



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
June 22, 2026

#1

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent



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#2

Nina Louise Dagavarian

Student



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#3

Randall Taylor

Teacher/Staff, Organization, Community Member, Former Board Member



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#4

Leeretta Payne

Community Member



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#5

Jazlynn Worthy

Parent



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#6

Leeretta Payne

Community Member

(Double Registration)



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#7

Marcia Bandes

Community Member



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#8

Valerie Webb-Allman

Parent

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#9

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher

Emily Sawyer,
parent of 4 PPS students: rising 6th grader at Manchester, rising 9th graders at Sci Tech and hopefully Westinghouse, and a rising 12th grader at Perry.
I'm also a PPS substitute teacher.

"It's good if you can get it" isn't good enough for a public education system ("it" being an excellent education). I know that people are rightfully devastated right now given the loss of many valued school communities. Given the many very consequential decisions that are likely being made right now, I felt it is important for me to come and ask us, particularly white and privileged people, to engage in some self-reflection.

We don't have to perpetuate a system that requires and creates winners and losers, this is not a baseball game. I recognize that we look around us and see that we can either get ahead or struggle, either be the exploiters or the exploited, but we don't have to accept that world and we don't have to be literally creating the next generation to perpetuate it. I also recognize that for some, these choices are a matter of literal survival, but for others they are resource and privilege hoarding, plain and simple. It matters the positionality you are making these choices from. If we have privilege, I believe it is our responsibility to choose to spend it not by getting our own kids ahead, but by insisting that every kid deserves and gets what we want for our kids and then doing what it takes to make that happen instead of opting our kids out of the systems we inflict on other people's kids. Union organizer Eugene Debs said it a long time ago,

"In this system absolutely no [one] is secure, and you instinctively know it... You strain every nerve to educate your [child] and give [them] advantages. Over whom? Over the [child] of your neighbor. You are told everlastingly there is room on top. On top of whom? On top of your fellow [person]."

I'm going to share some ideas from an Instagram post I recently read. It's from the Integrated Schools account if you want to go read it yourself. They suggest these steps for choosing a school.

1. Instead of asking: What's the absolute best option for my child right now?
Try asking: What patterns am I participating in?

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2. Name your constraints honestly – safety, special needs, logistics, work schedules – these are real. This isn't about ignoring constraints. It's about being honest about them without hiding behind them.

3. Consider the collective impact:

If many families like yours made the same choice, what would happen?

Would it:

Strengthen public schools

Or further concentrate advantage and disadvantage?

They end by reminding us: There is no perfect choice. But there are choices that move us closer to the values that we claim.

“What is good for our children is inseparable from what is good for all children.”

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#10

Dashel Sawyer

Student

I am a rising freshman. I attended Pittsburgh Manchester for grades 5-8.

I have wanted to be a fire fighter for as long as I can remember. I am very excited about the opportunity that the ERT CTE program at Westinghouse provides for me and other PPS students.

What I don't understand is why I have to go to my assigned high school for 9th grade. I know the CTE program doesn't start until 10th grade, but Westinghouse has plenty of space and it shouldn't be impossible for students like me to transfer there. It is extremely disruptive and unnecessary to have to start high school at one school knowing I'm just going to transfer the next year. I will have to start over making friends, joining teams and clubs, and all that stuff. It just doesn't make any sense for me or any other student to have to do that when there are spaces available and kids transfer around PPS all the time for all kinds of things. There was a student at Schiller where my brother went taking math at Perry during middle school, so we know you make exceptions. But also, you shouldn't have to make an exception for me, because you should have a system in place for this scenario since most CTE programs don't start until 10th grade and lots of schools have plenty of space for a few kids to transfer in 9th grade instead of 10th. Please don't make me have to start high school twice. And also, please create a system for other students like me in the future so they don't have to be in this position.

Thank you for your time and attention.



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#11

April Clisura

Parent, School Bus Driver



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#12

Jackie Smith

Organization