



Pittsburgh Public Schools Woolslair PreK-5 Special Public Hearing Testimonies
July 30, 2025

#1

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Woolslair PreK-5 Special Public Hearing Testimonies
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#2

Mason Runion

Student



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#3

Aalyn Julia

Student



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#4

Jazlynn Worthy

Parent



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#5

Jaliyah Haden

Student



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#6

David Haden

Student



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#7

Elijah Mitchell

Student



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#8

Lars Munson

Student



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#9

Holly Munson

Parent



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#10

Sarah Zangle

Parent

#11

Molly Freedman Latinova

Parent, Community Member

Let's talk about Denver. Since 2014, many DPS schools have been closed due to dropping enrollment and poor performance. Outcomes of the closures were mixed. Some data show that overall, test scores and graduation rates improved. Ok, sounds good. ERS - the organization responsible for the Facilities Update RFP and submission, also did work in Denver. It makes sense that we would want to read into the positive data and reporting that Denver's restructuring has "worked" ... we are, after all, about to embark on something very similar. But as we are a data-driven district, we cannot then ignore evidence showing that the achievement gap there was not closed. Equity was not achieved. And now, a decade later, more schools 1 will be closing. In 2024, research showed school closings linked to drops in test scores and, 2 longer term, negative impacts in higher education attainment and even wages.³

As a parent, yes, I look at data; I read A+ Schools reports, and do research. But when it comes down to it, I have the luxury of making decisions based on instincts, or, as was the case in 2024 when my daughter applied to Schiller, based on her instincts. Math is her favorite subject, but she wanted arts programming. Science is thrilling, but she couldn't imagine going to a school that didn't have instruments, or chorus. STEAM felt right to her; STEM did not.

Your plan has created waves of uncertainty and will cause waves of change. Maybe good change, I don't know. What I DO know is that when my family are starting down uncertainty and change, we will grab whatever agency we can. I'm probably similar to many parents in that regard: when we see chaos, we will seek control. We will seek certainty. Something this plan cannot offer anytime soon.

So for my one student, I have the luxury of making a gut decision; you, as a Board and Institution ensuring the right to public education in this city, do not. You are obligated to consider comprehensive and accurate data. And since you are making decisions that impact 20,000 kids, and 6,000 teachers and staff, the data should be irrefutable. Is it?

I get that something needs to be done, but this plan feels drastic, hurried and rendered in broad strokes and snappy slogans. Drastic has been tried. It's painful and has uneven success. I think you should do something radical instead: Close this building. Sell this 4 building. Pitt just bought one down the street for \$34 million! It's 2025 and the future is Agile 5 and AI-driven, Go remote: decentralize the administration, embed in the schools to learn what each community really needs. Dismantling the models of excellence in this district will not somehow make other schools more

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excellent, but \$34million can buy you time; and time, close listening, and community-centered decisions could help you regain trust.

- 1) <https://www.axios.com/local/denver/2023/08/01/segregation-pervasive-denver-public-schools>
- 2) <https://denverite.com/2025/06/06/denver-public-schools-enrollment-drops/>
- 3) <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-harm-of-school-closures-can-last-a-lifetime-new-research-shows/2024/06>
- 4) <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/2/5/21106706/five-things-we-ve-learned-from-a-decade-of-research-on-school-closures/>
- 5) <https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/news/2024/04/04/pitt-paa-walnut-capital-oakland-landmark.html>



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#12

Justin Williams

Parent



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#13

BJ Samson

Community Member



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#14

Erin Child's

Parent



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#15

Meredith Bortz

Parent, Community Member

(Removed Testimony)



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#16

Lily Allman

Student



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#17

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent, Community Member



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#18

Annette Hall

Parent



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#19

Jesse Gordon

Parent



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#20

Kari Thompson

Parent



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#21

Amy Williams

Parent

#22

Kathleen Michelotti

Teacher/Staff

My name is Kathy Michelotti. I am a first-grade teacher at Woolslair. I am here to express my concerns about the lack of planning for the proposed school closures. I urge you to vote against closing Woolslair or any other school until a solid plan is in place.

It is disappointing, but not unexpected to see the lack of turnout to these meetings. Not having these meetings in the school that is proposed to close, having them during the summer when families are not as in touch with the district, says to me that this is just dotting the i's and crossing the t's so you can get these buildings closed. Let me point out my serious concerns about this plan.

How will all elementary schools have a foreign language teacher, or a STEAM teacher, or the opportunities that are now available through our magnet programs? How will this be accomplished? If it can't be accomplished, the students will be getting less and not more. Less choice and less opportunities. If there are not enough of these specialized teachers for all schools, will the administration just shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, we tried. Sorry." It leaves people feeling bamboozled.

The logistics of closing so many schools at one time will be chaotic. Packing and moving classrooms, reassigning staff, feeder patterns, transportation issues and more will be extremely problematic. I predict that the community will say, "Why can't PPS get things right. Why is what they do always such a hot mess? In fact, I'm already hearing that. Let's please work on building trust and confidence in our district. These things are overshadowing all of the good stuff about our schools.

If you're going to close schools, it should be phased in to allow for smoother transitions and ample support for our families and staff. For example, are there any plans to acclimate students to their new schools so it is not the "original kids vs. the new kids and new staff vs original staff? Having been through the closure of Madison Elementary during the "Right Sizing" plan in 2005, I can tell you that this does happen. It is very painful for staff and students. It felt kind of like a funeral. The grief of losing a community — a school family— is real.

I truly wish someone, anyone, would have talked to some teachers about this plan. Please don't close schools until there is a solid plan. I'm more than willing to help.



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#23

Michael Cummins

Parent



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#24

Trey Cummins

Student



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