



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
June 23, 2025

#1

Rachel Canning

Parent, Community Member



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#2

Morgan Coles

Parent

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#3

Lily Allman

Student

Lily Allman
Public Hearing Testimony
6/23/2025

For those who don't know me and my history of working toward a stronger PPS, I have been doing this since I was born. Literally. My mom was fighting to save my brother's school when she was pregnant with me and I've been going to meetings on building policy and programs since I was a baby. So, I have seen and heard everything the school board has been talking about for 12 years, my entire life. And I can give years worth of examples on how board members, previous superintendents and even how Dr. Wayne Walters has destroyed and broken trust, but we only have 3 minutes, so I'll keep this short.

"Why should I trust you with my future?" is the question I seem to be asking every month. You told the people to ignore us, the so-called "loud few," whenever we voiced our concerns for the student's future. Whenever we tell you to "Take your time and hire people," or "Look at things needed for this plan to work and/or to help us," you completely discard us. You said you would do the hard work to rebuild our trust and listen to concerns, but have turned around to break that promise month after month. So, why should I trust you with my future? You plan on closing schools, but you don't even have fully outlined attendance zones or demographer info. Your whole plan is built on trying to fit a solution into a plan that was built on bad data and even worse community engagement.

I live within 2 miles of Allegheny based on how the bird flies. According to you, I would walk to Allegheny when you close Schiller. This means, I would have to walk an hour to school and an hour home, on 2 highway on and off ramps, through unsafe areas, with a heavy backpack AND up a huge hill...sometimes in snow or high heat (but not uphill both ways). And, on top of that, we have a severe crossing guard shortage citywide. Have you added buses for kids like me where it's unsafe to walk? What about once I get to school? How big will my classroom be? Are you going to make me cram into a class of 30 or more students with no support for us or our teacher again? Where will you hire teachers and support staff when there is a shortage? How will you make up for the disruption to our educational outcomes while you repeat history? My peers and I have grown up building a stronger PPS for years and have been trying to help you to do your jobs. When will you finally do your jobs and listen to the voices of the most impacted people by this plan, the students? Please, vote no to closing specific schools until you have a full plan and consider things you might not have considered before.

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#4

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent

Valerie Webb-Allman
Public Hearing Testimony
6/23/25

I woke up at 5am this morning with a startling realization. It is my birthday and I have spent nearly half my life advocating for a stronger public education system. The majority of that time has been spent here with PPS and I am proud of some of the achievements that I have seen in that time. But, those achievements have been overshadowed by the continual return to the same broken promises and the same so-called solutions over and over.

Once again, I am here testifying to beg the board to do things in the right way. Some of you claim that those of us that come here to tell you not to close schools are only worried about our kid, our specific school or we want the district to do nothing and stay in the same downward spiral. That isn't true. We have been advocating for change and proposing solutions for years. If you chose not to hear us until now, please, listen carefully because your vote Wednesday makes a huge difference.

I now have the benefit of understanding past mistakes in a long term way that only people that have experienced those mistakes can, and I am begging you not to walk the same path as those before you. Superintendent Thompson, Roosevelt, Lane and now Walters have all said that we need to close schools in order to achieve the educational outcomes that our students deserve. They all have stated that we need to close buildings to save money, make our schools more racially diverse and to provide better opportunities to all students. In the last 25 years, the outcomes have been the opposite. Please, stop to ask yourself why.

Superintendent Walters' plan revolves around a model from the past that was successful-ish back then, but can't exist now. Back then, the funding model at a state level was different and the only choices parents had was to homeschool, pay for expensive private schools out of pocket or trust the only public education system in Pittsburgh, PPS. Now, the educational world we live in is vastly different. Families have the choice to leave PPS and go to a more stable option, regardless of whether it actually out performs PPS or not. The state now has a funding model that we know bankrupts public education when children go to those other options. Ignoring that fact is a detriment to PPS and sets us on a direct course to state takeover.

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If you don't believe that parents will make that choice you can, once again, look to history and see the steep decline of enrollment after every round of school closures. Each time we closed schools, our enrollment dropped. Then, we had to return to closures to offset the cost of those students leaving the district and the cycle continued. We only stopped that steep decline when we stopped closing schools. Families now have the choice to let our trust in a district or school determine our path rather than financial or other constraints. That is a key difference from a time that Superintendent Walters is trying to replicate, and it simply won't work anymore.

The basis for this plan to work isn't built around the buildings, the budget, or even the curriculum. It is built around the trust and buy in of the community that is directly impacted by it.

Dr. Walters said that we must "trust and believe in creating a world-class education system for the children of Pittsburgh." But, how can we trust this when all we see is a district following the path of some of the most traumatic upheaval we have experienced over and over again. PPS has lost the community's trust over the last 25 years and is not on track to earn it back. Dr. Walters, you acknowledged this when you said, "While this erosion has a long history, I fully accept the responsibility of helping to repair this." What have you done to make strides to that goal? All we see is lip service again. Parents are already leaving before this vote because they have seen THIS administration, and even some of you on the board, cast off the concerns over repeating history. Please, stop following the path of destruction.

It is true that this has been a long process. But, that is largely due to the mishandling of the plan and skipped steps up to now in an effort to speed up the process. Just like when contractors cut corners and rush to build a bridge or building, we can't be surprised that the public is concerned about its safety in the future. Just because this has been going on for a year now doesn't mean that we can just bypass those crucial steps to get it over with. The combination of a chipping away the bedrock of community trust to the thinnest point and a plan's foundation with missing pieces and steps is only a recipe for catastrophe. Please, vote no on beginning the closure of specific buildings until this is done right. We know some buildings may need to be closed but we should determine which buildings with accurate data and a well thought out plan. We cannot keep repeating the darkest chapters of PPS history and pretending that brighter futures can be built from them. Make the choice to divert from repeating the mistakes of those before you rather than adding another, possibly the last, dark chapter to PPS's story.



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#5

Lamar Black

Community Member

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#6

Anne Farris

Parent

Anne Farris Public Testimony June 23, 2025

Hi, I'm Anne Farris, a PPS parent living in the North Side.

Whether PPS families agree that schools need to close for PPS to thrive, many families are continuing to ask the question, "why the rush?" Many of you have talked about having worked on this a "long time." A little over a year is not a "long time" to develop a plan to "reimagine" a school district for 18,000 students.

Alyce Pinchback Johnson with Black Women for Better Education stood up here in April and said, "Excuses are symbols of nothingness, they build bridges to nowhere. Those who use these tools are masters of nothing." I am tired of metaphor. We are not building bridges, but I would argue that metaphorically or in actuality, building a bridge requires a detailed plan, one with flexibility and contingencies.

PPS families have been asking this governing body questions about the facilities utilization plan for over a year. Directors Taliaferro, Silk, Yourd, Barker, and Udin have also asked pointed questions about budget, attendance zones, and the measurable goals this plan would enable the district to achieve for over a year, and each month it feels like Dr. Walters has scrambled to provide partial information and gloss it over with divisive rhetoric.

The nine of you are voting to approve the extension of The New Academy Charter School, Catalyst Academy Charter School, and Provident Charter School on Wednesday right after you hold the vote to start a public commentary period before voting to close NINE Pittsburgh Public School buildings. With charter schools utilizing over 21% of the PPS operating budget, why have there been no solutions discussed regarding reducing those costs. If it has been acknowledged that we can agree the status quo cannot hold, then how do charter schools continue to operate in the status quo while the plan shutter 20% of PPS schools. Does this sound like DOGE fiscal policy to you?

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Speaking of DOGE. Superintendent Walters said in a PR video for the facilities utilization plan that this is not the 1980s, the 1990s, the oughts...well, this is not 2024, when the facilities utilization plan was presented to the public. When the plan was announced, the reason behind a reimagining PPS was to solve for the fiscal cliff PPS was facing. In multiple Town Halls, many of the questions had to do with how this plan will solve that problem and the answer multiple times was that actually the plan doesn't save money, that it's no longer about money, it's about equity. EVERYTHING is about money. And the opportunity to build equitable schools does not exist without it. Board Directors, after careful review, after seeing how the DOGE budget cuts have cost US citizens so much more than any savings, how they have impacted all of us in this room, are you able to look your constituents in the eye and tell us WHAT this plan is about, that you believe Dr. Walters has a staffing plan in place to implement this plan, and to name measurable goals for our students this plan allows him to achieve? Do you see a future you are proud to call your legacy? In this country almost at war, with massive federal funding cuts affecting our basic needs, with congressional leaders blindly following one illogical and vindictive man, there is so much out of all of our control. But here, on Wednesday, the nine of you have a voice, you represent the voices of every PPS family in Pittsburgh, and you have tremendous power to impact our future and the future of our city. I ask you, "where do you stand?"



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#7

Kari Thompson

Parent



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#8

Alanna Peterson

Parent



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#9

Dyllan Childs

Student



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#10

Jordan Childs

Student



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#11

Erin Childs

Parent



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#12

John McFarlane

Community Member

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#13

Ashley Rooths

Parent

To the Superintendent and Board Members of Pittsburgh Public schools:

My name is Ashley Rooths and I am writing to express my deep frustration and concern regarding the recent decision to eliminate all magnet school programs. This abrupt policy shift is not only unfair, but also disruptive and harmful—especially to students like my daughter who are caught in the middle through no fault of their own.

My daughter has been a dedicated and thriving student at Pittsburgh Dilworth since she was first accepted in kindergarten; she is now finishing her third-grade year. At the time of her admission, we were explicitly told that once accepted, she would be allowed to remain enrolled through 5th grade. That was a foundational part of our decision to enroll her and make long-term plans based on that commitment. For the district to now renege on that assurance is unacceptable.

If this policy is enforced as currently proposed, my daughter will be forced to transition to a new school for her 5th grade year—only to have to move again for 6th grade. This creates unnecessary instability during two critical developmental years and could have serious emotional, social, and academic consequences for all students, specifically the class of 2032.

Pittsburgh Dilworth (a magnet school) has provided all of my children with structure, high expectations and academic rigor, but for my current third grader it has brought so much more. Unlike her siblings she is not outgoing and struggles with extreme social anxiety. The community at Dilworth has afforded her the opportunity to develop and foster close relationships. I am devastated that your plan intends for her to be uprooted from everything she is familiar with; environment, routines, but most of all she will be denied the opportunity to continue her educational journey with the close-net community that she is now flourishing in. If something works well, you should not come in with a bulldozer and demolish it; instead, you should replicate, but the students should not be upheaved and shuffled around like monopoly pieces during this transition. Would you want to move into a new house that was only partially constructed? As parents we don't want our soon to be fourth graders paying the price for this proposed plan which will sacrifice all that has been poured into them.

It is deeply troubling that the administration would choose to prioritize rigid zoning enforcement over the well-being and stability of its students who are already enrolled and thriving in various magnet learning communities. Children are not just numbers on an enrollment sheet—they are individuals with relationships, routines, and educational needs that matter. This plan emphatically does not represent, “Student First”.

At the very least, I strongly urge you to honor the commitments made to families whose children were accepted into the magnet programs prior to last year. Changing the rules midway through a child's education is not only poor policy, but also ethically wrong. I understand the district wanting all schools to be equal; however, it is not going to happen overnight and will require time to perfect similar learning cultures. I do not want my daughter and others to suffer during this abrupt change; this plan should be grandfathered in and those students who began kindergarten during the 2024-

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2025 school year should not be “deported!” This would be an actual “phase out” and give the district time to replicate best practices.

Please reconsider this decision and consider the detriment it will have on students, families, and the community at large. My daughter, and many others like her, deserve your protection and consideration. The program proposed is not a Phase Out, it is a massive deportation of innocent children.

We, the concerned parents of elementary magnet students, stand united and ask:

- Honor and permit all currently enrolled elementary magnet students to complete their full magnet program at their designated magnet schools.
- Prioritize educational stability, trust, and the well-being of all students over administrative policy shifts.
- If transportation is an issue, give parents the option to transport their children to and from school.
- Our understanding is that Pittsburgh Montessori will not be dismantled; we are requesting the same consideration for Pittsburgh Dilworth and all other Magnet Schools.

With extreme Concern,

Ashley Rootes-McClain

(Please see the attached petition)



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#14

Stephen McClain

Parent

11:34



Sincerely B. McNeill

Begin forwarded message:

From: Pittsburgh Public Schools Magnet Office <noreplyregistration@powerschool.com>

Date: March 10, 2022 at 11:11:19 AM EST

To: brandi.mcneill@icloud.com

Subject: Pittsburgh Public Schools Magnet Lottery Results

This e-mail address is unable to receive messages. Please direct all inquiries to the Magnet Office at magnetoffice@pghschools.org or 412-529-3991.

To the Parent or Guardian
of Montae Booker

Thank you for your interest in a magnet program at Pittsburgh Public Schools. Montae has been **accepted** through the magnet lottery to attend the program below for the 2022-23 school year. *The Seat Placement value indicates the order in which they were **selected for acceptance** through the lottery.*

← Reply

→ Forward





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#15

Zion Rooths

Student



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#16

Hunter McClain

Former Magnet Student



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#17

Rowen McClain

Student

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#18

Sonia Brown

Teacher/Staff

Good evening,

My name name is Sonia Brown and I am a teacher at Pittsburgh Fulton. I just completed my 20th year teaching at Fulton and 26th year with the district.

When the Facility Condition Assessment Report came out a couple of years ago, it was listed on page 147 of that report that the last renovations on Fulton were done in 1929. So I am quite sure that left people thinking Fulton was a dilapidated building and that staff and students were in deplorable conditions. But actually a lot of money has gone into updates to Fulton in recent years.

Not sure of year - New swipe card system for employees

2014 – New Windows

2015 – Elevator

2017 – New roof

2019/2020 Whole building was painted and new lockers

2022- Received Clear Touch screens for all teachers

2023 – Dry erase boards were installed in every room

2024 – New generator

In addition to the building having recent updates, the staff that has been assembled together is a phenomal team/family. We were recognized as a STAR school 3 times. (School years 11-12, 17-18, 22-23). Our staff is not transient. We stay until retirement. The majority of the staff has been there for an average of 20 years or more.

Thank you for your time and considerartion.

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#19

Sara McKosky

Parent

My name is Sara McKosky. I am the mother of a rising 3rd grader at Pittsburgh Dilworth. We live outside the neighborhood in which Dilworth would become a neighborhood school. If the proposed plan is accepted my son will no longer be able to attend the school he loves.

I am respectfully requesting a reconsideration of ending the elementary magnet programs, or, if the ending of the program is imminent, that currently enrolled students are allowed to remain at their school through the 5th grade as promised when accepted to the program.

Dilworth is a magical school. I applied for the program for my son, not because I did not want him to go to his neighborhood feeder school, but because it seemed to be the school that would provide him with the best opportunities. I was right. Dilworth has given my son everything I could hope for and more -- a wonderful academic foundation, a diverse, accepting environment, musical and humanitarian enrichment, and most of all a loving second home. Dilworth has given him so much confidence and allowed him to be his best self. It's part of his identity as an 8 year-old. PPS has developed an amazing school in Dilworth and I believe the district knows this. The students, classrooms and teachers of Dilworth are the first images you see on the PPS website. Our school represents what the district strives for in each of their schools. In fact, a photo of my son's face taken at Dilworth is a PPS print ad that promises to prepare students for future successes.

But the proposed plan will affect so many more students than my son; hundreds, thousands. I absolutely believe in equity in education and I understand that magnet programs have potentially created inequalities among schools in the district. I support reform of the program if this is the case, however the abrupt ending of the program and displacement of hundreds of students from the school they have known for years, will absolutely have negative effects on them.

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If the program must end, at the very least please allow the magnet students being displaced to complete their elementary education at their current schools so they can maintain some stability. I am sure I speak for every parent who has anticipated that their child would complete their elementary education at the magnet their child was accepted to. (Three years ago when my son was accepted to Dilworth there was absolutely no talk of the potential for this program to end - perhaps we would have chosen a different path.) My son has already talked about the programs he wants to be involved in and the teachers he hopes he gets as a 3rd, 4th and 5th grader. We all know stability and consistency for young children, especially in education, is one of the biggest keys to success.

I truly feel for every student (and parent) whose school will be closed or changed due to the proposed Facilities Utilization Plan, and I also understand the need for the district to make necessary changes. I hope the board will consider making changes to minimize the impact of this abrupt plan.

I know this is not all about my son, or his friends, or the students at Dilworth, but I must speak out about what I believe is best for them all. In the middle of their primary education, these students will lose everything they have built or the past several years -- the building they call home, the teachers and staff they have

come to know and trust, the academic and artistic enrichment programs they love and their very best friends they are excited to see every day.

Many of them may adjust just fine to their new schools (which I believe are excellent schools), and some may not. But every student will experience a profound, preventable loss at a time we should be providing them consistency and stability.

Reform may be needed and the magnet program may be flawed, but please do not let our children bear the full brunt of the consequences of the needed change.

Thank you for listening/reading.

Sincerely,

Sara McKosky



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#20

Allie Petonic

Community Member



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#21

Rachel Schlosser

Parent



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#22

Shannon Striner

Parent



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#23

Sarah Zangle

Parent

#24

Stephanie Cipollone

Community Member, Sister of Student, Previous Student

“I come to you from Overbrook, but the school I’m fighting for stands a mile up the hill in Brookline—and it has carried the hearts of Overbrook, Carrick, and Brookline for nearly twenty-five years.

Of all the schools I’ve ever attended—including high school and Duquesne University—South Brook was the first and only place where I truly felt safe, where I felt like I mattered.

It was the first place where I believed I belonged.

It wasn’t just about academics. At South Brook, I wasn’t invisible.

- I was encouraged to speak up.
- I was supported when I doubted myself.
- and I was accepted for who I was.

Those hallways are more than drywall and lockers. They are a shelter in the storm of adolescence—a place where teachers stay long enough to watch a shy sixth-grader walk back in as a confident adult and say, “*You changed my life.*”

South Brook isn’t just a middle school. It’s a home base. A foundation. A lifeline.

And now we’re told it should be closed—to “save money.”

But what’s the real cost of breaking a community’s heart?

You don’t just remove a building—you rip out the center of connection, safety, and identity. A spreadsheet can’t calculate what it means when a kid no longer feels like they have a place that belongs to them.

And make no mistake—South Brook is a true neighborhood school.

When you close it, the damage doesn’t stop at the classroom door:

- Home values drop.
- Local businesses lose customers.
- Families leave.
- And what once held us together begins to quietly fall apart.

It creates a chain reaction of loss.

If the district is in financial distress, then let's find *real* solutions:

- Fundraisers, partnerships, grants, alumni outreach.
- Reevaluate district spending before gutting community roots.
- Support our schools instead of shutting them down.

-You cannot raise a child in a broken community and expect them to thrive.

So I ask you—are we helping children thrive when we close their school and scatter their community? Or are we sending a message that they don't matter?

Because you cannot build a thriving city by taking from its children.

We don't need less—we need more. More support. More investment. you can't build a stronger Pittsburgh by taking from the very children who *are* Pittsburgh's future.

I'm asking you—don't balance this budget on the backs of thirteen-year-olds.

Don't close a school that has protected, guided, and inspired generations of students.

I am asking—on behalf of students, families, teachers, and an entire community:

Do not close the doors on South Brook.

Do not close the doors on us.

Thank you."



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#25

Bryan Rooths

Parent, Organization, Community Member



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#26

TruLe'sia Newberry

Organization



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#27

Martha Riecks

Parent



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#28

Brandi McNeill

Student, Parent, Organization, Community Member, Other: Protected Citizen

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6/23/25

Brandi McNeill

Re: STOP! The deportation of PPS (pgh public students) from their magnet programs.

We the people do not consent to that which has been offered by Dr. Wayne Walters and his colleagues.

We the people do not consent to the deportation and segregation of the proposed ideologies.

We have watched over the generations as many schools in communities of improvised citizens have been stripped away and promises broken by the same corporations held with the task of persevering high quality education for our families.

We have watched our schools confiscated and closed at an alarming rate over the years. Schools like Belmar, Gladstone, Rezenstein, Baxter, and the like. Programs like teaching Latin also used in law and the understanding of it, business classes that would work hand in hand with job opportunities, clerical classes, African American history, among other incredibly beneficial courses used to be taught at Westinghouse when my mother went to school. Their were even more when her elder brother attended.

Our options are being eliminated, erased. Our footprints are what makes us a stronger and better performing community, city, town, state, country. You are only as strong as your weakest link. To weaken us further will have a direct correlation of how poorly your environment will operate as a result. You might even wake up to the realization that capitalist have high jacked morale. Though what's done in the dark will always come to the light. The dilemma we are currently facing will ultimately have negative effects on everyone. So I encourage EVERYONE to look around and try to image how beautiful and encouraging our neighborhoods were when we were at our peek and our needs were being met not further exacerbated. Our neighborhoods have taken an alarming hit with each closing of a school, with each swipe away of money.

We are constantly targeted and at constant war with the very people who are placed with the responsibility to provide us with the best but, our rights are being constantly attacked. We have a right to our education and the many programs that benefits us and our communities. The plan to dismember us will knowingly and understandably result in more educational death & deficit. Why allowing some schools in more well off zip codes keep their magnet status while the rest of us hard working Americans fuel your business and these communities and receive even less

than what we had before under the guise of better education. This is an on going issue. My family, friends and I are a product of the magnet program and the Pittsburgh Promise. I have been made better through this route than if I had to settle on my homeschool. My homeschool did not have the means and the structure needed for a student like me to thrive mentality, physically and spiritually. Due to the stripping of their programs and good teachers over the years. We are born free and we will stay free. Free to choose our own paths for us and our children. We do not consent to closing the door that our ancestors worked so hard to obtain.

Education isn't getting better because greed & trickery exist in the same body as the people who truly put education first. Teachers spend their personal finances on our children because there are people who steal it from us and lie to us. Everything in this present day economy has been about raising profits at the expense of our health & education. Corruption is everywhere and until everyone is on the same page about putting our students, children & communities first the world you live in will not get better for ANYONE rich or poor, young or old, corporation or people.

We do not consent to your offer.

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#29

Shirley Ann 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 toxic principals like her. In December 2023, Ms. Stephanie Lapine was removed from her classroom by Kellie Meyer. After **many attempts** by parents/guardians, Kellie Meyer did not offer an explanation for Ms. Stephanie Lapine's removal. Ms. Stephanie Lapine was cleared in February 2024 but was "conveniently transferred" to another school that does not have a Montessori program. Why was Ms. Stephanie Lapine not reinstated at Montessori where she belongs? **Get it right for the 2025-2026 school year!!** Why is Kellie Meyer not being held accountable for her **unfair treatment** of Ms. Stephanie Lapine (the only lead black teacher)? Some Montessori teachers have filed grievances and still nothing has been done. Toxic principals like Kellie Meyer put fear in teachers who speak up by sabotaging their teacher evaluations. **Pretending** there are no problems at Montessori definitely creates an unsettling work environment. Teachers should not have to adapt to this leadership style to keep their jobs. Some principals are good for "conveniently cutting" positions when you speak up. I question how students are first when toxic principals are not held accountable.

Carrick High School has a **very small percentage of Black teachers**. "Recent studies have demonstrated that **Black** students who are exposed to Black teachers have a much greater chance of academic success." (Connect Magazine, September 27, 2024) **BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!** I hope with the incoming new principal there will be changes at Carrick.

What is the rationale behind virtual public hearing speakers going after in person speakers? Please return to the **original format** where it did not make a difference which option you selected to speak at the public hearing.



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#30

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent



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#31

Rebecca Maclean

Parent



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#32

Litzy Reconco

Organization



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#33

Lovisa Niklasson

Student



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#34

Andy Kubis

Parent



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#35

Becky Mingo

Community Member



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#36

Gloria Badmos

Organization

#37

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Other Substitute Teacher

** All credit and thanks to Dr. Barbara Sizemore, the Equity Advisory Panel members, the editors of and contributors to “Black Freedom Struggle in Urban Appalachia,” and all the folks on the ground day in and day out for their steadfast work, analysis, and documentation on behalf of

Black students, families, and communities in Pittsburgh

On equity, specifically policies 802 and 802.1 as examples:

The authors of “Fix Injustice, Not Kids” define inequity this way:

Inequity is the unfair or unjust distributions of material and nonmaterial access and opportunity resulting in outcome disparities and experience disparities that are predictable by race, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, immigrant status, home language, and (dis)ability, among other identifiers.

They further define the unjust distribution of access and opportunity as:

situations in which students or families are denied the kinds or levels of educational access and opportunity enjoyed by other students or families (this often occurs because our institutional policies, practices, or culture protects the interests of more privileged students or families at the expense of other students or families.

The Board’s new policy 802.1 is written to allow inequity to continue to fester and grow in our district.

I’ll start by thanking Director Silk for at least following up publicly about this issue. I am grateful to them for even bothering.

The opinion of the District’s legal team is, “The District cannot control the amount of funds that are donated or sponsored and where they go.”

¹ This is, of course, a patently absurd abdication of responsibility since the District is the only one who can control where any funds to be

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potentially donated can or should go. Of course, the entity doing the donation can ultimately choose whether to donate the funds, but the District absolutely has the right and the ability to

1 Board legislative meeting, 5.28.2025, starting at 17:10

ask that funds be directed where they are needed if there are equity issues regarding distribution. And Board policy 802 explicitly gives the Board the authority over such gifts (i.e. sponsorships).

Policy 802 states:

The Board has the authority to and shall consider whether to accept gifts, grants and donations made to the School District or to any school in the School District.[1]

The Board reserves the right to refuse to accept any gift, grant or donation that does not contribute toward the achievement of the goals of the School District or when such ownership would adversely affect the District.

It was also mentioned in the same legislative meeting that if the board wants to add equity language, we would have to draft that policy language and consider similar policies such as 802. YES! This is exactly what you should do. Policies should be reviewed and revised AND new policies should be drafted and passed (or not) with equity at the forefront of said policies. It is quite literally in the Board's own adopted policy that this is your, and the administration's, responsibility specifically when it comes to policy. And though the equity audit was limited in its scope, it also called on the Board to create, review, and adopt policies with equity explicitly as the goal. Additionally, the On Track to Equity Report explicitly refers to Board policy 102.5. Both the Report and policy 102.5 exist as part of the still ongoing (19 year old) MOU in place to ensure equity and excellence in education for Black students in the city of Pittsburgh. And it's been 33 YEARS if you count the 14 years that the district fought the claim before it even agreed to pretend to do something about equity and excellence for Black students in this district. Below please find the exact language from the On Track to Equity Report and Board policy 102.5, so we can all be clear on responsibility and expectation.

From the On Track to Equity Report:

“In the MOU, Board Support refers to the involvement of the Pittsburgh Public Schools

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Board of Directors. The Board's Key Performance Indicators align with the measures identified in the MOU. On October 24, 2018, under the leadership of then Board President, Dr. Regina B. Holley, the Board adopted the new comprehensive Policy 102.5 Equity and Excellence in Education which states:

PURPOSE

The Board of Education of the School District of Pittsburgh is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools and to achieving our mission of ensuring that all students graduate ready for college, career and life. The concept of educational equity goes beyond formal equality—where all students are treated the same—to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class or other personal characteristics such as creed, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, economic status, gender (including gender identity or expression), sexual orientation, pregnancy status, marital status, physical appearance, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability, have the opportunity to benefit equally.

The responsibility for student success is broadly shared by the Board of Directors, District staff, administrators, instructors, communities and families.

AUTHORITY

It is the right of every student to have an equitable educational experience within the School District of Pittsburgh. This policy will ensure that, in accordance with District policy, state, and federal laws, the District is focused on closing the opportunity gap by providing historically underserved students with equitable access to programming and support resources and eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce individual and institutional bias and create disparate outcomes.

TLDR: It's not your (our) fault, but it is your (our) responsibility.

The cavalry is not coming from someplace else.

It has to be us.

It has to be you.”

– Andre Henry l

You’ll notice in the above policies that there is no exception for when it would be easier and more agreeable to the powerful not to disrupt the aggregation of privilege and resources. There simply is no way to restructure systems of advantage and disadvantage without making some of the people accustomed to advantage panicky and turning off people who are invested in the status quo.

I assume that you all mean what you say, so I am imploring you to realize that there is more to creating equity than talking about it and hoping someone else will do it or that it will magically happen – I think our embarrassingly long MOU is evidence enough that there is no magic that is going to save us, no amount of goodwill, or wishing, or hoping the administration will write an equitable AR will create equity in our school district. Are we clinging to magical thinking that somehow equity will materialize without anything fundamentally changing? If so, who does that protect? We must reimagine every policy, practice, and bit of institutional culture with a commitment to equity and justice.

A board member said, “I certainly think that equity is important...” Thinking equity is important and making choices to create equitable systems, policies and practices are two totally different things, and this board seems to be only able (willing?) to do the former (think/ talk) and more or less unable (unwilling?) to do the latter (the actual work of equity). This district keeps snubbing its nose at real equity work while it talks about change and wonders why everything stays the same – why we keep failing the same kids. The community has been demanding action to match proclamations of equity for decades, and it is time to meet those demands. Advantages are often subtle and can be found buried in unquestioned practices, traditions, or old policies. What are we doing to transform policies, practices, and institutional cultures, and ideologies that uphold systems of advantage and disadvantage, like allowing resources to accrue to the already most privileged? “... any significant improvement in reducing disparities requires advocacy, leadership, governance, funding, and innovation focused on the systematic transformation of an archaic system.”

2

Equity isn't fluff.

It's not a luxury.

It's a requirement for learning.

2 From Slow Walking in Circles, EAP 2020 report

Who makes the rules of the game? Who are the winners and who are the losers? What story do the winners create to cover their tracks? In this school district, Board and Administration, YOU MAKE THE RULES. And the story you are telling is that you can't control the distribution of resources in your own district.. I call shenanigans. You are the only ones who CAN.

“We are a district that wants things to be better,
but for nothing to change.”

– Monic Behnken

On being radical and making hard choices, specifically the Student Code of Conduct &

Facilities Utilization:

TPOASIWID, or THE PURPOSE OF A SYSTEM IS WHAT IT DOES. Since we keep insisting on closing true public schools and using punitive, exclusionary punishments as the only ways we can run our school district, then I have to conclude that it is the purpose of our system to erode true public education and create disparities in educational outcomes to maintain the hierarchy of people in our society that capitalism requires to function. This IS the logical conclusion. Closing schools and suspending/expelling/citing/arresting students are neither radical nor “hard.” People might be upset by these choices but they are literally the easiest, least imaginative, least disruptive choices that a school district can make. They are the definition of status quo since we have been trying all of it for decades and decades and it has never worked yet.

When it comes to the Student Code of Conduct, I am tired of hearing people say we need to have the option to suspend kids so we can “take misbehavior seriously.” Suspending kids is not taking misbehavior seriously. Period. It teaches nothing and changes nothing. Here's the thing about “chronically misbehaving students,” no one is saying let them disrupt, let them cuss out teachers, let them fight and bully, let them get away with it. We are saying let's solve the

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problems that cause this behavior rather than just punishing kids and hoping for the best (spoiler alert: isolation, shame, and disconnection DO NOT create better behavior). Director Walker asked in the May 2025 policy workshop, what do we do to protect the education of all of our students? We know what the answer is – adults releasing our punitive mindsets and ideas about who deserves an education; restorative practices implemented with resources and fidelity; whole child, student-centered school cultures; just to name a few. We have to create school environments that our students value and care about and feel ownership and responsibility for, not parsing which “bad behaviors” and how many times warrant “being taken seriously.” Kids do well when they can. We need to abandon our deficit mindset and start to work with students to solve the problems that underlie chronic disruption and other unwanted behaviors. Our own solicitor who every year meets with advocates and professionals who have been doing work with youth in the legal system for decades said in the same policy workshop that these folks always have ideas for what we could do differently but that “they all require a lot of staff.” THAT is a choice about what we spend our resources and energy on, because punitive, exclusionary discipline takes a lot of people, time, and energy, too. That we keep coming back to the student code of conduct and saying if we can’t suspend then our discipline has “no bite” is a choice. Yes, we need to take misbehavior seriously. Suspensions isn’t taking it seriously. If it was gonna work, it would have worked by now.

When it comes to the status quo idea of closing schools there are a lot of big promises and aspirational talk in the updated feasibility report. How will the District meet these obligations? So often, these promises are put forward as a type of quid pro quo – you give us school closures and in return you’ll get x,y,z – but so often, only the school closures side of this equation is actually implemented. Please don’t repeat the past in Pittsburgh or the pattern from other school districts across the country.

To imagine that we are unconnected —
that you can protect the privilege
and comfort of you and yours at the expense of others —
is to brutalize ourselves.

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– Ross Gay

Please note: None of this is just me talking. Much of the language at the beginning of this public comment is taken from the book “Fix Injustice, Not Kids and Other Principles for Transformative Equity Leadership.” Resources are included below.

Resources

1. Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform, Dr. Barbara Sizemore
(Chicago: Third World Press, 2008)
2. “Slow Walking in Circles,” EAP report 2020 (I can’t find a copy of this online, but you can read excerpts in a chapter from Black Freedom Struggle, see below...)
3. Black Freedom Struggle in Urban Appalachia, eds. Bennett, J.Z. et al (Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 2025)
4. Fix Injustice, Not Kids and Other Principles for Transformative Equity Leadership, Gorski, Paul and Swalwell, Katie (ACSD, 2023)
5. “What We Get Wrong About Violent Crime: A Chicago criminologist challenges our assumptions about why most shootings happen—and what really makes a city safe.”
The New Yorker, June 2, 2025
6. “How Treating Teens Trauma is Stopping Violence in Chicago,” Tradeoffs podcast,
episode June 5, 2025



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#38

Sara DeLucia

Parent, Community Member



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#39

Michael Cummins

Parent



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#40

Billy Hileman

Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers



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#41

Mark Rauterkus

Parent, Community Member



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#42

Laura Mullen

Parent

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#43

Adam Rauf

Parent

To: Pittsburgh Public Schools

To whom it may concern:

My child was recently able to get into the Dilworth Traditional Academy after multiple applications to different schools. We specifically wanted to get our child, Linden, into Dilworth because of how great the school is, what we've heard from other parents, and how incredibly kind and inclusive it is. With this restructuring, we're seeing schools such as Montessori close down and get combined with other schools, and we've also been hearing that we may lose magnet schools altogether.

It's already hard enough to get our children into the schools, and then afterwards, having them yanked from the school where their friends and teachers are that we're all happy with. Please consider the children who specifically went for these magnet schools to get the education they were seeking, and don't close down schools and force kids to have to transition to brand new schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Adam Rauf



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#44

Kara Britanik

Parent



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#45

Lars Munson

Student



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#46

Holly Munson

Parent



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#47

James Fogarty

Parent, Organization A+ Schools

(Please see flyer)

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#48

Dan McKosky

Parent

To Whom It May Concern:

Our son has thrived at Pittsburgh Dilworth for three years and found a culture and artistic and academic community that perfectly aligns with his needs and our values as a multiracial family. We are not neighborhood residents, but the district allows for students whose academic, cultural, and demographic needs match certain schools the opportunity to apply and be accepted there. We do not approach our son's enrollment from a privileged position—but the same opportunity that every student in the district has had. Surprisingly to us, our son became the face of both Pittsburgh Dilworth and PPS through a series of advertisements that showcase “Small accomplishments today. Big successes tomorrow” through a candid photo at school. We couldn't agree more with this statement and the following paragraph that boasts “it's never too early to prepare students for future success” and that PPS helps “them build self-confidence, increase their academic skills, and develop appropriate social interactions.” It is because of the incredible opportunities we have been given, *which all students are given*, that we see that smiling, thriving face in these ads—a child who has found a second home.

As a teacher of secondary students myself, I understand the importance of culture, social acceptance, and stability in students' development. Nearly half the students will pay the price by being uprooted from their current schools if the Facilities Utilization Plan takes effect.

We wholeheartedly believe in equity and want the best for all students in the Pittsburgh Public School system; however, we do not believe allowing our child to attend a school outside his neighborhood, where his specific needs are being met and he is thriving, is a barrier to inequity in the district. Please consider the hundreds or thousands of children whose communities will be collapsed for this plan or at least please consider letting the students who entered their schools before this plan was proposed the ability to finish their education at their current school before moving on to their secondary schools.

I appreciate your time and any consideration you can give these words.

Sincerely,
Dan McKosky



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#49

Meredith Knight

Parent

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#50

Leah Cunningham

Family Member

PPS Board:

As you are now at the point of needing a final decision to be reached on the Pittsburgh Public downsizing and school closure plan following a less than stellar study and development of a plan, I find it unconscionable that you are considering an abrupt closure of the magnet schools. No one wants to have schools close, but I totally understand that closure and “right-sizing” the district is necessary given the decrease in enrollment. However, what purpose is served by abruptly closing the magnet programs? Why can’t these schools allow current students to progress for the next several years and phase out gradually???

My grandson lives in Squirrel Hill and just completed second grade at Dilworth. His parents thoughtfully sought admission to Dilworth because of its arts and humanities focus and for the opportunity for their child to attend a school where many of the children looked like him. When he was accepted they received a letter promising that their child would be permitted to complete all 5 years at Dilworth. My grandson absolutely loves this school, the opportunity to be part of the world drummers and learn to play other instruments, loves his classes and teachers and the support that they provide and loves his diverse group of classmates. The multiculturally diverse community at Dilworth is truly amazing.

What is the reasoning behind an abrupt closure....it makes no sense whatsoever. Closing an entire school and moving ALL students to another school allows these children to at least move as a cohort and have classmates that they know. Unless Dilworth and other magnet students live in the feeder zone for their magnet school, all other will be removed individually and placed in their neighborhood schools totally apart from many classmates. Why can’t this magnet closure be a gradual phase-out??

I believe in public school education and I also support public magnets. However the poor planning on the part of the PPS administration has been pretty pathetic. My grandson and his parents have committed to live in the city and attend public schools, but I fear that there will be another migration of people to the suburbs or to private schools if this plan becomes reality. And then what....close even more schools??



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I strongly urge you to vote NOT to abruptly close the magnet programs.

Respectfully,

Leah Cunningham



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#51

Justin Booker

Student, Parent, Community Member, Other: Protected Citizen



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#52

Mario Booker

Student, Parent, Community Member, Other: Protected Citizen

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Dear Dr. Walters and School Board Members,

My name is Mario Booker and I'm a proud graduate of Dilworth. That school shaped me in so many ways and it helped give me a love for learning. I'm writing to you today because I'm very concerned about the future of my younger siblings, who are still students at Dilworth.

They love their teachers, their friends, and the school community just like I did. But now, they're being told they may have to leave the school we've all come to call home. This kind of disruption is confusing, unfair, and unnecessary.

This plan is being described as a "feasibility plan," but I honestly don't understand who it's really feasible for. It doesn't help students like my siblings or families like mine—and it goes against the promises we were given when they were accepted into the magnet program.

Even if the district believes it's time to phase out magnet programs, rushing this process in a single year doesn't feel like a true phase-out. It feels like pulling the rug out from under kids who did nothing wrong and who only want to stay in the schools they love.

I urge you to let students who are already in the program, especially those in grades K-3, finish their time at Dilworth. They deserve the same stability and opportunity I was given. You helped set me up for success—I'm just asking that you do the same for them.

Thank you for your time and for listening to a former student who truly cares.

Sincerely,
Mario Booker
Dilworth Graduate & Concerned Sibling



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#53

Lindsey Lafferty

Parent

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Hello,

I am reaching out to you regarding the school boards decision to remove Pittsburgh magnet schools.

I am a parent of a Dilworth Traditional Academy second grader. We are not from Pittsburgh but I moved here five years ago to give my daughter more opportunity and a great education.

My daughter's father unexpectedly passed away two years ago. The last text message I have to her father is letting him know our daughter was accepted into the magnet program at Dilworth. We were both so happy she was going to experience the amazing education we saw at Dilworth from our extended research on a good school for her.

We also live in a not so great part of the city. When researching out "neighborhood school" all I see is low test scores, staffing issues, violence, etc. obviously, as a parent who cares deeply for my daughters wellbeing and education this is not a school I would ever want her to be. I would worry about her safety everyday.

Dilworth is a family. My daughter has made a ~~bestfriend~~ who lives the whole way in ~~Beechview~~. Closing this magnet school would also mean my daughter's friendships would have to end.

Are we really going to close the GOOD school programs PPS has? Are we going to punish the parents that truly care for our kids wellbeing and shove them with the kids who don't care with parents who don't care? It's a harsh thing to say but facts are fact. I see the news, I read the stories of these school you need to help.

It appears you are only caring for the schools that truly need help and you want to shut down the magnet program to hurt kids and parents who truly want good education for our kids.

I beg you to please think of these kids. These kids are going to be heartbroken if you make the decision to close the magnet school program.

It is the only good thing PPS has going. I can understand you have many schools that definitely need restructuring but the magnet schools do not.

I pay my taxes to the school our say should matter to you. These kids were promised this education. How can you sleep at night knowing you want to strip that away from them? Everything they know and love. You want to ruin education for the kids and parents that love where they are at.

I have done my research and I can't find a good reason for you to make this decision.

You have your work cut out for you with most other PPS. I would think you would want to put your efforts into making those schools mirror the magnet schools. Instead of making every school in the district a work in process

Best,

A very concerned PPS parent.

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54

Tamaira Binion

Parent

June 23, 2025

Subject: Urgent Appeal: Reconsideration of Magnet Program Closure and Impact on Current
Students

Dear Esteemed Members of the School Board,

I am writing to you today as a deeply concerned parent of a second-grade student at Dilworth Traditional Academy. I urge you to reconsider any decisions that would lead to the removal of the magnet program from our schools, or, at the very least, to guarantee that currently enrolled students are permitted to complete their programs as promised.

My husband attended Dilworth as a child. Now our son has been a cherished member of the Dilworth community since preschool and is now flourishing as he enters second grade. He is enrolled in the gifted and talented program and demonstrates a profound love for subjects like math, music, and art.

Dilworth is more than just a school for him; it is his second home, a comfort zone, and a nurturing environment where my husband and I have witnessed him truly blossom academically and socially. He has built strong friendships, including with a best friend who lives across the city, highlighting the diverse and enriching community Dilworth fosters.

The prospect of forcing current students to transition into new schools within their current neighborhoods is deeply distressing. Our designated neighborhood school, unfortunately, presents significant concerns, including documented low test scores, persistent staffing issues, and incidents of violence. As a parent who prioritizes my child's well-being and education, this environment is unacceptable, and I would be constantly worried about his safety and academic future.

Dismantling successful programs like the Dilworth magnet program would be a profound disservice to the students and families who have invested their trust and their future in these proven educational pathways. These programs represent a significant asset to Pittsburgh Public Schools, demonstrating what is achievable when focused resources and dedicated communities align. We pay our taxes with the expectation that our children will receive a high-quality education, and it feels unjust to strip away

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the educational promise made to these students and their families.

I implore you to consider the immense emotional and academic disruption this decision would impose on these children. Instead of dismantling what is clearly working, I urge the Board to focus its considerable efforts on elevating all PPS schools to mirror the successes found within programs like Dilworth. Our goal should be to expand access to quality education, not diminish existing excellence.

Thank you for your time and serious consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A Very Concerned PPS Parent

Tamaira Binion



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#55

Angel Gober

Organization, 412 Justice



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#56

Margo Hinton

Community Member



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#57

Aya Eliza-Christie

Parent

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#58

Erika Gidley

Parent, Community Member

Dear Dr. Walters and the PPS Board of Directors,

My name is Erika Gidley, a parent and community member at Arsenal K-5. Currently, I have many questions I hope will be publicly addressed before the Board begins the facilities utilization plan process.

In the May unaudited Financial Statement, it is mentioned that Charter School costs continue to increase, and there has already been a 3.74% increase in Charter School funding in 2025. How much will this rise with the consolidation of schools in the Fall of 2026?

If the facilities utilization plan moves forward as written, four elementary schools will either move or close buildings in the east end, and the Student Achievement Center will close.

1. Have considerations been made for these increases in the Facilities Utilization Plan?
2. If the Student Achievement Center closes, and those students move to their feeder schools, are appropriate accommodations being made for these students? Student-to-teacher ratios need to be smaller, and instruction specialized- does this factor into the calculations used to determine how “utilized” a building is?
 - a. I know music/labs/art rooms are factored differently, I’m wondering if specialized instruction rooms for students with IEPs, GIEPs, etc are calculated differently as well.
3. The same question above, but regarding the closing of Greenway’s programming and moving it into the schools.

I live in Lawrenceville, and families zoned for Arsenal PreK-5 in central Lawrenceville overwhelmingly chose other schooling for their children outside of PPS. Even though achievement levels for their children will likely be similar at PPS than they are elsewhere.

1. What accommodations will be made at Sunnyside (if Arsenal & Woolslair close) for gifted students that might lower the % numbers for utilization?
2. What accommodations will be made for struggling students who need extra help outside of a 25:1 student-to-teacher classroom?
3. How will the district actively recruit families within Sunnyside’s sending district to increase capture rates?
4. Will Sunnyside retain Arsenal PreK-5’s community school model?

Last spring, estimated Facilities Utilization numbers for Arsenal IB 6-8 were still in the 25% range AFTER consolidations. The Arsenal facility is huge and should be treated as a pillar of the community. As a resident, I do not want to see this school close in 5-10 years because you cannot meet capacity for the middle school.

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1. Is there a way to better utilize this building?
2. Can an elementary school and PreK stay in this building?
3. Is there a way to keep it open so that we don't lose more families to charter schools?

Circling back to Charter Schools, there are three charters up for renewal on Wednesday. What are these schools providing that PPS cannot? Some charters should exist in tandem with PPS, they're useful in filling gaps that cannot be met with such a diverse student population.

1. However, are we pushing more and more students into these gaps while PPS keeps shrinking?
2. How will the current Facilities Utilization Plan factor into larger charter school enrollments and take even more from the district?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Erika Gidley
erika.gidley@gmail.com

#59

Lauren Stuparitz

Teacher/Staff, Parent, Organization, Community Member, Other Parent of two in PPS. 412 Justice member. Substitute Day to Day in PPS

I'm the parent cochair of the LICC (advisory council for Early Intervention) and also for the LTF (task force for PPS intermediate unit on the Right to Public Education, for students under IDEA with IEP/504), as well as I am on the Early Childhood Policy Council. My children are young and just starting their journeys in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. After touring our neighborhood school, Westwood, and ATA Allegheny k-5 magnet, I went on to enroll my rising kindergartener in the Magnet because of the positive and engaging school culture and joy that seems to live their in the students and staff. I made this choice even though I know the plan is to phase out the way this school, ATA, currently exists. I have to say it feels very sad because of the joy that each person there exudes and the confidence and pride they have in their school culture, building, and programming. I wish this sense of belonging, family engagement, and educational joy to each of the students in PPS. I'd like to raise my concerns and look forward to learning from the board and district's response.

One of my biggest concerns with the proposed changes is that we'll end up with larger than life megaschools rather than neighborhood schools with developmentally appropriate class sizes.

Consider the positive outcomes linked to smaller classrooms in elementary schools:

Academic Achievement

Enhanced Participation

Improved Classroom Management

Stronger Teacher-Student Relationships

Better Assessment and Feedback

Social and Emotional Development

The benefits tend to be most pronounced for younger students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, making small class sizes particularly valuable in elementary education.

Protect our school libraries and librarians! Staffed library in every building! A safe space for reading and our kids to be themselves. For instance, in Philadelphia public schools there is a dearth of librarians and functioning libraries for the students. This was a supposed cost cutting but short sighted move and now students have taken advocacy into their own hands to fight for restored school library services! Their story is powerful and I will attach a document about their work so far.

Having dedicated librarians in elementary schools provides crucial educational and developmental benefits that extend far beyond simply checking out books:

Information Literacy Skills

Reading Promotion and Literacy Development**Curriculum Support and Collaboration****Technology Integration****Individualized Student Support****Intellectual Freedom and Diverse Perspectives****Safe Learning Environment****Professional Expertise**

Elementary librarians lay the groundwork for students to become independent learners and critical thinkers, skills that benefit them throughout their educational careers and beyond. My transition to kindergarten aged son told me he wants to be a librarian when he grows up. In the age of defending our kids' rights to read, think, and learn freely, please protect our school libraries for our kids.

Another concern, and suggestion, is the current location of the EHS classrooms. The plans so far have not been clear, to me, what our district has envisioned for our Early Childhood families and students.

For example, when renovating a school like King on the Northside, or Langley on the west, can we please add an appropriately outfitted Early Head Start room? Think of the benefits of being able to have your youngest children learn and grow at EHS in their own neighborhoods. It will build continuity with the rest of the prek and school age levels of the district, and will build parent and child confidence in the district. Public school districts should prioritize developmentally appropriate early childhood education as a strategic investment that yields profound returns for children, families, and communities:

Brain Development Foundation**Academic Achievement Gains****Cost-Effective Investment****Social-Emotional Development****Family Engagement and Support****Teacher Expertise and Continuity****Equity and Access****Community Economic Development****Prevention Rather Than Remediation****Long-Term Graduation and Career Success**

The question isn't whether districts can afford to offer developmentally appropriate early childhood education—it's whether they can afford not to. The evidence overwhelmingly shows that this

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investment pays dividends for decades, creating stronger students, stronger families, and stronger neighborhoods and communities.

Lastly I want to speak out for children like mine who have been through and are currently in Early Childhood receiving Early Intervention services. I'm sure the district is planning to keep up these services across PPS facilities and programs as the FUP phases take place, but I would love to hear more about how PPS plans to nurture the academic, social, and future ready potential in each of our IEP and 504 students. These children deserve, can bring, and receive, a lot of joy through their days interacting with others in inclusive education environments. Supporting early intervention in early childhood programs within public school districts creates a comprehensive system that identifies and addresses developmental needs at the most critical time for maximum impact:

Legal and Ethical Responsibility (IDEA legislation)

Critical Developmental Window

Seamless Transition and Continuity

Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Approach SLP, OT, PT, vision, hearing, behavioral, assistive tech, and more supports

Family-Centered Support

Early Identification and Prevention

Cost-Effectiveness and Resource Efficiency

Inclusive Service Delivery

Professional Expertise and Standards

Data-Driven Decision Making

Long-Term Educational Planning

Community Integration

Preparation for Academic Success

Reduced Long-Term Costs

Research-Based Outcomes

Public school districts that invest in comprehensive early intervention programs are making a strategic investment in their students' futures while fulfilling their moral and legal obligations to serve all children in their communities. The evidence is clear: early intervention works, and public schools are uniquely positioned to provide these essential services effectively and efficiently.

We need to offer world class education to our kids, and that includes their whole selves, not just academic pursuits. We can offer mind body learning and joyful social and outdoors time by protecting their right to play at recess. Recess is not a luxury or optional activity—it's an essential component of

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effective education that supports children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development in ways that cannot be replicated in the classroom:

Physical Health and Development

Cognitive Benefits and Academic Performance

Attention and Behavior Regulation

Social Skills Development

Emotional Regulation and Mental Health

Creativity and Problem-Solving

Brain Development and Executive Function

Equity and Access

Developmental Appropriateness

Teacher Benefits

Long-Term Health Habits

Stress Reduction for the Whole School

Research-Based Evidence

Balance and Well-Being

The pressure to eliminate recess in favor of more academic time is counterproductive and harmful to children's development. Quality recess time is not time taken away from learning—it's an investment in more effective learning. Schools that protect and prioritize recess are investing in their students' immediate well-being and long-term success.

Thank you for hearing my concerns and feedback. I look forward to learning more about this plan and the elements I've just raised and how they fit into it.

please see attached resources on protecting and restoring well-resourced urban public school libraries

- **"School librarians and libraries help students gain reading proficiency.** Students in schools with full-time school librarians score significantly higher on reading tests than students whose schools do not have librarians. And, there is a long-term impact to reading scores when students who have access to a library with a librarian from elementary through high school. Librarians help students not only to read, but to read to learn. Librarians promote the habit of reading, enhancing students' skills in deep reading, comprehension, and interpretation.

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- **School librarians are teachers.** School librarians must be credentialed teachers in PA. Endorsed by the PA Department of Education, their instruction includes critical thinking, research, information/media literacy, and digital citizenship skills.
- **School libraries support marginalized students.** In a PA study, Black students and Latinx students were found to have on average better academic gains than all students combined in schools with librarians.
- **School libraries even improve writing skills.** According to the same study, while libraries improve all students' writing scores, Black and Latinx students more than doubled their percentages of Advanced writing test scores and cut their Below Basic writing scores in half.
- **Well-resourced libraries make a difference.** Students in schools with more library staff, larger library collections, and greater access to school libraries increase literacy, student achievement, graduation rates, and college and career readiness.
- **Adding school librarians is possible!** Realizing that access to school libraries is an equity issue, several large, urban districts are reinstating school librarians and libraries, including Boston, Chicago, D.C., Los Angeles, NYC, and San Francisco. They know the difference librarians can make in student learning. Philly students deserve this too!

Of course, funding is needed to restore school libraries and add professional staff. Our work as advocates for libraries and certified teacher librarians in all schools is to make sure that the state, city, and/or the SDP specifically allocate some of this money for restoration of school librarians and libraries!

School librarians and libraries can help close the literacy gap and provide safe spaces for students before, during, and after school. SDP students deserve to have functioning school libraries and certified school librarians like most other schools provide."

https://www.restorephillylibrarians.org/annual_report_2024

<https://www.inquirer.com/education/philadelphia-school-library-kensington-health-sciences-academy-20250112.html>



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Eric Mitzel

Parent



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#61

Meredith Knight

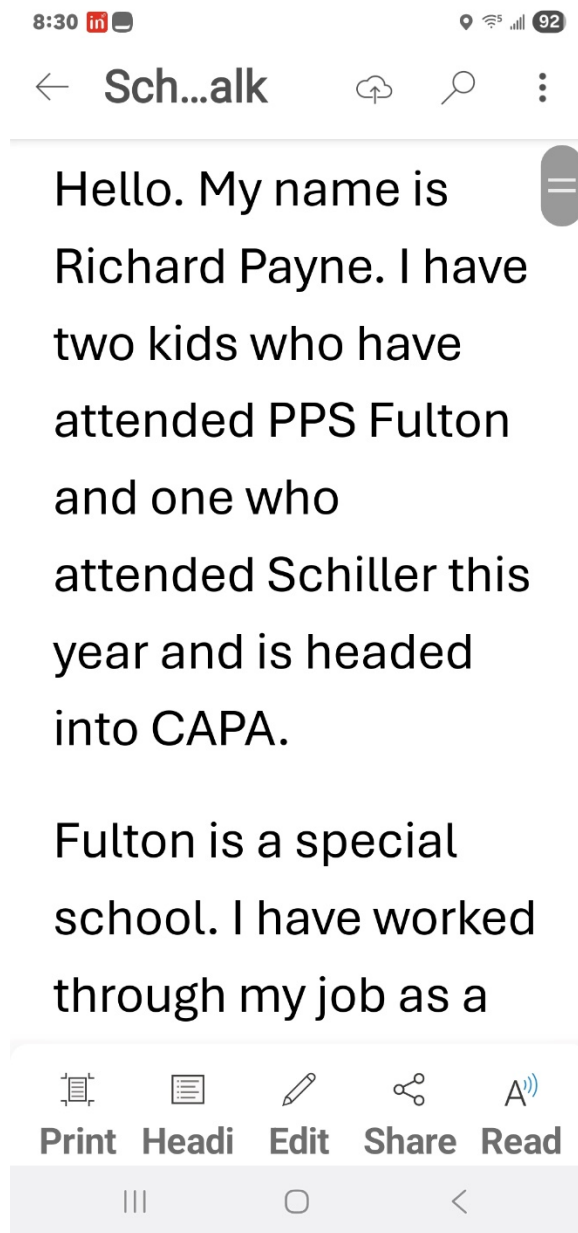
Parent

(SIGNED UP TWICE, SKIP SECOND TURN)

#62

Richard Payne

Parent





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#63

Elizabeth Cummins

Parent



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#64

Trey Cummins

Student



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