

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#1

Anne Farris

Parent

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

I have been speaking to you at these Public Hearings since late fall of last year. In ways it feels like a long time to continue to ask that you focus on accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility when it comes to holding the superintendent accountable for his handling of the now-called Future-Ready Facilities Plan. However, it seems like a short time to see how much more limited your scope of governance has become while you work with the Council of Great City Schools under the Student Outcomes Focused Governance contract.

I can see why Dr. Walters asked for clarification on what community engagement means when the district continued to hold critical community engagement sessions over the summer after the community publicly asked for these meeting to take place in the fall and at schools, after Director Taliaferro repeated these concerns from her community, after Director Silk asked pointedly why these meetings were still scheduled during summer when the public clearly called for these meetings to happen during the school year.

And here we are after 12 community listening sessions, where 250 people showed up, seeing the nine of your vote on 3 goals the superintendent must meet in order to receive his 4% salary increase. 2 of which had already been met, which means there is actually a single updated goal in that list. These three goals are only tied to 3rd grade ELA test scores, 3rd grade Math test scores, and graduation rates. Where is the accountability for the superintendent to improve the quality of education and student outcomes for our students from 4th to 12th grade? Where are the guardrails to ensure our students are offered algebra, which was possibly the most mentioned concern during the ERS Facilities Utilization Plan Meeting? Where are the guardrails to ensure our students receive equitable access to robust arts, music, and library instruction and programming - something this group insists is a significant impetus behind the school closings and grade reconfigurations.

Many of us spoke out about our concerns that Student Outcomes Focused Governance is undemocratic, weakens the school board's authority to hold the superintendent accountable, and quiet our voices. You responded by discussing in meetings how you are NOT giving up your power to

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

hold Dr. Walters accountable. And then you cut 175 questions you responsibly brought to the table down to 8 with CGCS guidance. In less than two years you've dropped the superintendent's goals from 16 to 4. I am asking you to show us that you are not giving up the board's authority to hold the superintendent accountable to measurably improve the quality of the PPS experience for all students by voting no on agenda item 17.02



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#2

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Other Substitute Teacher



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#3

Pam Harbin

Community Member, Organization: Education Rights Network

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#4

Shirley Ann Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

PUBLIC HEARING – SHIRLEY ANN HILL

August 25, 2025

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. Ms. Stephanie Lapine was cleared in February 2024 but was “conveniently transferred” to another school that does not have a Montessori program. Why is Kellie Meyer not being held accountable for her unfair treatment of Ms. Stephanie Lapine (the only lead black teacher)?

Because you chose to completely ignore Kellie Meyer’s toxic behavior, Ms. Stephanie Lapine will be starting her own Montessori school. Once again, another awesome teacher leaves PPS because you continue to enable this type of toxic leadership which has been extended to the parents/guardians and staff. I question how students are first when you do not hold Kellie Meyer accountable for her actions.

I am appalled that the Student Achievement Center is on the chopping block. This school offers our kids so much that credit recovery can’t come close to it. It’s like comparing a Fred Flintstone car to a Mercedes. While at Carrick, I can say credit recovery was dismal. Students started dropping off even before the nice weather.

Carrick High School has a very small percentage of Black teachers. “Research has shown that Black teachers have a direct positive impact on Black and non-Black students.” (The Power of Black Teachers, Kaci Wright, February 26, 2025) BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!

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.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#5

Annie Pettway

Parent, Community Member

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#6

Kate O'Brien

Student

Dear Members of the School Board,

I am writing to express concerns regarding the safety and equity of students in our district, particularly undocumented students and their families. While many in our community are actively working to support immigrants during this difficult time, there is less acknowledgment of the risks undocumented families face when sending their children to school—especially with regard to transportation. Safe transportation to and from school is a critical issue that needs greater attention.

Public schools remain the safest educational option for undocumented families. Unlike private or many charter schools, public schools are required by law to protect all student records and identifying information. This framework provides an important safeguard for documented students, undocumented students and their families. However, improvements are still necessary, particularly in the areas of transportation, civics education, access to resources and ensuring that curricula reflect and represent the diversity of our student body.

I am deeply concerned that the proposed school closures, the board's decision to relinquish some oversight to the superintendent, and the ongoing PRT crisis will disproportionately impact marginalized students. The harm to some groups of students is visible and measurable, but undocumented students remain an "invisible" population. Because citizenship status is not required for enrollment in PPS, we cannot identify these students directly. That is why it is essential to proactively advocate for their safety and well-being—before problems arise.

It is important to remember that school governance is a shared responsibility. The community elects school board members and funds the superintendent's position; therefore, how schools operate should reflect our collective values. Too often, community members feel their voices do not matter in school governance. Meanwhile, well-organized groups with exclusionary agendas—such as Moms for Liberty—have used this lack of engagement to gain influence. We must be equally committed to ensuring that our schools remain safe, inclusive, and welcoming to all students.

I urge the board to recognize these risks and take action to ensure that every student, regardless of background or immigration status, has safe access to school and receives an equitable education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#7

Katherine Davin

Teacher, Staff

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#8

Deepa Bardoloi

Teacher, Staff

My name is Deepa Bardoloi. I teach English Language Arts and English Language Development or ELD at Brashear High School, where the number of ELD students has ballooned to 300. It makes up more than 30 % of the school population.

My students amaze me every year. My 9th graders are young but already so resilient, and adaptable. They have taught me that a caring community can help us overcome our most challenging and traumatic experiences.

I hope to see more equity for ELD students at PPS.

- As a high school ELD teacher, we are overwhelmed with students of varied learning needs, languages and levels in one crowded classroom.

- Some students with limited or interrupted education can barely read three- or four-letter words and they cannot write simple sentences. ELD teachers work with these students who need more one on one attention while trying to meet the needs of more literate learners in the same classroom.

- In mainstream content class, how do you teach chemistry or biology terminologies when some ELD

students are not literate yet? The mainstream teachers also have native English speakers in the same class who require their attention.

There is no easy solution.

PPS is opening more ELD centers but do these centers come with resources? I hope the planners take the ELD demographics into consideration.

- Are there enough ELD teachers for all these centers so there are a variety of classrooms to support students with varied English levels and abilities?

- Are the mainstream teachers and non-teaching staff trained in how best to support ELD students in their classrooms?

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies

August 25, 2025

· Are native English-speaking students given the opportunity to learn about their non-native English-speaking peers? How can they learn together side-by-side in meaningful, respectful and integrated ways?

When we pool all our varied resources to support our students, every student gets the equitable treatment that we all aspire to.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#9

Kim Daelhousen

Teacher, Staff, Community Member

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#10

Jenna Baron

Organization – Alliance for Refugee Youth Support and Education, Community Member

Protecting and Supporting English Learners, Their Families, and
the Educators Who Support Them

Good evening President Gene Walker, Superintendent Walters, and members of the Board,

My name is Jenna Baron, and I'm here on behalf of ARYSE, an official Out-of-School Time partner with Pittsburgh Public Schools. Since 2013, we have provided programming to support English learners in this district and across Allegheny County. For more than a decade, we've worked side by side with PPS administrators and educators to better understand how to improve outcomes for multilingual students and their families.

In those conversations, we've consistently heard that there are "not enough" English learners in Pittsburgh compared to other cities to justify new models like a Newcomer Academy, even though PPS's own educators — those with the most direct experience — have been recommending such models for years. That rationale is out of step with the facts: the only student population that has grown in PPS in recent years is English learners. These students and their families bring tremendous strengths to our schools and communities, yet too often their needs are not centered when major district plans are made.

At the same time, federal policy changes have made life even more difficult for immigrant students and their families — from the quiet removal of federal rules protecting English learners, to shifting immigration enforcement policies, to the trauma and absenteeism that researchers have documented nationwide. We've heard directly from students and educators about the ripple effects of this broader anti-immigrant climate inside PPS schools, which further isolates students who already face structural barriers to the education they are legally entitled to. All of this underscores the urgency for PPS to build a culture and infrastructure that truly support multilingual learners.

Agenda Item 17.01 asks the administration to provide key deliverables before the Board moves



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

forward on its Facilities Plan. We urge you to ensure those deliverables include concrete plans and timelines for improving outcomes and equity for English learners. That means leveraging the financial resources you already have and the deep commitment of PPS educators, some of whom are speaking today and have spoken in dozens of previous hearings and town halls, and fully integrating multilingual students and families into the Future Ready implementation plan. Our district has the talent and the partnerships to do this. What's needed is the will to make sure every PPS school is a welcoming, supportive place for all students — including English learners. Thank you for your time and for your service.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#11

Lily Allman

Student



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies
August 25, 2025

#12

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent, Community Member