

#1

Annabelle Chipps

Reporter for InformUp

## Draft Survey

# Public Comment Script – Pittsburgh Public Schools

### Good evening, Board members.

My name is Annabelle Chipps. I live in Allegheny West and I'm here tonight with InformUp, a local news nonprofit which reports on public meetings and include a survey, so we can deliver reader preferences directly to elected officials during public comment

We received 62 survey responses from every district covering issues raised in December's School Board meeting.

### First, regarding spending priorities, we asked:

*"If the district needs to reduce spending, which categories would you most want to protect?"*

Residents ranked their priorities, and the top three were:

- **Teacher salaries and hiring**
- **Building maintenance and safety**
- **Student programs (arts, sports, clubs)**

District administration costs ranked lowest among the categories.

### Resident quotes:

- **A resident from Squirrel Hill South:** "PPS administration positions and salaries are out of control. The bloat in admin is insane. Why does a school need so many vice principals and admin? Start cutting those positions before you cut a single dollar from a single teacher's salary."
- **Shadyside:** "Schools should not cut any costs or spending—they should close the budget gap by raising taxes to \$30 on average a year. That's literally nothing for homeowners."

**Second, regarding the photo/video ban, we asked:**

*"How necessary do you believe the additional ban on taking photos or videos is, given that phones are already banned during the school day?"*

- **85%** found the ban somewhat or very necessary

**Resident quotes:**

- **Central Northside:** "Computers can also take pictures, so the photography/video ban is needed. I would like to know how the discipline for cell phones will be handled. I do not want to see the school-to-prison pipeline increase."
- **Carrick:** "I have concerns about phones being confiscated at the start of the school day, as students may have family situations or emergencies that would require having a phone available."

Thank you for your time. A complete survey report—with district breakdowns and all full comments—will be emailed to your offices today.

## Pittsburgh Public Schools Survey Results

Survey conducted January 9-16, 2026 regarding school district spending priorities and the new phone/photography policy.

**Total Responses: 62**

### Spending Priorities

Respondents were asked to rank spending categories they would most want to protect if the district needs to reduce spending. 24 respondents provided complete rankings.

Category	Weighted Rank	Responses
Teacher salaries and hiring	159	27
Building maintenance and safety	140	25
Student programs (arts, sports, clubs)	116	26
Transportation services	102	25
Classroom supplies and technology	97	25
District Administration costs	88	34
Other	53	29

*Note: Weighted score calculated by awarding n points for 1st place down to 1 point for nth place. Higher score = higher priority to protect.*

### Breakdown by School Board District

District	Board Member	Responses	Top Priority
1	Tawana Cook Purnell	5	Teacher salaries and hiring
2	Devon Taliaferro	6	Building maintenance and safety
3	Erikka Grayson	3	Building maintenance and safety
4	Yael Silk	7	Building maintenance and safety
5	Tracey Reed	0	Student programs (arts, sports, clubs)
6	Emma Yourd	3	Teacher salaries and hiring
7	Eva Diodati	1	Teacher salaries and hiring
8	Dwayne Barker	2	Student programs (arts, sports, clubs)
9	Gene Walker	0	District Administration

### Related Comments

- *"PPS is hot on banning cellphones because the kids keep producing evidence of negligence that winds up costing them in lawsuits. The cameras in buildings routinely don't work when you request footage after an incident. A staff member fully admitted during a parent/teacher meeting that they were tired of getting in trouble because of student videos a few years ago. Wish I would have been recording that meeting."* — Brookline
- *"PPS administration positions and salaries are out of control. The bloat in admin is insane. Why does a school need so many vice principals and admin? Start cutting those positions before you cut a single dollar from a single teacher's salary."* — Squirrel Hill South
- *"I dislike your false premise that we should need to reduce school spending at all and you shouldn't be asking that question. It's the wrong question. Schools should not cut any costs or spending, they should close the budget cap by raising taxes to \$30 on average a year. That's literally nothing for homeowners who are the most financially resourced in the city."* — Shadyside
- *"Question 2: Other - academic programs should not be touched. Our district needs as many high performing students to remain enrolled as possible so that schools have a mix of both above and below average students"* — Bloomfield
- *"I think the school board should show actual leadership and come up with a school building closure and simplification plan that they can actually stand behind and get passed. It's ridiculous to charge us more taxes only because of their failure to do their job."* — squirrel hill
- *"Close school buildings"* — Central northside

### Photo/Video Ban Necessity

Respondents were asked how necessary they believe the additional ban on taking photos or videos is, given that phones are already banned during the school day. 53 respondents answered.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

Response	Count	Percentage
Very necessary	31	58.5%
Somewhat necessary	14	26.4%
I'm not sure	3	5.7%
Not at all necessary	5	9.4%

Summary: 85% of respondents found the ban at least somewhat necessary.

### Breakdown by School Board District

District	Board Member	Responses	Support	Oppose
1	Tawana Cook Purnell	8	75%	1
2	Devon Taliaferro	11	91%	1
3	Erikka Grayson	6	67%	1
4	Yael Silk	10	90%	1
5	Tracey Reed	3	100%	0
6	Emma Yourd	6	67%	2
7	Eva Diodati	1	0%	1
8	Dwayne Barker	3	100%	0
9	Gene Walker	2	100%	0

### Related Comments

- *"Phones need to be fully banned. The current policy does not go far enough because it leaves it up to principal discretion and some principals will not have the guts to go against vocal parents who are typically in the minority anyway"* — Beechview
- *"PPS is hot on banning cellphones because the kids keep producing evidence of negligence that winds up costing them in lawsuits. The cameras in buildings routinely don't work when you request footage after an incident. A staff member fully admitted during a parent/teacher meeting that they were tired of getting in trouble because of student videos a few years ago. Wish I would have been recording that meeting."* — Brookline
- *"I would like no student phones in schools at all, period."* — Greenfield
- *"Students may take photos on laptops or other devices even if cell phones are turned in."* — Marshall-Shadeland
- *"all PPS students have ipads or laptops and use the cameras to take inappropriate photos all the time. A policy is needed."* — Point Breeze North
- *"Computers can also take pictures, so the photography/video ban is needed. I would like to know how the discipline for cell phones will be handled. I do not want to see the school to prison pipeline to increase."* — Central Northside

## Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies

January 26, 2026

- *"I have concerns about phones being confiscated/turned in at the start of the school day, as students may have family situations or emergencies, medical or otherwise, that would require having a phone available." — carrick*

### Other Comments

1 additional comments:

- *"Does anyone actually read these? We need comprehensive, systemic organization. This all feels so piecemeal. Where is the history/context for these decisions/rules/laws? Sometimes we have to spell it out for legal or insurance purposes but sometimes it's just distraction, so which is it?" — Park Place aka Point Breeze East*



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#2

Shirley Ann Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

#3

Geffen Blumenfeld

Student PPS

Good evening members of the board, Dr. Walters, teachers, families, and community members. My name is Geffen B. I am an 8th grade student at greenfield K-8 school. I am a proud member of the Middle School Student Envoy, and I am here today to share why student leadership programs have lasting impact.

Being in Student Envoy is defined by actions not a title. It means learning how to lead and listen and speak up for others, while also creating fun and meaningful events for our school, such as spirit weeks, and monthly socials like reindeer games, and the greenfield game show, as a Student Envoy, we work to make our school a better place. Through this role, we learn important skills that will help us in the future, including responsibility, confidence, leadership, and teamwork.

One event that helps build a community at greenfield, is Littles to Middles. This event allows younger students to visit the middle school to see what we do each day, while giving the older students the opportunity to proudly show their younger siblings what they're learning. This experience increases school morale and encourages all students to continue with enthusiasm.

Another important role of Student Envoy is organizing spirit weeks. We dressed as twins, rhymes, and carried everything but a backpack. These events bring excitement throughout the entire school and encourages participation from students of all ages.

Through our monthly socials, we also create a space where students can relax, participate in activities, and connect with friends they may not have classes with. These events give students a break from classes and supports social interactions.

Overall, K-8 schools provide a great opportunity for both older and younger students. Older students can set positive examples, build connections, and form friendships, while younger students benefit from having role models to look up to. Student Envoy programs allow students to take an active role in creating events and activities for their fellow peers. My experience with Envoy has taught me to take initiative and responsibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

#4

Evelyn Abernathy

Student PPS

My Speech

By: Evelyn Abernathy

Good evening members of the board, Superintendent Walters, teachers, families, and community members. My name is Evelyn A. and I'm an eighth-grade student at Greenfield K-8 th. I'm also a proud member of the Middle School Envoy, and I'm here today to share why student leadership programs are important.

Being a member of student envoy goes far beyond just a title. Being in envoy builds leadership skills, confidence, responsibility, and teamwork. Envoy students strive to make our school a better place by planning and helping with student events, making sure everyone is involved, and setting a positive example for our peers.

Through Envoy we push empowering messages such as FADAF, which stands for failure and difficulty are feedback, onto students of all grades. Every year Greenfield dedicates a week to one of these secrets, most recently FADAF. This holds an important reminder for everyone that failure isn't bad; it's an opportunity to learn and grow.

Getting the younger students involved is important because the sooner we can introduce these lessons; the sooner the kids can apply them into their lives. In addition to teaching lessons, Envoy engages the whole school in activities such as spirit weeks, Littles to Middle, a day when siblings are invited to spend some time in the middle school classrooms, and kindness day! These events allow older and younger students to build relationships with one another, bringing a sense of community into our school.

As an older sibling, getting to see my little siblings participate in school events is so special. Being at a K-8 th school is an amazing opportunity because it allows middle school to interact with younger students through envoy events. While a k-8 th is not the only school model that can make a difference, I believe this opportunity has made a difference in my life, my fellow students, and especially the younger kids.

These are some ways the Envoy at Greenfield is using the k-8 th structure to its advantage, turning it into a model that enhances the school community to be closer. The older students look out for the younger kids, while the younger kids look up to them.

Keeping Greenfield as a k-8 th affords the envoy to have more chances to make a significant impact on our school community. This will help students develop life skills they can apply outside of school.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

Thank you for taking the time to listen to students' voices and truly embody the district motto,"  
Students first always, In all ways."

#5

Amalia G

Student, Student Voice

Good evening, my name is Amalia. Thank you all for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My experience in the Pittsburgh Public Schools has been one shaped by the arts, and I am tremendously grateful for the outlet it has become for my creativity and individuality. Starting in kindergarten at Dilworth, I was immersed in art: from drum lines in the mornings to learning how to knit in TEA periods.

Because of these opportunities, I was able to follow my creative instinct to CAPA's middle school. At CAPA, I have had countless, specialized visual arts opportunities like contributing to a 440-foot street mural and learning how to loom weave and solder-stained glass.

But beyond that, creating and consuming art in this environment has taught me the importance of confronting complex ideas. I have learned that through art, these complexities can be communicated in ways that stretch our lives, making room for new perspectives.

As a district, it is our responsibility to continue nurturing the empathy and collaboration that magnet programs have provided. Without Dilworth's magnet program, I might not have had the opportunity to connect with students from across the city, understand the complexities of our neighborhoods, and learn in an environment of diverse perspectives and ideas.

I hope this testimony can resonate with some of you in the room. On a final note, I want to implore the district to continue working towards equitable solutions that provide all district students, not only those that attend a magnet school, with the resources and support that I received, in a way that connects students from across the city, mobilizing us through opportunities that bring us together while celebrating our uniqueness as individual students.

Thank you for your time. Have a wonderful evening!



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#6

Stephanie Lapine

Teacher/Staff, Organization

#7

Matteo DiNunzio

Student

Good evening, board members and PPS families, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Matteo Tarka DiNunzio, and I am a senior at Pittsburgh Creative and Performing arts High school, as well as a member of the Super Intendent Student Advisory Council.

Pittsburgh CAPA is unique from other high schools in our district. It has a diverse location, being the only school downtown, it has a diverse student body, pulling from throughout the city, it is a magnet school, and has the arts programs.

With its diversity, the staff is what makes the school stand out. In CAPA's visual arts program, my teachers have multiple degrees and experiences. I have been able to work closely with Yale graduates, Edinboro ceramic graduates which is a top ten program in the nation, and SCAD graduates.

While their academic accomplishments are impressive, CAPA's staff is also recognized artists. Multiple teachers work at the Andy Warhol museum in the Northside, actively work or have worked in their fields before teaching such as the ceramic teachers leading glaze calculations for large scale corporations, or are part of international art groups such as our director. These experiences and knowledge that the staff can transfer to students is what separates CAPA from other schools.

Not only does the visual arts department have an outstanding staff, but every major has recognized teachers. The guitar program has teachers who have recorded for artists such as Mac Miller and Wiz Khalifa. The theater programs have teachers who actively are casted in shows annually.

My arts teachers have personally impacted my life and inspired me to be more involved in the arts. Because of them, I have done internships at ceramic studios, and I have effectively started my own business, selling ceramics at local art shows. If it was not for the teachers who pushed me to become a better artist, I would not have half of those experiences that I have today.

I want other students within our district to have the same experience as I have and I hope that they will gain the same inspiration that I have because of my teachers.

Thank the amazing teachers that I have had the privilege to learn from, and thank you Board members and PPS families for your time.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#8

Auden Campbell

Student

Here is my public hearing presentation!

Good evening! My name is Auden and I am a Senior at Pittsburgh CAPA, as well as a member of the superintendent's student advisory council and I would like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

My experience with Pittsburgh Public Schools has been very positive, and I would like to share with you all how beneficial my classes and curriculums have been to me and my peer's growth and development.

I have been a member of PPS for 7 years and even while we were all stuck at home, learning algebra through zoom, I continued to enjoy and focus on the classes I was in. CAPA has introduced me to classes that I would have never known even existed that I love and have grown a passion towards, like History of Jazz, AP African American History, and even Women and Gender Studies.

Having such a wide range of classes helped me and other students grow as people and discover things we would have never learned about if not given the opportunity. I also think it has made school more engaging and supportive environment, for example, I love my Women and Gender Studies class and one day, I hope to work in Women's Health, and this class has given me the resources to pursue that passion.

I think that CAPA specifically is given many opportunities, but I believe that all schools, K-12, should also be given a wide range of classes that allow students to achieve their full potential, whether that be through more AP classes or electives in general.

Thank you for listening and I hope that you have taken what I have said into consideration. Every student deserves an equal opportunity and room to grow, and I believe they will be given that opportunity if given a wide range of classes and opportunities. Thank you!

#9

Gregory Harper

Student

**Good evening, Board Members.**

My name is Gregory H., and I am a freshman at Allderdice High School. I am also a member of the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight.

One thing I really like about Allderdice is how diverse it is. Our school has African American, Middle Eastern, Hispanic, and many other students from different backgrounds. Being in a diverse school helps me learn how to respect others and see different points of view. It also makes me feel like I belong.

Allderdice gives students many opportunities. We have advanced classes like CAS and AP, CTE magnet programs, and electives such as Band, Jewelry, Visual Communications, Film Appreciation, and Art. There are also sports teams, marching band, and clubs that help students stay involved and connected to the school.

This year, I am taking English 1 CAS, Biology 1 CAS, AP U.S. Government and Politics, Spanish 1 PSP, Pre-Engineering, and Band 2. These classes show that Allderdice supports students who want to work hard and try new things. Even though I did not have a gym class in my first semester, I will have one in my second semester, which shows the school works to support both academics and physical activity.

I would also like to talk about how my middle school helped prepare me for high school. I attended **Sterrett Middle School**, which is a 6–8 middle school. Sterrett helped me get ready for the move to high school by taking us to open houses, school events, and freshman orientation at Allderdice. Because of this, I felt prepared and confident when I started ninth grade.

Having a separate middle school like Sterrett gave me time to grow and mature before entering a large, independent high school. That kind of preparation matters, and it helped me succeed.

In closing, Allderdice is more than just a blue-ribbon school. It is a place that supports students’ academics, talents, and future goals. Keeping strong, independent high schools, along with effective 6–8 middle schools like Sterrett, helps students like me succeed.

Thank you for listening and for supporting Pittsburgh Public Schools.

#10

Brennan Skweres

Student

Good evening. My name is Brennan S., and I am a student at Pittsburgh Allderdice. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am here to talk about why I am PPS Proud and to share my experience transitioning from middle school to high school.

I want to start by talking about my time in middle school. I attended Schiller STEAM Academy, where I was very involved as a student leader. I was part of Student Envoy and GSA. Student Envoy is similar to Student Voice, but for middle school students. Being in Student Envoy helped me learn how to speak up, share my ideas, and listen to others. Because of that experience, transitioning into the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council felt much easier for me. I truly believe Student Envoy should be offered in every middle school, because all students in grades 3 through 8 deserve the chance to have their voices heard.

In 8th grade, my teachers worked hard to prepare me for high school. My science teacher introduced us to Biology before the year ended. My Algebra teacher taught us Geometry to get us ready for higher-level math. My English teacher shared tips on how to read more carefully, take better notes, and think more deeply about books. All of this helped me feel more confident going into high school.

However, there were still things I wasn't prepared for. I wasn't ready for how early Allderdice starts. I went from waking up at 7:15 in middle school to waking up at 6:10 every morning. I went from 8th grade Geography and History to AP Government. I also went from a regular band class to Band 5 and marching band. At first, all of this felt overwhelming and stressful. But my teachers at Allderdice were patient, understanding, and supportive, and that made a huge difference for me.

Allderdice is a welcoming school, but if there is one thing I wish we could improve, it would be the number of fights. Almost every day, there are physical altercations between students. I have seen some of them firsthand, and it is upsetting. I do not believe these fights define who we are. They do not represent our values or the potential of our students or our school.

In closing, as a 9th-grade Dragon, I believe Allderdice is a school that understands new students and treats them like family. It is a place full of gratitude, love, respect, and opportunity. I am proud to be a student at Allderdice, and I will always be a Dragon. Thank you for listening

#11

Michael Livingston

Student

Good evening. My name is Michael L., and I am a senior at Brashear High School. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

I'm here to talk about why Brashear is a great school to attend. One of the biggest strengths of Brashear is our Career and Technical Education programs. From MPAC's computer programming to Auto Tech's hands-on learning, these programs give students real skills they can use after high school. Whether students plan to go to college, trade school, or straight into the workforce, Brashear helps prepare them for life beyond the classroom.

Another strong part of Brashear is our diversity and the many opportunities students have to get involved. Our student body includes people from many different backgrounds and cultures, which creates a welcoming and supportive environment. There are also many activities and clubs for students to join. Groups like Student Council and Student Voice help students build leadership skills, while clubs like HOSA and Science Olympiad allow students to explore interests, challenge themselves, and grow both academically and personally.

If there is one thing I would like to see improved, it would be the number of AP courses offered at Brashear. While we do have some strong AP classes, we currently offer fewer than other schools in the district. Expanding AP options would give more students the chance to challenge themselves academically and earn college credit, which can make a real difference for their futures.

Over the past four years, Brashear has given me many opportunities to grow. I've participated in competitions, sports, and clubs that helped me connect with my school community and prepare for what comes next. Being involved in Student Council and the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council has helped shape me into the person I am today by teaching me responsibility, leadership, and confidence.

In closing, Brashear offers its students more than just an education. It provides opportunities to grow academically, personally, and socially. For these reasons and many more, Brashear is a school worth being proud of. Thank you for your time and for listening.

#12

Zuri Tinsley

Student

**Good evening Pittsburgh students, families, and staff.**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Zuri T. Today, I want to share my experience as a student in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

I want to start by talking about some of the positive things about my school. One of the things I love most about Westinghouse is the community. A lot of people see Homewood as dangerous or tough, but that is not the full story. While our community has its challenges, when we come together, we create something powerful. There are times when the community is very supportive, involved, and truly invested in its students and youth. I think the positive community school atmosphere can only truly be achieved when students attend schools in their own community.

I also really appreciate the staff at Westinghouse. Many of the teachers are welcoming and supportive, and they genuinely want to see students succeed. We are given many educational opportunities, such as Career and Technical Education, also known as CTE, and the Pittsburgh Promise. When I was a sophomore, I took health careers CTE classes. Through those classes, I learned about different career paths in healthcare, went on several field trips, and even had the opportunity to work in a hospital. Although I decided not to pursue that career, I am grateful for the experience and the knowledge I gained.

At the beginning of my junior year, I met my college coaches. They introduced me to scholarships and explained what Promise money was. Even though I later found out I was not eligible for Promise money, my coaches did not give up on me. Instead, they helped me find other scholarships and supported me through the application process. They also took me on college tours around Pennsylvania, which was one of the most meaningful experiences I've had in school. It helped me think seriously about my future and motivated me to improve my academics so I could stay on track and reach my goals.

While there are many positives, there are also areas where improvement is needed. I do believe my school has made some progress over the past two years, especially since we got a new principal. A major focus has been student behavior. However, when the new principal started in early 2024, many students were sent to SAC due to behavioral and academic issues. At times, it felt like the school was more focused on removing students with challenges rather than helping them improve.

I believe there are many students who are struggling but choose not to ask for help because they do not feel a safe or comfortable connection with staff members. Creating stronger relationships between students and staff could make a big difference and help more students succeed.

Thank you for listening to my story and allowing me to share my perspective.

#13

Isabella Whitney

Student

Good evening, pps students, family, and staff.

My name is Isabella and I'm a Junior at Pittsburgh Carrick and I am also a member of the Superintendents Student Advisory Council. I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am standing here today not just as a student, but as someone who truly feels at home attending my school. Today, I want to share a student's perspective on the merging of Pittsburgh Carrick, and Pittsburgh Brashear, and on the recent news that the utilization plan involving our schools merging is no longer being considered.

For many of us, this entire process has brought overwhelming and mixed emotions. Carrick is not just a school building- it's a community. It is where we have built friendships, created memories, and learned lessons that go far beyond the classroom. Being asked to imagine a future without Carrick was painful and unsettling for many students.

When the utilization plan was first introduced, students feared losing our identity, our teachers, and the sense of belonging that Carrick provided. While there is relief knowing the plan to merge Carrick with Brashear is now off the table, there is also exhaustion. Students carried fear, confusion, and uncertainty throughout this process- all while showing up to school every day and trying to succeed.

During this process, I had the opportunity to speak directly with a woman who helped with presenting the idea. I was able to share my concerns, my emotions, and the realities students were facing. In that moment, I felt heard- not just as a student, but as a person whose experience matters. This conversation showed me how powerful it can be when students are given a space at the table and how our voices are truly listened to.

We understand why decisions like this are considered. We know conversations about mergers are often about resources, opportunities, and long-term outcomes. A merger could have brought more class options, stronger athletic programs, and improved facilities. But it also brought very real concerns.

Change is not easy. Especially when students feel like decisions are being made without our voices. We worried about larger class sizes, longer travel times, losing close relationships with the faculty, and whether we would feel welcomed in a new environment. We worried about how two different school cultures would blend and whether students from both schools would be treated equally.

What this experience has shown us is how important student voices are. What we ask is simple: include students in the conversation. Listen to our concerns. Support us through uncertainty. Also remember that behind every decision are students whose lives are directly affected. We also ask that the history behind our schools have been respect when considering these decisions.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

As a Carrick student, the thought of losing the faculty I grew close with, the friendships that became family, and opportunities that shaped me into the woman I am becoming, was heartbreaking. Carrick has given us more than just an education it has provided us with a place we can call home. Carrick provides ways in which the students we have lost are always and will always remain close and a part of the community no matter what.

Thank you again for listening to the voices of your students.

#14

Isaiah Thompson

Student

Good evening, my name is Isaiah T, a senior from Pittsburgh Brashear High School. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

I want to start off by sharing something positive about my school. One of the greatest strengths of our school is its diverse population. Our school is very open and welcoming, no matter who you are, and this creates an environment where students from different backgrounds feel welcomed and valued. This wide expansion of diversity helps us learn from one another, not just academically, but socially and culturally as well.

Another thing that really stands out is our school spirit and involvement opportunities. Events like spirit weeks, sporting events, and more – bring students together and create a sense of pride. Our CTE programs are also extremely engaging and important. They give students hands-on-experiences and open doors to future careers, whether students plan to go to college, trade school, or straight into the workforce. These programs show that our school truly cares about preparing students for real life.

In addition, school events – especially those offered through PBIS point rewards – help students build peer-to-peer connections. These events encourage positive behavior while also creating safe spaces for students to socialize, make friends, and feel like they belong. All of this contributes to a friendly, supportive school community.

If I could change one thing about my school, it would be the mentality surrounding it. Too often, people focus on negative stereotypes or outdated ideas about our school. I wish we could do more to highlight the positive things happening here every day. Our students are hardworking, our teachers are dedicated, and our programs are strong – but that doesn't always get the attention it deserves.

I would love to see, and of course help with, the increasement of community involvement and outreach, so that people outside our school can see the shining light in our community, instead of hearing the bad. Whether that's through community events, partnerships, or showcasing student achievements, we deserve to be recognized for our grow and success.

Lastly, I want to share that our academics are rigorous and challenging. I personally took and currently take AP World History, AP U.S History, AP Psychology, AP Environmental Science, AP Statistics, AP Calculus, AP Literature, and AP English. I also, for the sports side, play volleyball and used to run track. I'm also in plenty other clubs, from being in the student body as school president – to being in the sustainability club, and even more clubs to list. And finally, I have been a part of the Student Advisory Council for the last 3 years. These classes, and other extracurriculars, show that our school offers both strong and academic opportunities and programs that support physical health, teamwork, and community involvement.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

In closing, my school is more than the reputation some people give it. It's a place full of opportunities, diversity, and potential – and I'm proud to be a student here.

Thank you for listening.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#15

Mario Germany

Student



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#16

Lily Allman

Student



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#17

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#18

Holly Munson

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#19

Kim Daelhousen

Teacher/Staff, Community Member

Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#20

Erin Halloran

Parent

I want to express my support for the Wild Flower Montessori charter school.

My son was a student of Stephanie Lapine's at Pittsburgh Montessori in first and second grade 2018-2019. I also have two older sons that attended Pittsburgh Montessori 2006-2017.

I was so happy when my youngest Ronan was assigned to Stephanie Lapine's classroom because she had such a wonderful reputation at the school. I would see her outdoors with her class sitting in a circle teaching Montessori lessons, she clearly had a special talent for communicating with the children, and drawing out their natural curiosity and desire to learn.

When Ronan entered Ms. Lapine's class, I had frequent opportunities to volunteer in the classroom and even sometimes help students with the Montessori materials. Ms. Lapine's classroom was always a joyful place. Students were busy at work and it was clear to me that this wonderful method of teaching offered so many innovative ways of teaching..

We realized that we were so lucky to have Miss Lapine who is an amazing Montessori expert. Because of my trust in her and my son's wonderful experience in her classroom

I am confident that a new Montessori charter will provide an incredible educational experience for students that do not have access to a Montessori in their neighborhoods.

Unfortunately the administration at Pittsburgh Montessori was not as passionate about the Montessori method, when Covid was upon us Montessori materials were replaced by computers, standardized, tests and many more traditional types of learning that we're way less suited to my child's learning style.

Having three children of my own and working as a volunteer in the classroom it is very clear to me that we need to employ different methods of teaching for different students.

I know that many students would benefit from and blossom in, a truly Montessori school with a caring dedicated teacher at its helm.

I hope that the board will decide to approve the application for the wildflower Montessori school, children and parents in our district, deserve to have choices about their education.

Thank you so much for your time.

- Erin Halloran



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#21

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher



Pittsburgh Public Schools Fulton Special Public Hearing Testimonies  
January 26, 2026

#22

Deepa Bardoloi

Teacher/ Staff

#23

April Clisura

Parent, School Bus Driver

January public hearing testimony

*This is the part of the testimony I didn't get to read:*

*Thinking about my job for the last 4 years there are areas where technology could help us minimize hassles for student families, teachers, drivers and our dispatch offices..*

- *This is above my pay grade to understand if or how the district could access these, but I know there is software in use in some school districts across the country that allows student families to look at an app to see where the bus is. If they could do this here it would eliminate a lot of family phone calls to our dispatcher's office and reduce missing the bus.*
- *Another area is in producing the bus route schedules themselves. I don't know, but I imagine there is a routing software involved when the district office makes these schedules. For myself and other drivers we meet a dilemma each year because the times for each bus stop are sometimes unrealistic. For example, I have seen several instances where 2 consecutive bus stops are listed with the same time. Or cases where we drop off at our first school, often a high school, and we are already supposed to be at the first pickup for our elementary school. The same thing happens on the way home. I finish getting my high school students home and then there's an unrealistic expectation for when I need to arrive at the elementary school over in Lawrenceville. Things that we have to keep in mind are the amount of roads being torn up for construction and the amount of new infrastructure on the roads that is meant to slow traffic, such as speed bumps, chicanes and bike lanes. While I generally support that infrastructure, as it keeps us all safer, we have to remember that it is going to slow buses down even more so than it slows cars.*

*Finally, I think of the prospect of some of our big 5 nonprofits in the City who do not pay property taxes and there's a conversation about them giving some kind of payments in lieu of taxes. I hope the district along with partners in City government and nongovernmental experts will consider putting together a proposal that would allow institutions like UPMC to make a very impactful contribution to our school kids. For example, they could fund additional counselors and mental health providers within schools. I would love to see at least some of our buses get a pilot program where a social work student for credit or as an externship would ride along with us. The time students spend on buses can get very negative and having another adult on the bus who is specially trained to work with students could turn that into a very productive time where students receive positive encouragement and feedback. Bus drivers by and large care a lot about*

*interacting with students, but the expectation is that we are driving with our backs turned to the students. So we're only able to provide 2 second sound bites to the students. Or at best pull over a couple times so we can mediate something.*

---

Good evening. One of the factors in family satisfaction with PPS is student transportation. While I do not speak for any bus company or for my fellow drivers, I will give you my personal perspective on what's good on the horizon and what could be improved. We know there are students who spend an hour or more on the bus each way every day, so the quality of the bus ride is an important factor in the students' days.

Some good things are already coming.

- Electric buses are coming at least to the First Student fleet and we already have them in place with the small buses.. Electrics are quieter, allowing the driver to hear students and more closely monitor what's going on. And students can more clearly hear driver instructions.
- A few months ago a woman from the department of Student Transportation visited the bus terminal where I work, and told us about a portal that will track student bus behavior and be visible with a login to keep parents, individual school coordinators, the board, and drivers and their supervisors in the same loop in real time. There will be timeliness expectations and hopefully consistency and standardization across schools on (at a minimum) what takes place when a student gets a first write-up, second write-up, etc. And this is I hope where we can dovetail with restorative practices in our discipline. If we don't shame on us. Because write ups should really be a process of communication about the steps of restorative practices.
- I think having clearer expectations with student photo and video use is a good thing. I can tell you as it stands now, myself and other drivers have had experiences with student arguments that arise when students post photos or videos of other bus riders on social media without their consent. This can obviously be a big disruption on the bus. The students need more education about how important consent is, but also how unintended consequences can occur when we post photos and videos online even with our classmates' consent.