

Joshua Zelesnick Board Testimony – Alumni and Student Letters – April 28, 2025

Dear PPS Board and Dr. Walters,

I know school closings are on pause for now, and I appreciate the thoughtfulness that went into making that decision. I think the many people who spoke at the last public hearing felt heard based on that decision. So, thank you, Dr. Walters. I also understand that that decision is temporary, so I want to reiterate the importance of a school like The Student Achievement Center in the district. Students deserve a second chance. We can't give up on them. I know the proposal is to give kids this second chance in their home schools, but this isn't always the best choice and may not work for all kids. SAC prides itself on building community. We build deep lasting relationships with our students, and we have live teaching in-person classes—not just Edgenuity. I will now read a letter from an alumnus of SAC and then a current student's letter discussing their experiences at SAC.

### Praise for the Student Achievement Center

To whom this may concern, my name is Miguel Angel Velez-Munoz. I'm currently a combat medic in the Army working in the 82nd Airborne Division, and this wouldn't be a thing if it weren't for the SAC(Student Achievement Center). A little bit about my background: I was raised in Chicago with my brother and mother, where I didn't make the best decisions academically or socially. Those decisions that I made as a young man in high school set me back academically, so when I moved to Pittsburgh to better myself, I was given the best opportunity I could ask for, which was to attend my last two years at the SAC. Attending classes at the SAC gave me the opportunity to graduate on time with my peers as well as be able to join the military like I planned to. The Student Achievement Center is a great opportunity for kids to catch up when they need it. Everyone deserves a second chance. If it weren't for the SAC, who knows where I would be in life right now? With my high school diploma, I was able to sign up for the military. Where I found a love for medicine and treating people. I have been serving for 3 years and some change now. I graduate online school with an Associate of Applied Science in Health Science at the end of this year as well, and I owe this opportunity to the SAC. Especially to the teachers there that care, love, and motivate the students to be better, like Ms. Condon and several others.

To whom this may concern again, do not close the Student Achievement Center. Your program helps kids a lot more than you know.

Superintendent  
Walters

Dear Board President, Board members and

I am Jaysaun Crosby and my home school is Westinghouse. I am attending <sup>the</sup> Student Achievement Center to make up credits. ~~in the SAC program.~~

Since attending SAC, I have found that I am better able to make up credits because I am not around my friends, and ~~that~~ my teachers at SAC really help me understand what I am learning. They take the time to get to know me and I feel like they really care about me.

Also, because I am not at my home school, I have found that SAC added up my credits so that while I am making up credits, I know exactly what I have to do in order to graduate. It is true that SAC does not offer as many choices as my home school, but what SAC does offer is credit recovery in an accelerated manner that period 10 cannot offer during the school day, which allows me to continue to work after school or meet other commitments that I have.