



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies  
July 21, 2025

#1

Toni Allen

Teacher/Staff



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#2

Roman Reinheimer

Student



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#3

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent, Community Member



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#4

Jazlynn Worthy

Student

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#5

Donnese Tyler

Teacher/Staff/Parent

PUBLIC HEARING 7-21-25

How dare you not give parents a choice as to where we want to send our children?

I'm sure you had a choice as to where to send your children to school.

Is it a good idea to get rid of magnets at the elementary and middle school level AND redo attendance zones? You want us to believe that closing magnet schools is a good thing because it promotes equity. Think about this! You are pulling some of the students from the top performing schools in the district to now attend some of the lower/lowest performing schools in the district because of these changes. Are we to believe that once these changes occur, our children will magically receive the same quality and equitable education on day one? If it is going to be equity across all schools, then why get rid of the magnet programs AND redraw the feeder pattern? Why not see what's making some schools more successful than others and replicate what's being done at the successful schools in order to make other schools just as successful? Instead, it seems you are dismantling the successful schools because other schools aren't as successful. All schools are going to be equal right? So, it shouldn't matter if students attend their home school or magnet, because according to your plan they will all receive the same quality education. I know! It sounds good!

Are we supposed to wait years until that happens, while our children's education suffers in the meantime? Do you honestly think our schools will not be in disarray at the start of the 2026-27 school year with ALL but three schools/programs undergoing some type of change in Phase 1? Class sizes will be larger and stressed teachers due to having more responsibilities in our new classrooms in new buildings while making sure we meet the needs of all students including those with IEPs, GIEPs and everything in between. Do you want us to believe teachers are going to be able to consistently give the students the same enriched and high-quality lessons they received at the Gifted Center while teaching all other levels of academic instruction in one classroom setting? Because according to most of you, closing the Gifted Center where students receive those additional enrichment lessons is a good idea.

Now on to the Student Achievement Center! You are closing the district's only credit recovery school. Are we just hoping students are successful by attempting to only make up two credits per year or do we not care if they are successful or not? There is no way you should take this opportunity away from

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the students who need it the most. We owe it to them to keep their chances of graduating well within reach.

This plan is impractical, unrealistic, rushed, and to the detriment of our children's education. I hope you are able to live with your decisions that will cause PPS to lose students and families which in turn will also cause teachers, custodians, nurses, social workers, counselors, paraprofessionals, secretarial staff, SDSSs, cafeteria workers, school security, school police, and administrators their jobs while those who don't work inside the schools jobs probably won't be affected at all.

Remember this! We, as parents, will not continue to let you play Russian roulette with our children's education.

If you don't give us a choice, we will go elsewhere to be given a choice because as I stated in my earlier testimony, we all know nothing we say is going to change your decision. Your minds are made up. That was evident in the voting. I'm done wasting my time!

Thank you,

Donnese Tyler  
PPS Parent/Teacher



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#6

Shirley Ann Hill

Retired PPS Teacher



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#7

Tiarra Hardy

Parent

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#8

Anne Farris

Parent

General Public Hearing

Hi. I am Anne Farris, a PPS parent living on the North Side.

Director Walker, you spoke in a facebook live interview with a Black Women for Better Education moderator, that “There are folks out there that have opposed us the whole way and they will say and do anything to get you to be outraged and upset with us.”

Yes, I am outraged. And I believe many of us share the same outrage at a system that has failed so many students, many of the reasons being beyond the district level and out of our control. I want to be as excited about this plan as you are, Director Walters. I want to believe in a reimagining of the district that will bring families to Pittsburgh and bring in investment into public education in our district, city, state, and country. But when we stand up here and ask questions and are only given “equity” as our answer and our job is to understand the “what” and leave the “how” up to the superintendent who has zero district reconfiguring experience, I am outraged with those who voted to move forward with the school closure process. I am outraged at being accused of spreading misinformation because I also am concerned about the future of Pittsburgh Public Schools.

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Director Walker, you spoke in a facebook live interview with a Nichole Sims from Black Women for Better Education, that “there are unfortunately folks that are trying to sew some distrust and chaos into this process by putting misinformation out there..”

No one needed to do anything to “sew” distrust. This plan was presented to a community with no trust in the district, a community that I, as a parent new to PPS at the time, heard in the refrain on every social post, every conversation that “they will do what they want.” Dr. Walters and you have continued to prove them right. This is what the community sees. Those people doing whatever they can are the people watching the board meetings, reading draft after draft of the facilities plans that Dr. Walters posts publicly, engaging with you all through emails, social media posts, and these testimonies. And it’s we who you label as “the loud few.” Which, as an introvert, I actually think is pretty cool. If, and again your words, “every voice matters, if everybody has to show up,” why do you say the people in this room are the ones “sewing distrust and chaos into this process.”

As I work on this testimony, I am stuck on this language from PPS that is on every communication regarding the now named "Future-Ready" Facilities Plan:

"Please Note: No changes are recommended for the 2025-2026 school year."

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#1 - the word "recommended": Families believe 25-26 is going to many magnet families believed their students would remain enrolled after the magnet program ends, because of their faith in PPS leadership and administration, but that was never presented publicly in writing and now the superintendent is clear that there is no planned phase out for any magnet program he is planning to end.

#2 - Recommended by who?

Words matter. PPS is spending over \$200K just for an agency to provide "on-call graphics" (see May legislative session agenda) and they continue to use this slippery language which makes it impossible for the families and caregivers who've enrolled their students to have any understanding of how the plan will affect them. I ask, WHY does a PUBLIC school district have operators behaving in this way, obscuring all details that have tremendous impact on our lives - where we live, work, etc.?

Even with a theoretically democratic board, this process is politicized. Where is this political pressure coming from, why is it so powerful that Board Directors are willing to move forward a plan that they have publicly said will not save money with no reason other than "equity" that has not been backed up by models for success, data, or measurable goals aside from saying this enables the district to have what is legally required anyway in every school.



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"Future-Ready" to me means get ready for Pittsburgh Public School to be reduced to an all-charter and voucher system of education. Does this improve student outcomes?



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#9

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Other Substitute Teacher

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#10

Kara Britanik

Parent

Hi. My name is Kara Britanik, and I'm the mom of a rising 1st grader at Pittsburgh Montessori. As in my previous testimonies, I am here to talk about the outdated and flawed data that you continue to use in your analyses, as you make important decisions about our school district. You continue to ask us to "reimagine the district", where every student has access to art, music, foreign language, a library, and other enriching programs. I can support you in that vision.

But what I'm asking of you, is to reimagine how the data is being collected, calculated and analyzed so that we can make that vision a reality.

In the May feasibility report presentation, I was happy to hear that the facilities team conducted walkthroughs of the buildings to collect updated data. I know the summarized data is available on the website, but why don't we have access to the detailed worksheets for each building?

For some reason, they are only available for schools on the North side. When I asked Dr. Walters and Mr. McNamara to make those detailed worksheets available to the community, I learned that walkthroughs were not conducted at the buildings slated for closure. This is deeply concerning, considering the previous walkthroughs were done over 9 years ago. These are important and impactful decisions that you are tasked with making. Don't you want the most updated and detailed data available to you, or is your mind already made up? Because that's the perception we have, and this is not how you try to regain our trust in the process.

Next, you define functional capacity as the total number of students a school can hold, based only on standard classrooms. This verbiage was taken directly from the district website. This is a definition that you've been using since 2008 - 17 years ago!

But let's dig into this further, because on the detailed worksheets from the facility walkthroughs that I could find, and the ones from 2016, you have also included the capacities of the small

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classrooms in your total capacity number. So what is the actual definition? Just standard classrooms, or any room that can hold people? This makes a huge difference!

On the topic of rooms, can we acknowledge that a school doesn't need to have specialized spaces, like an art room with a kiln, or a music room with built-in risers in order to have enriching art and music programs, especially at the elementary level? Schools just need a space, like a standard classroom, to house them. But if we're not setting aside those spaces when determining functional capacity, how can you be sure those programs can be offered?

Now is the time to reimagine how functional capacity is being calculated. Coupled with correcting the rounding errors that another community member brought to light at last month's hearing, these are the only way to ensure that all of the promises you're making to us about improved course offerings, and consistent access to programs across schools, can be actually be realized.



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#11

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent/ Community Member



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#12

Lily Allman

Student



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#13

Michael Cummins

Parent



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#14

Kari Thompson

Parent



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