

#1

James Fogarty

Parent, Organization



Every Kid. Every School. Every Day.

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Board Testimony – Future-Ready Facilities Plan

James Fogarty, Executive Director, A+ Schools

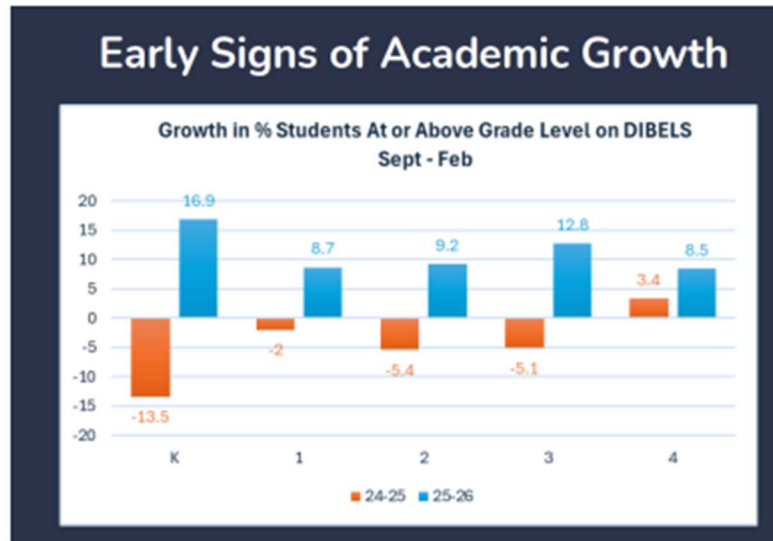
Good evening. For over 20 years our organization has worked to support Pittsburgh Public Schools deliver a high-quality public education for every child in this city, it's part of why we have funded Everyday Labs and urge you to vote for approving it at your legislative meeting this month.

I'm here tonight, though, to ask you to address the inequities in opportunities and outcomes that undermine student success in Pittsburgh – by taking the first step in a longer improvement journey towards a Future Ready school system.

At A+ Schools, our motto is *Every kid. Every school. Every day.* But the data tells us we're falling short of that promise for too many Pittsburgh children, and we've known it for years. When you take a look at the Future Ready Plan as a whole, it provides a roadmap for solving many of the challenges that are leading to the inequities that we see. And there's already evidence at schools like Pittsburgh Arlington – where fights are down over 90% and DIBELS scores are up – that the elements laid out in the plan will work to improve culture AND student outcomes in real and lasting ways – if we work together to make it happen.

Arlington data from 2025-26 school year





In 2025, ten PPS middle schools didn't offer Algebra I, that's 390 8th graders that were denied an opportunity because of the current structure of our school system.



In 2025

- 10 schools with grades 6-8 didn't offer Algebra I
- 23% of 8th graders took Algebra I

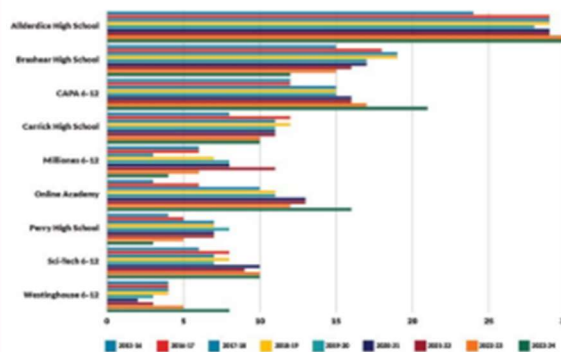
Allderdice offers 30 AP courses. Carrick offers 10. That's not a difference in ambition — it's a structural inequity baked into how we've organized our schools.

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Smaller high schools aren't able to offer as many AP courses in general.

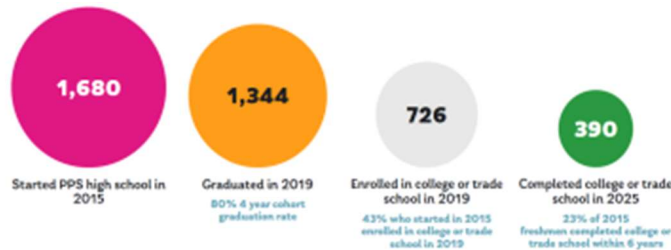
Number of AP courses offered, by school



Source: "Advancing Equity, Excellence, and Efficiency: A Proposal for a School District Facilities Utilization Plan" PPS Board of Education Meeting, April 3, 2024.

Our neighborhood elementary and middle schools are among the most racially and economically segregated in the country. The Future Ready Plan ameliorates this in many places with a mix of more socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods feeding into the schools. Of all the students that graduated from Perry, Westinghouse, and UPrep in 2015, fewer than 10 had completed a college degree or trade credential a decade later. We are not setting our kids up for success, and we have to be honest with ourselves about why.

College and trade school completion challenges regional economic mobility



PPS has lost over 6,000 students since 2014 — a 25 percent decline — without a single school closure. We have too many half-empty buildings and not enough concentrated resources to give kids what they deserve: art, music, world languages, Algebra,

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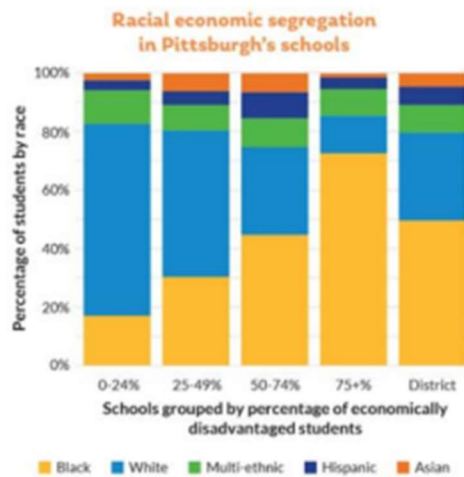
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air conditioning, and teachers who are well supported to meet students' needs across every stage of their development.

9 schools have PTAs

- **Neighborhood schools are highly segregated with concentrated student poverty**
25 out of the District's 50 regular schools have **student poverty rates of 80% or higher** and the average size is 276 students.

Challenge: current system has high racial economic segregation

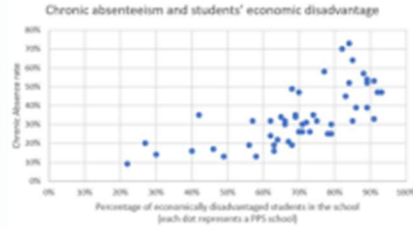


The current system concentrates students with disabilities and greater needs in smaller schools with less resources - in a system where **per pupil spending exceeds \$33,000 per pupil**, this shouldn't happen. Consolidation is not about abandoning communities. It's about finally giving the kids in those communities what they've always deserved.

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Schools that serve high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students have higher average rates of chronic absenteeism.

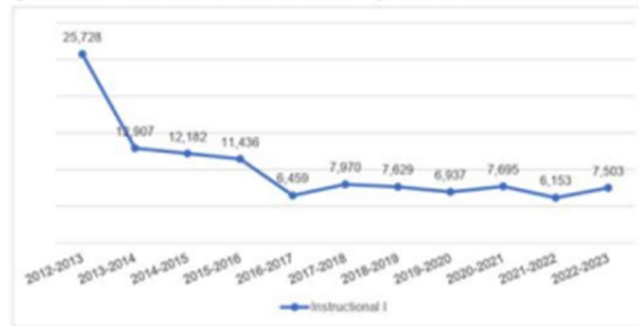


A+ Schools supports the Future-Ready Plan moving to a vote. We know that implementation is going to be challenging. And we recognize this plan is not without tradeoffs — we've sat with Hilltop, Hill District, and Northside families and heard their concerns directly. Those concerns are real and we've seen the plan adjust to address those concerns — as adjustments will continue to need to be made in implementation.

But the status quo is also a choice, and it is a choice that costs our kids and taxpayers every year we delay — something we're already seeing in the increasing difficulty in staffing schools.

Pool of available educators has decreased over the past several years

Figure 6: Instructional I Certificates Issued Annually, 2013-2023¹⁶



PDE Act 82 of 2018: Report on Educator Preparation and Certification, 2022

We truly have everything we need to succeed by our children - well funded schools, well paid teachers, abundant community partners and resources. But without aligning these resources in a strategic way — we're wasting them. Passing the Future Ready Plan is a step to ensure Every kid is succeeding in Every school Every day. Thank you.



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#2

Lorenzo Rulli

Parent, Community Member, Activist

#3

Shirley Ann Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

PUBLIC HEARING – SHIRLEY ANN HILL

April 27, 2026

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. She 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)? 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. Dr. Sacco - Have you talked to Kellie Meyer regarding her toxic leadership that has been going on for years?

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. When is the last time you observed a credit recovery class? While at Carrick, I can say credit recovery was dismal. The students log on and they are basically on their own. This also goes on at other schools. Take off the blinders and keep SAC open.

Carrick High School has a very small percentage of Black teachers. Mr. Zaire Howze Jetter, senior at Obama, made a very powerful statement regarding this issue at last month's public hearing. Please go back and view his testimony. He is speaker 12. It definitely resonated with me. **BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!**



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#4

Jason Whalen

Community Member

(Testimony Removed Upon Request)

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#5

Allyson Najera

Community Member

Slide 1: Title

Thank you all for being here. The people in this room represent the systems that Pittsburgh's immigrant and ELL students depend on — and that's exactly why I wanted to share this research with you specifically.

My name is Allyson Najera, I have a background in nonprofit work and education access research at UCLA.

Currently I am a Public Policy graduate student at Carnegie Mellon University → I have spent the last few months conducting interviews with PPS, CBO and Allegheny County DHS leaders.

This study looks at how ELL and immigrant student engagement is being shaped right now, in 2025 and 2026, as ICE enforcement activity in our region has grown dramatically. What we found isn't a story about systems failing — it's a story about systems that were never fully designed to work together under conditions like these. That's what we're going to dive into today.

To understand why that matters, let's start with what the data is actually showing us

Slide 2 - The Problem

Here's what made this data striking. At Brashear High School — which serves the highest share of Hispanic and ELL students in the district — enrollment among Hispanic students held steady between 2024 and 2026. Students didn't leave. But attendance dropped sharply. Among 11th grade ELL students, **chronic absenteeism went from 56.5% to 66.7% in a single year.**

That distinction matters a lot. This isn't students disappearing into other districts or moving away. They're enrolled. They just aren't coming. And that tells us the barrier isn't access to school — it's something happening between the front door and the classroom. District-wide, chronic absenteeism sits at 33%, compared to 24% before the pandemic, and it's worst at the high school level. That's the backdrop we're working against

The numbers raise an obvious question — if students are still enrolled, what's keeping them away?

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Slide 3 Root causes

When I looked across stakeholder interviews and the data, three things kept surfacing together — and they aren't separate problems, they compound each other.

The first is **fear**. Behavioral health providers are seeing families cancel appointments because they're afraid to leave home — even families with legal status. Youth are shifting to virtual school not because it's better for them academically, but because it feels safer. That fear is measurable and it's changing behavior.

The second is **fragmentation**. Provider Connect was designed to connect PPS, DHS, and around 500 CBO providers. Only 107 accounts are active. Coordination right now depends heavily on individual relationships — which means when a principal leaves, a partnership often leaves with them. Students who enroll mid-year fall outside tracking systems entirely.

The third is **compounding barriers that intensify as students get older** — the FAFSA graduation requirement at Pittsburgh Promise is a recent example. It's well-intentioned, but for mixed-status families, the parent portion raises real documentation concerns. None of these barriers exist in isolation

Those forces are real, but they don't tell the whole story — because some organizations are maintaining engagement even in this climate

Slide 4 - What is Working

To build on the root causes, the following are most important findings in the study.

While school-level chronic absenteeism was climbing, out-of-school participation at Casa San José stayed at 97 to 98% consistency among the same grade 11 PPS students. At Brookline Teen Outreach, attendance held steady through the same period. Students weren't disengaging from everything — they were disengaging from spaces where they didn't feel safe or seen, and staying connected to spaces where they did.

That's not a coincidence. Casa San José's model — enrollment support, culturally grounded programming — builds the kind of trust that makes families less hesitant to engage. Lizbeth Garcia from Casa San Jose references their success, *"When families see schools partners with **trusted organizations**, they are less hesitant to engage"*. ARYSE's home visit model meets families in their own space. These organizations have figured out something that formal systems are still working toward.

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And it tells us that the challenge isn't a lack of services. The services exist. What's missing is the **culturally responsive integration** and coordination that would let those relationships carry weight inside the formal system

The question is why that success isn't translating into the broader system — and that comes down to how these systems are actually connected to each other.

Slide 5 - The Coordination Gap

So what does that gap actually look like in practice? Across every interview, the same theme came up: PPS, DHS, and community organizations are running parallel tracks. There's genuine goodwill and real effort on all three sides — but without structured coordination, the students who fall between systems are often the ones with the highest need.

At PPS, ELL identification depends on family self-report — which misses students whose families don't feel safe disclosing. Feeder schools get students mid-year with no automatic trigger for additional support. At DHS, behavioral health case management for newly arrived immigrant families wraps up at three months. After that, families navigate on their own. And for CBOs — organizations doing some of the most effective work with these students — many aren't in Provider Connect, meaning their work is invisible to DHS and PPS workflows.

To be clear: this isn't anyone's fault. These systems were built at different times, for different purposes, and funded through different streams. But that history is showing up in student attendance data, and that's what this conversation is about

The good news is that closing those gaps doesn't require starting over — it requires building on what's already here.

Slide 6 - Recommendations

The three recommendations coming out of this research aren't new programs. They're **structural additions** designed to work inside what already exists.

1. The first is a **dedicated enrollment specialist** at Brashear and Allderdice (highest proportion of Hispanic / ELL students in PPS) — someone who can absorb the case management demands that currently fall between ELD, social services, and community partners.

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This isn't meant to replace social workers; at Brashear, two social workers are currently serving 7,300 students. It's meant to extend their capacity into the specific gap that immigrant and refugee students face at entry.

2. The second is formalizing school-based liaison roles so that coordination doesn't live or die with a particular principal.

The work is already happening informally in some schools — this is about making it structural.

3. The third is expanding Provider Connect access to include organizations that are already doing effective work with this population.

Not to add administrative burden, but so that the trust these organizations have built can actually connect to the broader system.

California's Community Schools Partnership Program is a useful model here — not because Pittsburgh should replicate it wholesale, but because it shows what integration looks like in practice: shared data, site-based coordinators, and cross-sector accountability

So concretely, what does that look like for each leadership?

Slide 7 - The Ask

*For **PPS social services leadership**: the social worker ratios alone tell an urgent story — 1 to 600 is not sustainable. The enrollment specialist pilot is a targeted, feasible next step that doesn't require a system overhaul.*

For **Allegheny County DHS — across OCS and OBH** — the school-based liaison model is exactly the kind of coordination infrastructure this research is calling for more of. The next frontier is what happens when intensive case management through programs like Hello Neighbor, JFCS, AJAPO, and ISAC Pittsburgh closes. Ensuring a structured warm handoff into school and community systems — and revisiting how funding rewards the slower relationship-building work that actually sustains families after that window — is where your offices have real leverage

And for everyone in this room — the trust is already here. It lives in CBO relationships, in county partnerships, in the work liaison staff do with families every day. What this research is asking is that we find ways to make that trust structural, so it doesn't depend on any one person's relationship to hold it together.



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#6

Rosanne Levine

Community Member

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#7

Raeed Chowdhury

Parent, Community Member

Public Hearing Testimony — April 27, 2026

Pittsburgh Montessori PreK-5 / Future-Ready Plan — Anchoring a Montessori Expansion

Opening — Acknowledgment (30 seconds)

- Hi
- My name is Raeed Chowdhury. I'm a parent at Pittsburgh Montessori, and I've spoken to this board twice before about this program.
- I want to start by thanking the board and the superintendent. The board's request for extra information and the superintendent's response did something important: it recognized Montessori as a distinct instructional model worth preserving and named a real path to expanding it.
- I agree with that vision. Tonight I want to talk about this path and preserving it for the future.

Where we are (30 seconds)

- Building a Montessori program is hard.
- One of the most important aspects of the Montessori method is the learning environment--the classroom setup, the materials, outdoor learning spaces, mixed-age classrooms.
- In Montessori, environment is pedagogy, not decor.
- Here's the good news: Pittsburgh Montessori has been building its teaching environment in and around the Friendship building for *decades* already. It's a prime location for anchoring a Montessori program expansion *now*.

Expansion from an anchor (30 seconds)

- These kinds of district-wide Montessori expansions have happened before, in Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Arlington.
- In every case, the program expanded from a single, anchor Montessori school.
- An anchor school is important.
- You can't train a Montessori teacher in a conventional school--you need an existing

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Montessori site.

Why moving is the risk (60 seconds)

- Now, the district wants to defer the development of an expansion plan because rushing it would risk the integrity of the program.
- I understand the caution--I'd rather see expansion start sooner, but budgets are real, and we should do this right.
- What *does* risk the integrity of the program, though, is the proposed move of Pittsburgh Montessori to Linden.
- Moving to Linden might move the staff and students, but the environment would have to be rebuilt from scratch.
- This would basically restart the clock on building a true anchor school and expanding the Montessori program to the district.
- And keep in mind: there are no other public Montessori schools in the *entire state* to anchor an expansion--Pittsburgh Montessori is it.

Close — The Amendment (30 seconds)

- The district wants to preserve the integrity of our Montessori program. I do too.
- So here's my ask tonight: as the board finalizes this plan, I'd urge you to consider an amendment to keep Pittsburgh Montessori at the Friendship building, preserving the time investment it has already made.
- And as we move forward, let's make the Friendship building an anchor for future Montessori expansion.
- Thank you



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#8

Kara Britanik

Parent

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#9

Dr. Allyce Pinchback

Parent, Organization, Community Member

In economics, there's a theory known as the sunk cost fallacy, which is a cognitive bias where people continue an endeavor—such as a project, relationship, or investment—solely because they have already invested resources (time, money, or effort) into it. Unfortunately, this has become the sad reality of the PPS Future Ready Plan.

It is not lost on me and many others that the district must address its geographic footprint, a looming budget deficit, declining enrollment, teacher shortages, and perennially poor academic outcomes. In some ways, the Future Ready Plan speaks directly to these issues. Many people in the community can absolutely get behind fewer schools with more concentrated resources, a return to a neighborhood model with robust academic offerings to increase equity and decrease transportation costs, and increased access to gifted education through a school-based model.

The biggest issue is not the plan itself, but the extreme lack of confidence in PPS to implement it well. Here's three reasons why.

#1: Nobody on the current leadership team in PPS has a track record of moving the needle and improving outcomes for the most marginalized students in the district. And while it's great that the district has finally decided to hire a Deputy Superintendent (a suggestion we made months ago), I worry that this administration will not be humble enough to hire a transformational leader with this skill set because many folks around this table have a difficult time hearing hard truths and being challenged.

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#2: There are no current exemplars for Black student achievement in the district.

At one time, this district had predominantly Black schools under strong Black leadership with academic achievement as high as or even better than their white counterparts. There is not one K-5 school in PPS currently with ELA or Math achievement at 50% or higher. The closest is Beechwood at 49% in ELA and Allegheny at 38% in Math. And even at a school like Allegheny K-5 (where my daughter is a kindergartener) where students have access to robust course offerings, their achievement may be higher than the district average, but their gap between Black and white students is larger than the district. How is reconfiguring the district going to lead to excellence when we don't even have excellence to point to?

#3: PPS lacks a coherent professional learning and change management strategy. We spend a ton of time and money on professional development in PPS with little to no return on investment. A large initiative such as the Future Ready Plan will require a total shift in mindset, extensive teacher training and leadership development, and overall organizational capacity building, yet the professional development director position is vacant, and we've heard no plans to fill it.

So what do I suggest? Table the Future Ready Plan next month. Make a massive push to get a Deputy Superintendent hired by July 1st. Develop a comprehensive infrastructure and capacity building plan to become a high-functioning and operationally efficient district. Then, revisit the PPS Future Ready Plan.

We do not have to continue down this path simply because we've been on it for two years. There is still an opportunity for the PPS Future Ready Plan to be implemented well if the district is willing to first address its capacity and operational issues. Let's get it right this time.

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#10

Cem Reid

Community Member

Good evening,

I'm here tonight to speak about something that affects every corner of our community—the Future Ready Plan and the difficult decisions surrounding school closures. These are not easy conversations, and they should not be treated lightly.

Let's start with the numbers. This is not about one or two students. It's about more than 19,000 students across PPS whose education, opportunities, and futures must be considered. It's also about the dedicated staff who serve them every day. And it's about a budget that, quite simply, cannot be sustained without making thoughtful, and sometimes difficult, changes.

But beyond the numbers, this is about people.

Dr. Walters has spent more than 30 years serving the students and families of PPS. That is more than three decades of showing up, listening, learning, and leading. He has seen generations of students come through these schools. He understands this district not just as a system, but as a community—because he has been part of it for so long.

We may not all agree with every recommendation in the Future Ready Plan. It's natural to feel concerned, emotional, even uncertain when schools are at the center of the conversation. Schools are more than buildings—they are places of connection, identity, and belonging.

But I ask that we also recognize the weight of the responsibility being carried. Leading a district of this size, with these challenges, requires experience, perspective, and a commitment to doing what is best for students—not just today, but for the future.

Supporting our Superintendent does not mean we stop asking questions or sharing concerns. It means we engage respectfully. It means we stay focused on solutions. And it means we work together as a community to ensure that every student—every single one of those 19,000—has access to the opportunities they deserve.

Tonight, I urge all of us to keep both the numbers and the people in mind. To approach this moment with thoughtfulness, with respect, and with a shared commitment to the future of PPS.

Thank you.

#11

William Fitch

Community Member

This is what this is really about.

When former superintendents John Thompson and Anthony Hamlet proposed closing public schools, Pittsburghers erupted. Rooms were packed. Emotions ran high. Today, we are here again—directing that same energy at Superintendent Walters.

Let's be clear. Much of what we're hearing is unjust, unresearched, and uninformed. This is not just about buildings. It's about real harm.

It's also about something people avoid saying: money. The city population is declining. The district is smaller. We have buildings designed for hundreds of students now serving fewer than one hundred. That is not sustainable. Pretending otherwise does not help any of our children.

I've listened closely in meetings. People say they want fairness and quality education for all. But what some mean is: keep "them" over there and leave us alone. Leave our Montessori programs alone. Leave our STEM programs alone. Don't touch our Science and Technology school.

That is not equity. That is separation.

Now, let's address something uncomfortable. When Mark Roosevelt came through PPS like a bull in a China shop closing 22 schools in five years, there was limited outrage. Few packed rooms. No widespread backlash and that wrecking ball included closing Schenley High School, once recognized as a National Model of Integration and Achievement.

So what changed? Why was it quiet then, but loud now?

We should be honest. Maybe it was his last name. Maybe it was also his race. When Dr. Thompson, Dr. Hamlet, and now Dr. Walters present plans, the response feels different—louder, sharper, more personal.

That should concern all of us.

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We are pushing back against a superintendent who has spent 30+ years in this district—as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and now superintendent.

So when did we stop trusting his leadership? Or is something else driving this—perhaps politics?

Some say it's his way or no way. But was that before or after plans were adjusted based on community input?

Over the past year, I've heard testimony claiming there weren't enough meetings or access. I've also seen people meet directly with the superintendent, ask questions, and receive clear answers.

I've watched individuals with PIIN have a full conversation with the Superintendent, then go to public hearings and falsely claim the plan closes community school buildings. That is not confusion. That is intentional misinformation.

We cannot make sound decisions for our children without honesty.

This is not just about closing schools.

This is about truth.

This is about accountability.

And this is about whether we are ready to confront inequality—or continue protecting and perpetuating it.

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#12

Stacey Turner

Community Member

Good evening members of the board, Dr. Walters,

Thank you for the chance to speak today.

This is more than just about closing school buildings. It's about students, fairness, and telling the truth about what is happening in our district.

I've been listening to what people are saying at meetings and online. A lot of it sounds strong and emotional, but not all of it is based on facts. There is even a gentleman that is at every public hearing and every meeting and was so angry, a member attending a meeting about community partners ask him to calm down, because yes school closings can be emotional. But some of the information being spread just isn't true, I wonder if people have even read the plan and or the frequently updated questions and answers that is on the PPS website.

One thing we don't talk about enough is money. Our city has fewer people than before, and our schools have fewer students. But we still have a lot of buildings, and some of them are mostly empty. That means we are spending money on space instead of spending it on students. That doesn't make sense if we really care about education.

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People say they want every student to have a good education. But sometimes it feels like what they really mean is they want to protect certain schools and not think about everyone else. They want things to stay the same for them.

But that is not fairness. That is not what equity looks like.

There is also something else we need to think about. In the past, when big changes happened in this district, there was not always this much anger or attention. This response feels louder and more personal. We should ask ourselves why that is. We should be honest about it, even if it's uncomfortable.

Right now, we are talking about a superintendent who has spent many years working in this district and knows it well. So we have to ask: why are we questioning his leadership now? Is it really about the plan, or are there other reasons behind it?

Some people say they have not been heard. But there have been meetings, conversations, and chances to ask questions. I've seen people get answers and then still go out and say things that are not accurate. That is not helping anyone.

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If we really care about students, we have to be honest. We cannot make good choices based on incorrect information.

This plan is not just about closing or changing schools. It is about facing reality. It is about using our resources in a better way. And it is about making sure all students—not just some—have real opportunities.

So the real question is: are we ready to do what is fair, even if it is hard? Or are we going to keep things the same, even if they are not working?

Thank you for listening.

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#13

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher

Emily Sawyer,
parent of 4 PPS students and a 2024 graduate of Pittsburgh Perry HS.

We make the odds

“The world is not primarily changed by what we think of it. Transformative change happens when we are willing to build the things that we know must exist.”
(from “Let This Radicalize You” by Kelly Hayes & Mariame Kaba)

I get accused of being negative and too critical but what I actually am is a dreamer who believes endlessly in our ability to make a better world.

I also, confusingly enough, get accused of being naive or too theoretical, or existing in the world of ideas but not being realistic and practical. But I’m actually the one who is living in reality, the world where choices, especially those of white and privileged people that systems cater to, create the conditions that we all experience.

I always get told, “That’s nice, but when the district does stuff white and privileged people don’t like, they leave, so we can’t afford to do that.” Maybe, but we can’t afford to keep catering to privilege either. And I hate to break it to us, but we are the white and privileged people. So what if we just didn’t leave? I am asking you to just not leave. We are the ones who decide. The district can’t make us do anything. If we say we believe in something, I’m simply suggesting that we should live it. Don’t say one thing and do another. Don’t blame me for your discomfort and say I’m not being realistic. I’m the most realistic. My kids go to the schools you wouldn’t dream of sending your kids to, but don’t do anything about for the kids who do go there. I know what there is to be “lost” when we insist on exceptions for us and our kids and expect “one of the good ones” status anyway.

In the Nice White Parents podcast, the host, Chana Joffe-Walt, challenges us, “[This nice white parent] began with a material interest of getting her kid into a good school. But then she developed a new self interest. She didn’t want to be complicit in segregation. She felt compromised by a system that made her into someone she did not want to be. I recognized that feeling. It’s shame. I think we should listen to that shame. Because what it’s telling us is that we can’t have it both ways. Nice white parents can’t grab every advantage for our own children and also maintain our

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identities as good citizens who believe in equitable schools. The shame is telling us we have a choice. We can choose to hoard resources, and segregate ourselves, and flee the moment things feel uncomfortable. Or we can choose to be the people we say we are. But we can't have both."

(1)

If you have privilege to spend, spend it here. Don't teach your kids that they can always be an exception to the hard things in this world— that we can exempt ourselves from the impacts of hard things. Any kid that we fail in this school system will impact us, so we may be saving our kids from hard things now, but we can't keep that from them forever.

I still have yet to figure out what it is we mean when we say "recreate what's working." The question was asked directly at the latest progress monitoring meeting, and the answer said nothing about specific things that are working at specific "successful" schools. I contend that this question never gets answered because at base we all know that we can't recreate the conditions that exist at "successful" schools because those conditions are based on concentrations of privilege, whiteness, capital of all kinds and less on the specifics of what is happening in that school. It's also a little offensive, in my opinion, to all the tireless administrators, teachers, and staff at less "successful" schools as well, isn't it? I just really want to know why we are always looking to "recreate success" instead of redistribute resources.

Magnets (and charters) are "starfish" initiatives like gifted, and simply expanding access to something inequitable is not equity. Without voting to close schools, elementary magnet programs can be discontinued and students sent back to their home schools. Our reticence to do this – while I understand the monetary repercussions of losing enrollment because of state law regarding charter funding and transportation – is just another example in a long line of school districts, and this school district in particular, twisting ourselves into knots to cater to privilege (why do you think the laws are written the way they are? So you feel like you have to make decisions like this to keep white and wealthy parents/caregivers in the district). Another example is the way the two most segregated and privileged magnets were exempted from any negative impacts of the current version of the Future Ready Plan. And frankly, just practically speaking, magnets were initiated (and worked in PPS to a certain degree) during the time before the *Parents Involved* (2) court decision. Since that decision, magnets have been completely defanged as an equity tool. To use them to build equity rather than bolster inequity will take an iron will, unpopular decision-making, and alienating the privileged in favor of supporting the under-served. Can we do it? In my experience, PPS (and most school districts) has not shown itself to be willing or able to undertake any of that, let alone the community and parent/caregiver political education that would be required to bring people along. BUT WE CAN!

"There simply is no way to restructure systems of advantage and disadvantage without making some of the people accustomed to advantage panicky."

Elementary school is much too young to be sorted into programs like this. For one thing, parents/caregivers are often making decisions based on the perceived quality of the school, not a

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child's interest in a particular topic. This is especially true in PPS where we have magnet schools with "traditional" programs, which seems to mean nothing, and where we had a language magnet that offered no language instruction for years (based on parent reports). It is a major problem that parents/caregivers don't make a huge issue of this, and lays bare the fact that the specialized programming and actual student interest wasn't the point, the exclusivity and narrative of perceived quality are guiding the popularity of elementary magnets in PPS.

References:

- (1) [Nice White Parents podcast, episode 5](#), 50:00ff
- (2) https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/The_Story_of_parents/caregivers_Involved_Sandberg.pdf

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#14

Anna Jean Wirth

Parent

Good evening. My name is Anna Jean Wirth, and I am a parent of a first grader at Greenfield Elementary.

I'm here tonight because I have serious concerns about the proposed facilities utilization plan—concerns that have only grown as more district data has been released. I understand that changes to the district are needed for cost and equity reasons and appreciate that many of the changes proposed are sensible. However, I am raising concerns about the plan for Allderdice feeder schools, which appears to be contrary to achieving cost savings, equity increases, or improvements to course offerings.

Based on the district's own documents, this plan appears to cost approximately \$5 million for the reconfiguration of Greenfield, Colfax, Minadeo, and Mifflin, without producing long-term cost savings. And importantly, those figures do not include critical upgrades that these buildings still need, such as air conditioning.

At the same time, staffing projections released by the district show that class sizes at Greenfield are expected to increase by at least 15 percent. That is before any additional students are reassigned.

We have been told that centralizing middle schools will expand academic opportunities. However, district materials which were released in March also indicate that staffing constraints may limit the ability to offer a full range of electives at the middle school level. That seems to directly contradict one of the primary benefits being presented.

Furthermore, the recent update from the district in response to questions from the board offers more questions for the Allderdice feeder schools. According to district materials, Greenfield is already projected to be at about 80 percent capacity under the new plan. So how will Greenfield accommodate additional students from Hazelwood—which the update suggests are going to move from Minadeo to Greenfield--without exceeding capacity? If the attendance zones have changed, parents have not been provided with updated attendance zone maps reflecting these revisions. That is deeply concerning—especially with a vote approaching. Families deserve clarity about where their children will go to school before decisions of this magnitude are finalized.

I want to be clear: I strongly support this district. I want my children to continue in these schools, and I understand that parts of this broader plan are necessary for financial stability and equity.

But for the communities feeding into allderdice, this specific proposal appears to increase costs, increase class sizes, and create significant disruption—without clear evidence of improved outcomes for students. Why are we spending more than 5 million dollars to shuffle kids around—money which could be spent on, for example, giving aging buildings air conditioning--increase class sizes, and have limited elective options for middle schoolers?

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So I ask: what additional benefits justify these trade-offs? And why has critical information, like updated attendance zones, not been shared with families before this plan comes to a vote?

Thank you for your time.

#15

Sandra Woolley

Community Member

Good evening!

I am Sandra Woolley, a retired educator, and a grandparent of PPS students.

I am Chair of PIIN's Public Education Justice Task Force.

I think you know that PIIN is an Interfaith group.

As my title suggests PIIN is asking the Board to Vote "NO" on the Future-Ready Facilities Plan. Why?

This Plan has not been developed with the input of all Stakeholders.

PIIN believes this is a huge, missed opportunity to work with the City and Non-profits to develop an Innovative Plan for Pittsburgh Public Schools.

A Plan that will attract families back to Pittsburgh.

Families want this and the City of Pittsburgh needs it.

What do I mean?

The City is already talking about creating Community Centers in the buildings you close.

Why not fill some of the empty spaces in buildings with the Services families need?

While renovating, why not invite the City and other Agencies working with Families into the School Buildings?

This is called a Community School. One-stop shopping for whatever families need. Other Cities and School Districts are already doing this? Look at Cincinnati or Erie County.

Community Schools are different than Schools as Community Hubs. An important feature of a Community School is the Site-based Committee, that conducts a Needs

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Assessment and develops an Annual Plan. Partnerships are formed based on the identified needs.

We need Innovated Ideas to fund Community Schools.

The PPS needs financial support to fund Community Schools.

In Erie County the United Way supports Community Schools, and UPMC and Highmark, for example, adopt a school.

A key reason there are only 9 Community Schools is a lack of funding.

In 2016 when a previous Board committed to creating Community Schools, more than twenty schools applied, but there was money for only one. Four were funded by community groups: Homewood Children's Village and Community in Schools.

So let me ask again, Vote "NO" on this Plan.

Spend another year developing a Plan with the input of Families, the City, and Community Organizations.

Dr. Walters and PPS Board Directors –

PIIN asks you to THINK BIG!

Work with other Stakeholders.

Make Community Schools Centers of the Community, and

Families will want to Stay and Come Back.

Thank you.

#16

Rachel Schwartz

Parent

Public Comment – Facility Utilization Plan

Good evening,

My name is Rachel, and I am the parent of a first-grade student at Greenfield Elementary. I am here to express strong opposition to the updated proposed facility utilization plan as it impacts Greenfield, Colfax, and Minadeo.

Based on the district's own data released in March 2026, this plan raises serious concerns about both fiscal responsibility and educational quality.

First, the reconfiguration of these schools including the creation of a dedicated middle school is projected to cost approximately \$5 million, with no long-term cost savings. At the same time, these figures do not include critical facility upgrades, such as air conditioning. This is not a cost-saving measure—it is a costly restructuring with unclear financial benefit.

Second, staffing projections show that class sizes at Greenfield are expected to increase by at least 15%. That estimate does not account for additional students from boundary changes, including Hazelwood, which will likely increase class sizes even further. Larger class sizes directly undermine instructional quality and student support. The last update stated that Hazelwood will be fed to Greenfield. However, there are no updated feeder patterns, financial impacts, or enrollment projections provided for the public to review. We cannot provide comments on information we don't have.

Third, the district has justified this plan by stating that centralizing middle schools will expand academic opportunities. However, the district's own feasibility update indicates that staffing shortages will prevent schools from offering a full range of electives. That directly contradicts the stated purpose of this plan.

Taken together, this proposal requires significant financial investment while reducing educational quality and increasing disruption for students and families.

I want to be clear: I support Pittsburgh Public Schools and I understand the need for long-term planning and equity-driven decisions. However, this plan, as it applies to

these school communities, does not demonstrate clear benefits, does not deliver cost savings, and does not improve student outcomes based on the data provided.

So my question is direct: what evidence justifies moving forward with a plan that increases costs, increases class sizes, and limits academic opportunities?

I urge the board to reconsider this proposal and provide transparent, data-driven justification before proceeding.

Thank you.



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#17

Nichole Sims

Parent, Organization



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#18

Erica Porter

Community Member



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#19

Michael Cummins

Parent, Organization



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#20

Jazlynn Worthy

Parent



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#21

Kari Thompson

Parent



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#22

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent



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#23

Lars Munson

Student



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#24

Holy Munson

Parent