

February 2012 Board Watch Report Card

Pittsburgh School Board Performance Remains Static *Maintains B- on Latest Board Watch "Report Card"*

Since the launch of Board Watch in January 2009, A+ Schools has issued 11 report cards* on Pittsburgh School Board governance practices based on observations of meetings by trained volunteers.

Highlights

The School Board received an overall grade of a B-. This is the same overall grade the School Board received on the August report card. Other grades include:

- **Focus and Mission** – the grade increased from last November to a B, which means that on average, volunteers reported that the Board members spent most of their meeting time managing time effectively, focusing on ways to achieve the district's goals, and prioritizing student outcomes.
- **Transparency** – the grade remained a B+, which means that on average, volunteers agreed that they felt welcome at the meetings and understood the information presented and the rationale behind the Board's actions.
- **Conduct** – the grade remained a B+, which means that on average, volunteers reported that some of the Board members used sarcastic, contemptuous or disrespectful verbal or nonverbal communication. They also reported that most of the Board handled differences of opinion respectfully.
- **Role Clarity** – the grade increased to a C, which means that on average, volunteers reported that the Board spent about half of the meeting time focused on monitoring the extent to which the district is making progress towards achieving its goals and using policy as a way to create solutions to their concerns. It also means that on average, the Board spent about half of the meeting time focused on the details of agenda items (i.e., who participates, when items occur, what the participants will do, etc.).
- **Competency** – the grade remained a B-, which means that on average, volunteers reported that more than half the Board members were prepared for the meeting, appeared to use research, district data, existing policies and other facts to inform their opinions, and effectively fulfilled their role as policy makers.



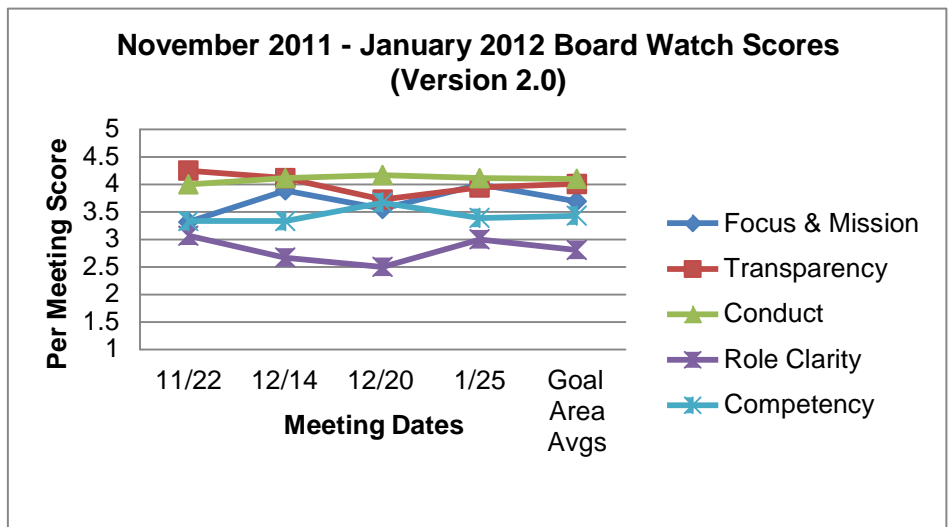
**February 2012 Report Card* Issued to
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Board of Directors**

Focus and Mission	3.69	B
Transparency	4.01	B+
Conduct	4.10	B+
Role Clarity	2.81	C
Competency	3.43	B-
Overall	3.61	B-

* Based on revised reporting form (Version 2.0).
All grades were calculated from the responses of informed citizens serving as independent observers and evaluators of school board governance.



*The February 2012 report card is the fourth report card to be issued using the new reporting form (Version 2.0) introduced by A+ Schools last spring. Version 2.0 reflects higher expectations for the School Board's governance and allows for more specific feedback and recommendations from Board Watch volunteers.



Minimum Score	Grade
5.00	A+
→ 4.67	A
→ 4.33	A-
→ 4.00	B+
→ 3.67	B
→ 3.33	B-
→ 3.00	C+
→ 2.67	C
→ 2.33	C-
→ 2.00	D+
→ 1.67	D
→ 1.33	D-
→ 1.00	F

Previous Report Card Scores based on Version 2.0 reporting form

	May 2011	Aug 2011
Focus and Mission	3.51 B-	2.98 C
Transparency	4.12 B+	4.00 B+
Conduct	4.19 B+	3.94 B+
Role Clarity	2.85 C	2.60 C-
Competency	3.44 B-	3.33 B-
Overall	3.62 B-	3.37 B-

Previous Report Card Scores based on Version 1.0 reporting form

	March 2009	June 2009	Nov 2009	Feb 2010	May 2010	Aug 2010	Nov 2010	Feb 2011	May 2011
Focus and Mission	3.28 C+	3.24 C+	3.59 B-	2.95 C	3.29 C+	3.33 B-	3.49 B-	3.63 B-	3.51 B-
Transparency	3.51 B-	4.02 B+	4.29 B+	4.14 B+	4.05 B+	4.20 B+	4.32 B+	4.47 A-	4.12 B+
Conduct	3.43 B-	3.25 C+	3.74 B	3.39 B-	3.49 B-	3.67 B	3.69 B	3.95 B	4.19 B+
Role Clarity	3.10 C+	2.98 C	3.10 C+	3.00 C+	3.05 C+	2.83 C	2.99 C	3.07 C+	2.85 C
Competency	3.28 C+	3.27 C+	3.39 B-	3.34 B-	3.31 C+	3.59 B-	3.66 B-	3.58 B-	3.44 B-
Overall	3.32 C+	3.35 B-	3.62 B-	3.36 B-	3.44 B-	3.53 B-	3.53 B-	3.74 B	3.62 B-

Recognizing Progress, Continuing Concerns

A+ Schools applauds School Board for its continuing steady improvement in focus and mission, which rose from a C to a B since last August. However, A+ remains concerned with the lingering issues regarding role clarity and a lack of focus on policy.

A+ Schools urges the School Board to make a concerted effort in future meetings to improve in these critical areas.

Recommendations

Our last three Board Watch Report Cards have included the following recommendation:

Implement the widely used best practice of the consent agenda as a way to minimize time and attention on administrative tasks and create more time and attention for setting and monitoring policies that create a high performing school system where all students achieve at high levels.

Once more, A+ Schools recommends that the Board implement the consent agenda and focus more on policy. Implementing this change will enable the School Board to improve its grade in both Focus and Mission and Role Clarity. It also will allow the Board to address and support many of the volunteers' suggestions that have been made over the last several reporting periods, including:

- Limit the amount of time given to a discussion;
- Limit the time that any given Board member can comment on an item;
- Avoid interrupting procedures with unrelated topics;
- Focus less on details and micromanaging;
- Relate agenda items more to policy;
- Manage time effectively;
- Prioritize focusing on student achievement rather than community; and
- Discourage acceptance of last-minute information, providing Board members ample time to review items before meetings and decreasing the time spent answering clarifying questions.