March 2025 - Jun 2025	(1) Review & Update Board Operating Procedures (2) Conduct Board Policy Diet (3) Align Budget Process to Goals & Guards (FY26 Process) (4) Design and Finalize Supt Evaluation Process	Alignment of board policies & procedures towards the accomplishment the Goals & Guardrails
Deployment (Accountability)	Feb 2025 - Dec 2025	(1) Implement Board Self-Evaluation Process (2) Design & Adopt Monthly Monitoring Calendar (3) Implement Monthly Monitoring of Progress Towards Goals & Guard	Board monitors progress towards its priorities regularly with clarity and processes are in place that align Superintendent and Board to accomplishing those priorities.
Deployment (Communicate Results)	Jun 2025 - Dec 2025	(1) Develop ongoing two-way community engagement structure (2) Codify Onboarding Process for incoming board members & community	Ongoing two-way communication structure between district and community developed and implemented

I’ll explain why the proposed policy diet is anti-democratic and anti-community, but first, I want to share important information with the public who are reading my testimony. In addition to the policy diet, the PPS Board has been busy implementing other major changes without informing the public. Since February of last year, this board has been working behind closed doors with a Council of Great City Schools \$100k consultant to “master” [Student Outcomes Focused Governance](#) (SOFG), a one-size-fits-all board governance model (see rubrics on pgs. 2-7) with no evidence the model results in improved student outcomes.

Under SOFG, elected members of the board will not work to improve anything other than what SOFG defines as “Board Work,” currently student outcome goals narrowly defined by 3rd grade PSSA, 9th grade Keystone scores, and graduation rates. In the SOFG governance manual you will find a definition of “Board Work” defined as: “Items that are discussed and/or acted on during Board-authorized public meetings because either state or federal law/rule requires the

Board to do so or because the items directly pertain to the Board's adopted goals or guardrails. Items that are not legally required and that the Board has not designated as Board work through the Board's goals or guardrails are, by default, Superintendent work.”

‘Mastery’ of SOFG requires the Board to limit the number of public meetings to 2 meetings per month not lasting more than 2 hours, and limiting discussion to no more than 3 items on the meeting agenda. This hands off approach by the Board, according to SOFG, will improve student outcomes.

This Board keeps telling us they are “transparent,” yet, there is nothing on the PPS website about SOFG except for the consultant contract (Feb 2024) and Implementation Plan (Aug 2024) on Board Docs. This doesn’t meet the minimum threshold for public transparency, especially when the Board has been working for months to implement a major shift in board governance.

Additionally, the SOFG ‘board work’ happening only behind closed doors is a possible violation of the Sunshine Act and Open Meetings Law. Other school districts implementing SOFG hold their meetings in public.

There are many reasons why these Student Outcomes Focused Governance “Policy Diet” changes are a mistake for the PPS School Board. I urge you to:

- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 001, Item 8.01.** These changes would require prioritization of resource allocation to the Superintendent’s Student Outcome Goals at the expense of any other student needs or priorities expressed by the community. (The 2024 Superintendent Student Outcomes Goals are 3rd Grade PSSA ELA and Math, 9th Grade Biology Keystone, and Graduation Rates. Three of the four goals are based on standardized test scores.)
- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 003, Item 8.02.** These changes would require the Board to establish “student outcome goals” rather than “educational” goals. Students and their families deserve so much more than a focus on standardized testing.
- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 004, Item 8.03.** The changes to this policy removes the legal authority of the Policy Committee to oversee “District Policy,” limiting the committee’s policy making authority to only “Board Policy” (the 000 series of the Policy Manual.) These changes would eliminate the Board’s critical oversight over the superintendent and allow for corruption or simply poor leadership to go unchecked. This is a way to strip the Board’s policymaking authority and the public’s ability to have a say in our public schools, leaving the superintendent to govern himself with no accountability to the community he serves.
- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 005, Item 8.04.** These changes would require Board Directors to undergo additional, redundant training that would only serve to indoctrinate incoming Directors with the unproven SOFG model.
- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 006, Item 8.05.** These changes would eliminate the Board’s Education Committee, Business/Finance Committee, and Personnel Committee.

Elimination of these committees removes school board oversight under PA law for personnel matters, budget matters, and education matters, including curriculum.

These changes would also remove the directive for the Policy Committee to develop “policies that reflect student, family, staff, and community needs and address state and federal regulations.” (See additional notes for Policy 004)

- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 007, Item 8.06.** These changes are anti-democratic and would severely restrict what Board members may discuss at a Legislative Meeting. One Board Director can't ask questions or trigger a discussion of any item on the legislative consent agenda unless there are three Directors who agree. Each Board Director was elected by us. They represent the voice of the community and must not be silenced at the Legislative Meeting prior to a vote.

New conflict of interest language is not necessary and explicitly targets Board members who were backed by labor unions as candidates, prohibiting them from voting on union contracts or any personnel matters. This would mean only anti-labor Board members can vote on labor contracts and anything involving personnel.

- **Vote NO on Revisions to Policy 009, Item 8.07.** These changes would institutionalize the unproven SOFG framework into the Board's written policy. These changes would eliminate the Board's duty to adopt a master facilities plan, professional development plan, or plan for curriculum review and development. This would allow the superintendent to implement a facilities plan—*to close and consolidate schools*—without a Board vote.