



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#1

Jacob Evangelista

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#2

Mel Packer

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#3

Bomani Howze

Organization, Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#4

Richard Adams

Former PPS School Board Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#5

Naomi Chambers

Parent

#6

Shirley Hill

Retired PPS Teacher

PUBLIC HEARING - SHIRLEY ANN HILL**September 22, 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)? Per Kellie Meyer, Ms. Stephanie Lapine was not permitted to clear out her belongings. Various teachers dismantled her room. This resonates with me. When Angel Washington "conveniently transferred" me to UPrep, I was not permitted to completely clear out my room. In fact, someone from CTE boxed up all my belongings and shipped them to UPrep. She was never held accountable and the union was useless. How is it that an administrator can bar an employee from clearing out their room? 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 which in turn can affect their salary. Pretending there are no problems at Montessori creates an unsettling work environment. Teachers should not have to adapt to this leadership style to keep their jobs. Ms. Purnell please look into the toxicity that is going on with Kellie Meyer. PPS continues to have toxic administrators who

are not held accountable for their leadership style. This definitely needs to be addressed!!

Carrick High School has a **very small percentage of Black teachers**. "In classrooms led by Black educators, students gain more than academics—they experience belonging, empowerment, and the affirmation that their stories and potential matter. For Black students especially, having a Black teacher can be life-changing, sparking academic achievement, increased confidence, and a sense of belonging in spaces of power and possibility. For all students, Black teachers cultivate critical lessons in empathy, diversity, and leadership, laying the foundation for stronger, more equitable communities."

As the late, great Nikki Giovanni reminds us, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Black teachers are architects of this change, equipping students to confront inequities and build a future rooted in justice and opportunity." (The NEA Foundation, January 21, 2025). **BLACK STUDENTS AT CARRICK MATTER!!!**



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#7

Sauntee Turner

Organization, Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#8

Monet Miller

Community Member

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#9

Kelly Anderson

Parent

Hi, my name is Kelly Anderson and I am a parent of two children at Colfax, in 6th and 4th grades.

I would like to speak up in opposition of the district's new policy to be "paperless".

First: parents had no opportunities to voice concerns on this before it was implemented. What evidence-based research, showing that this was best for our children and their families, informed this decision?

Second: going paperless for report cards and communication to parents is one thing, but my fourth grade daughter is now required to complete her math homework on her laptop. This takes the focus away from the math (the skills she desperately needs to be strengthening at this critical time in her education) and puts the focus on how to manipulate her laptop to get it to do what she wants. The assignments to date have not reinforced critical foundational math skills - they have only caused extreme frustration at the absurdity of the format.

Putting pencil to paper is the best way for knowledge to take hold in the brain. Homework that is meant to strengthen foundational skills should be paper-based - for all children, but especially in elementary school. At a minimum, parents should be able to opt out of the online format and choose paper-based homework for their children.

Many other school districts in the country have started to reduce their reliance on educational technology after realizing the negative impact it has had on their children. PPS is going the wrong direction here, and I urge you to please reconsider.

Thank you.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies

September 22, 2026



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#10

Vanessa Dagavarian

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#11

Nina Louise Dagavarian

Student



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#12

Kara Britanik

Parent



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#13

Emily Sawyer

Parent, Substitute Teacher



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#14

Billy Hileman

Organization, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#15

Sarah Martin

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#16

Lorena Amos

Organization

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#17

Martha Riecks

Parent

9/22/26 Testimony from Martha Riecks, Parent

Are we Ready for the Future Ready Plan? Let's look at actual capacity

Since the Future Ready plan started, we've been told to trust the process and not worry about the data.

But data is critical. Having access to data, and understanding it, allows us to make wise decisions. As we are just months away from massive reconfigurations and closures, I want to spend time with data, using my brief time tonight to talk first about Montessori.

For the 26/27 School Year, Montessori has 17 mixed-grade Classrooms:

- 7 Children's House Classrooms with PreK3, PreK4, and Kindergarten students
- 6 Lower Elementary Classrooms with 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade
- 4 Upper Elementary Classrooms with 4th and 5th grade students

All classrooms have a lead teacher who holds a Pennsylvania teaching credential and either holds, or is currently working on obtaining, a Montessori credential.

Classrooms can have up to 22 students each, per teacher union contract clauses about split-grade classrooms.

Currently PreK through 3rd grade are at full and at maximum enrollment. A limited number of space is available in upper elementary because a 4th classroom was added this fall so that class sizes did not exceed 22 students.

This means:

- Children's House has 154 students.
- Out of those 154 students, there are 49 Kindergarteners.
- The remaining 105 are enrolled in the PPS Early Childhood Program. While their enrollment on paper may say early childhood, they are fully and truly a part of our Montessori student body, not a separately run program in the same building.
- Lower Elementary has 132 students
- Upper Elementary has about 80 students.

This brings the total student body to 366 students in PreK through 5.

Now, let's talk about Linden's enrollment. Why? Because the Future Ready plan says: current Linden students will be provided the option to attend Montessori.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

Which I fully support in theory.

I have always, and will always continue to, advocate for MORE public Montessori education opportunities in PPS, not less.

But "offering this option" means we are combining two schools, not simply moving a magnet program into a different building. And it means we need to seriously look at capacity and staffing.

Linden's current K-5 enrollment is 135.

This includes two autistic support classrooms, which are proposed to stay in the specialised classrooms in this building so let's assume that's 24 students.

That leaves 111 students. Let's assume there are 19 5th graders, which leaves 92 students who will be offered the option to attend the Montessori Magnet program.

Let's assume 80% of them say yes, I do want to stay so and have access to the only remaining magnet elementary school, using internationally-recognized best practices that drive some of our district's highest student proficiency rates.

So if we take the current combined Montessori and Linden Student bodies, that's going to be **458** students enrolled in PreK through 5.

At no more than 22 students per classroom, that's at least 20 classrooms. It might be more, depending on the actual grade-level enrollment numbers.

Linden also houses 2 early childhood classrooms, with a total of 40 students. Have these students also been given the option to stay in Linden and become part of Montessori? If so, again assuming 20% attrition, that would be a preK through 5 enrollment of 472 students -- requiring at least 22 classrooms, maybe more.

But: Linden only has 19 standard-sized classrooms, not counting small classrooms, the art room or the computer lab.

It has no designated special music room nor a designated instrumental music classroom. And with Greenway closing in the future, a gifted teacher will need a space too.

Where will everyone fit?

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies

September 22, 2026

Montessori also only has 17 classroom sets of Montessori materials to bring over from Friendship school. It costs at least \$1,000 to purchase the baseline of materials needed for a Montessori classroom - I know this because our Montessori PTA helps to purchase many of these materials through our fundraisers. Where will the funds for these supplies come from?

And, once the question of space is solved, how is this new school staffed?

Montessori currently has 17 teachers that hold or are in the process of earning the necessary credentials.

Where will the other teachers come from? There are very few staff available to the district with both of PA Teaching and Montessori credentials. In recent years, anytime the idea of Montessori expansion comes up, staffing has been one of the top concerns and the district has repeatedly said that Montessori credentials cannot be district funded, as they were in prior expansions

Maybe solutions are in the works already - perhaps the district is already working to recruit more staff with dual credentials? Perhaps Linden Teachers who may want to stay in the Linden building have been made aware of the need to begin working towards a Montessori credential to be part of the new staff?

But we are months away from the closure of the Friendship School Building and none of this has been addressed or mentioned in the updates being shared.

Future Ready: Will We Fit?



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#18

Verna Johnson

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#19

Jacob Evangelista

Community Member

(DUPLICATED)



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#20

Dodi Chambers

Student

#21

Mark Rauterkus

Community Member, Athletic Reform Task Force Appointee

Public Statement to PPS Board Members and Administrators

From Mark@Rauterkus.com, 412-298-3432, <https://4Rs.org>

Today is the first day of fall. In reality, fall has been gripping this city and our school district for decades. Too many of our neighbors have voted with their feet and moved out of the city. Too few are choosing to make Pittsburgh their home. Sure, we lost steel, industry and many headquarters for Fortune 500 firms. Demographic trends are not booming, of course.

Families want to put faith in a plan to justify their investments, and the plan you are implementing is not going to alter the downward spiral we're enduring.

Future ready, right-sizing, -- whatever. Your grand plans are managing a system-wide decline and are like moving chairs around the deck of the Titanic.

There is a different way. Once upon a time, a prior PPS Superintendent of Schools spoke at a meeting I attended. Not Dr. Walters. A different district superintendent. I was overcome. I got goosebumps listening to that plan that day. I LOVED hearing how that plan was framed. It came from a perspective that resonated with me.

I cheered because I had hope that Pittsburgh's downward spiral would level. We were going to turn a corner with this falling legacy. Spring was to arrive.

Prior Superintendent Mark Roosevelt did many terrible things to this district. Some of those ills are being corrected with the present-day Future Ready Plan and the dismantling of those schools that span from grades 6 to 12. (I'm talking about Obama, Sci-Tech, U-Prep and Westinghouse. You're flubbing it by missing CAPA by the way.)

But there is one thing that Mark Roosevelt did exceptionally well that has the potential to turn this entire city and this falling school district around.

I'd love for YOU to reflect, review and re-launch the Athletic Reform Task Force. Believe it or not, and I know you don't (right now) because of the displayed ignorance and incompetence, the Athletic Reform Task Force is the hinge that you all should salvage from Mark Roosevelt's PPS tenure. It is the way to begin to save this city.

PPS has managed to lose track of its best idea in decades: the Athletic Reform Task Force. Time to recognize and revisit this work before an important piece of PPS institutional history is lost, along with another thousand students and their families.

Four books have been put into print this year (2026) to guide you and help to illustrate this different planning pathway.

Mental Skills for Young Athletes and Performers is a book that every student and family in the district needs.

Chapter Zero, Our A.I. Coaching Wizard, is a book that documents a Remake Learning Grant that I earned so we can deploy an after-school swim program at Arsenal. Problems abound as I gave a copy

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

of this book months ago to PPS Director of Interscholastic Athletics, Karen Arnold, and as of yesterday she still has not read it. And, the same can be said for the new principal at Arsenal. It includes the text of a BOARD TAB that I wanted to be delivered to you. We have nonprofit support – but there is no water in the pool. There are “broken pools” in many schools. We tried to shift activities to Sci-Tech, no reply.

Last school year, no swimming for the community at Allegheny, Oliver, PCA.

By the way, we are playing underwater hockey every week at 7:30 pm on Wednesdays at Keystone Oaks High School Pool. Enter door A3. We had to move to the burbs and we used to do that in a PPS pool.

The Community Aquatics Directive co-authored with Ron Usher, describes ten pillars and explains why the swimming pool is the best learning laboratory in any school.

The fourth book and the one I wish you all could get your head around is *Coach Mark's Public Policy Playbook for Aquatics and Recreation* (Alpha Yinzer Edition). The Aquatics Directive is included as part one. Then Strategic Principles (part 2), Meta Plays (part 3) and additional plays (part 4).

The three meta plays include:

- Relaunching the Athletic Reform Task Force
- Re-branding and expanding Summer Dreamers into Year-Round Achievers
- the iLeague, a different way to give inspired swim experiences to students who have been grossly underserved in aquatics, a lifesaving skill and lifelong activity. No varsity swim teams exist at Perry, CAPA, Westinghouse, Uprep. Plus. The fun has been sucked out of physical education swimming, along with much of the swimming once offered through PPS middle schools and elementary teams.

By the way, the mayor, Corey O'Connor, was given the first book that came off the press. PPS does not own 100-percent of the blame for our city's fall or for how we treat our youngsters.

We are a river city. We've got an abundance of water.
We are a sports town.

These are two of the essential elements for a plan that builds relationships and trust for coaching our city out of its falling tailspin.

Action is the kicker. The plans championed in these books are affordable and prudent. Playing well with others and teaching those values to our children is difficult, but economically viable, even for a city and school district with depleted rainy day funds.

I offered to provide at-cost copies of the books via unanswered emails to the manager of Family, Community, and Stakeholder Engagement.

Tips to purchase print editions (+ shipping and handling) go to <https://SwimISCA.com>.

- 1) *Coach Mark's Public Policy Playbook for Aquatics & Recreation*, \$26
- 2) *Community Aquatics Directive*, \$9. But it is included in above.
- 3) *Chapter Zero, Our AI Coaching Wizard*, \$10, with grant from Remake Learning Network & Afterschool plans for PPS Arsenal
- 4) *Mental Skills for Young Athletes*, by Ph.D. sports psychologist, John Hogg, \$25

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

Download PDF ebooks, no charge.

Chapter Zero, Our AI Coaching Wizard, has a link for download at <https://SwimISCA.com>.

The other three books are available for free for PDF download at present via the free app, CrewLAB.

<https://crewlab.app.link/iepCeDykB6b>

Look within the ISCA Team and within the chat threads.



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#22

Martha Moore

Organization



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#23

Kari Thompson

Parent

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#24

Kimberly Ellis

Organization, Community Member



September 21, 2026

To the Members of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors:

I am writing to urge the Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors to reconsider the proposed closure of **Miller African Centered Academy**.

I understand that when the District examines current enrollment and demographic data alone, it may see numbers that support consolidation. But those numbers provide a snapshot of the Historic Hill District as it exists today. They do not adequately account for what is already being built, what is coming next, and the number of families who will be living along the Bedford Avenue corridor in the years immediately ahead.

That distinction is critical.

Bedford Avenue is undergoing a significant residential transformation stretching through the Historic Hill District, and Miller sits directly on Bedford Avenue, in the midst of this development activity.

The Bedford Dwellings Choice Neighborhoods Initiative alone will dramatically change the residential landscape surrounding Miller. According to information I received directly from the Education Coordinator working with TREK Development Group, upon completion of the overall Bedford Choice housing plan, **approximately 853 housing units** are planned—more than twice the **411 units** that comprised the original Bedford Dwellings community.

The planned housing mix includes **411 replacement units, 274 additional affordable units, and 167 market-rate units**, with the broader Choice Neighborhoods redevelopment scheduled for completion in **September 2032**.

This is not speculative development that may or may not happen someday. **The transformation is already underway.**

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies September 22, 2026

The Reed Family Buildings and Townhomes at Reed and Roberts streets are a relatively new development. Letsche School Apartments is even newer. Additional phases of the Bedford Choice redevelopment are moving forward, including development at Somers Drive and Bedford Avenue.

And the demographics of the existing Bedford Dwellings community tell us something important about the potential educational needs accompanying this development.

According to information provided to me by the Education Coordinator, approximately **31.9%** of Bedford Dwellings residents are K–5 students, totaling **approximately 60 students**.

As families relocate from the original Bedford Dwellings community into new replacement housing, educational demographics should be considered across the entire Choice Neighborhoods footprint—not simply within Bedford Dwellings as it exists today.

We are already beginning to see this transition. I was informed that approximately **14 K–5 students** at The Reed Family Buildings and Townhomes and **two K–5 students** at Letsche School Apartments are currently eligible for grades K–5 at Miller.

Those numbers are not the end of the story. **They are the beginning.**

The original Bedford Dwellings community contained 411 housing units. The broader redevelopment is planned to grow to approximately 853 units by 2032. Reed and Letsche are already adding newly developed housing to the surrounding community, while additional phases remain ahead.

That raises an important planning question that I respectfully ask the Board and District administration to answer:

Has Pittsburgh Public Schools incorporated the full Bedford Choice Neighborhoods redevelopment—including the planned expansion from 411 to approximately 853 housing units by 2032—into its future enrollment projections for Miller African Centered Academy?

Schools are long-term public infrastructure. Decisions about them should not be based solely upon how many children live in a neighborhood at one moment in time. They should also consider where housing is being constructed, where families are being relocated, where population growth is being intentionally encouraged, and where children are likely to live in the years ahead.

This is particularly important when considering the available capacity at Miller. Recent reporting, citing Pittsburgh Public Schools facilities estimates, indicates that Miller can accommodate **more than 530 students**. Rather than viewing available space only as evidence that a school should close, the District should also consider whether that capacity may be needed to accommodate the residential growth already underway around it.

The Historic Hill District is preparing for growth. Significant public and private investment is being made in housing and neighborhood transformation. Public agencies, developers and community organizations are deliberately creating new and replacement housing intended to bring and retain families in the Historic Hill District.

Educational planning should be happening alongside that development.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education recognizes that enrollment projections may require adjustment when communities experience significant changes in new home construction. That principle is

Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

particularly relevant here, where substantial residential development is not merely proposed but already underway.

My connection to Miller also gives me a personal perspective on what a neighborhood school means. **I was once one of those Historic Hill District children. I lived on Bedford Avenue and walked up the hill to Miller School.**

Years later, I came before this Board to advocate for the opening of a new and important school: **Miller African Centered Academy**. I believed then that Historic Hill District children deserved an excellent neighborhood school grounded in African and African American history, culture, identity, academic excellence and self-determination.

Today, I find myself before you again—this time asking you not to close it.

Consider what is happening around Miller. The Reed is new. Letsche is new. Bedford Dwellings is being transformed. Additional housing is coming along Bedford Avenue and throughout the Choice Neighborhoods footprint. And this development is scheduled to continue through 2032. So I ask you not only to look at Miller's enrollment today.

Look at Bedford Avenue. Look at Reed and Roberts. Look at Letsche. Look at Somers Drive. Look at Bedford Dwellings. Look at the hundreds of housing units that are being built and populated across the Historic Hill District through 2032.

And then ask yourselves a different question:

If hundreds of new homes and families are coming to this corridor, will the Historic Hill District need an excellent elementary school to serve them?

Before closing Miller African Centered Academy, I respectfully urge the Board to incorporate the full scope of current and planned Historic Hill District residential development into its enrollment projections and facilities analysis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Kimberly C. Ellis

Executive Director

Historic Hill Institute

Historic.Hill@gmail.com



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#25

Justin Laing

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#26

Sarah Zangle

Parent

#27

LaKeisha Wolf

Organization, Community Member

Good evening, members of the school board, parents, and community members.

I come before you today to urge you to protect Pittsburgh Miller PreK-5. Miller is not merely an administrative facility under the Future-Ready Facilities Plan; it is Pittsburgh Public Schools' *only* African-centered academy. Preserving Miller is an urgent obligation across three fundamental areas: respecting our city's racial history, resisting cultural hegemony, and protecting public health.

1. Pittsburgh's Racial History and Institutional Erasure

We cannot view this proposal in isolation from the Hill District's history of disinvestment. In the 1970s, the Hill District was served by 11 public schools; today, systemic contraction has left only three. Closing Miller repeats a traumatizing pattern of municipal displacement, echoing the 1950s Lower Hill demolition that uprooted thousands of residents and local Black businesses, alongside historic "racialized slum clearance" policies. Furthermore, Weil's facilities will be unable to absorb displaced students, especially as housing continues to develop.

2. Resisting Cultural Hegemony and Supporting Self-Determination

Standard educational frameworks frequently reinforce Eurocentric models while marginalizing Black history and pedagogy, leading to cultural alienation and higher rates of disciplinary exclusion. Miller offers a vital alternative. Its African-centered model centers Black heritage, local history, and restorative practices to foster not only self-worth but also cultural responsiveness, building leadership able to respond to the conditions of our own community. Parents and community advocates fought for and established this designation. Stripping away the city's only African-centered academy erases a community anchor and halts community-led growth.

3. Public Health Outcomes, Trauma, and Community Well-Being

School stability and cultural safety are critical Social Determinants of Health. Findings from the Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission show that Pittsburgh remains severely unlivable for Black women and children. In Allegheny County, Black girls face disproportionate disciplinary "pushout" into juvenile detention. Miller acts as a crucial protective environment, offering emotional safety and strategies that defend youth against trauma. Closing the school creates commute burdens, family stress, and relational trauma across the neighborhood.

Policy Recommendations

Preserving Miller is an act of reparatory justice and public health protection. We call on decision-makers to:

1. **Rescind the Closure Order:** Reconsider shuttering Miller PreK-5.
2. **Invest in Cultural Infrastructure:** Provide dedicated funding for African-centered programming aligned with revitalization efforts.
3. **Incorporate Health Impact Assessments:** Require comprehensive Racial and Health Impact Assessments before closing neighborhood schools in historically marginalized communities.

Thank you.

LaKeisha Wolf
Executive Director
Ujamaa Collective
2512 Wylie Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#28

Alisa Grishman

Community Member



Pittsburgh Public Schools Public Hearing Testimonies
September 22, 2026

#29

Pamela Collier

Community Member