

Introduction

At our **Changemakers** event this past summer, where we raise funds for our programs and celebrate the students, parents, educators, and community volunteers who are making a difference for children, we shared with the audience this quote from Bobby Kennedy that sticks with us: “Each time a [person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, [he or she] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Standing up for equity requires us to create many more tiny ripples of hope if we are to reach our goal of a school system in Pittsburgh where all students experience great principal leaders, great educators in the classroom, access to opportunities that expand their horizons, and supports that help them reach their highest potential.

At A+ Schools this past year, we focused our advocacy on:

- Ensuring children had a safe and caring place to go in the event of a teachers’ strike
- Making “gifted” education experiences more accessible and equitable
- Monitoring implementation of restorative disciplinary practices in schools
- Raising concerns for English learner students and their families with administrators
- Requesting that school staff not be armed with guns
- Raising student voice with pre-service teachers about the importance of building authentic relationships and having high expectations
- Promoting teacher and principal pipelines and district/ university partnerships
- Fighting for more resources for schools across the state, and for more county resources for out-of-school time, early childhood education, and nutritious meals

We stand ready to work with organizations, individuals, and community leaders toward a common vision: all of our students achieving and succeeding at high levels. Read on to learn more about what happened last year in our schools, and how you can get involved.

What’s in the report?

This report contains data for each **Pittsburgh public school** and **the charter schools within the city**. (Charter schools are public schools operated independently of school districts.) We thank the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the charter schools that provided information.

The report is organized around indicators that research has identified as important for achievement. On our **school pages**, we highlight data about *teaching*, *student academic growth*, *school climate*, and *readiness* for college and careers. We report *key outcomes*, such as the number of students who took algebra by 8th grade, and achievement on certain state tests. This year, for grades 3-5 and 6-8, we report PSSA score ranges for subgroups of students (black, white, multi-ethnic...) next to similar information for that subgroup districtwide. While our district (like other urban districts) still has a large achievement gap between white students and other students, these comparisons highlight schools that are doing better with students of color than the district overall.

We report *academic growth* as measured by PVAAS—the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System. PVAAS reports on whether or not a school met the state’s standard for growth in PSSA and Keystone achievement: at least a year’s worth of growth in scores for a year’s worth of schooling. PVAAS is reported for public schools across the state, allowing us to look at district schools and charter schools using the same measure.

The report contains:

- Data about each school for the **2017-18** school year
- Comparisons of each school to district averages
- How each school measures up to state “proficiency” levels on PSSA tests and Keystone exams
- Information about each level (K-5, K-8, 6-8, 6-12, and 9-12) on the cover page of each section

Information that reflects the **current year** as a service to readers includes:

- School names, names of principals/administrators, contact information, and names of School Board representatives
- “English as a Second Language” program sites, magnet programs, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) program sites
- Building accessibility

Basic information about the district’s **special education centers** and the **Hill House Passport Academy Charter School**, which serve special populations of students, appears on page 116. Due to the lack of meaningful achievement indicators for groups of students with diverse special needs at these schools, we don’t provide additional information. **Pittsburgh Online Academy**, a regular education school, is included on this page. Because of its unique features, we’re unable to report the same data we provide for other regular education schools.

The report includes much additional information beyond the school pages. The **executive summary**, beginning on page 8, is an analysis of some aspects of the reported data and an examination of trends. On the **comparison chart pages** (14-18), readers can compare schools of different types and view information not reported on the school pages, such as each school’s *site-based budget*, and a measure of how *students rated their teachers*. On these pages, we also continue to track the *racial achievement gap* for grades 3-5 and 6-8, which we define as the difference between black student achievement at the school and white student achievement in the district overall.

On the **cover pages** for each level, along with aggregated information, we show PSSA or Keystone achievement in the same graph with students’ economic disadvantage, by school. Again, by showing this relationship, we are able to highlight schools that are succeeding with students who have high levels of economic disadvantage.

You will also find important information about **choosing a school for your child** on page 4, an index of **schools grouped by region** on page 5, information about the district’s **Gifted and Talented program** and efforts to make access to it more equitable on page 19, and a **“college and career readiness roadmap”** on page 88. See page 109 for **highlights of A+ Schools programs** over the past year and how you can support them with a donation, large or small.

The **indicators of school progress** were originally selected by an A+ Schools committee headed by Alan Lesgold, Ph.D., dean emeritus of the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh. The indicators in our revised report (starting in 2014) were developed with the help of Dr. Shula Nedley and the A+ Schools Board and staff. Changes to this year’s report are due in part to Parent Nation leaders who participated in focus groups; our former director of Research and Communications, Michelle Massie; our current data analyst, Sean Caulfield; and Carnegie Mellon University Professor Dr. Amelia Haviland. Thanks to all for your contributions.

We offer readers contextual information along with achievement information to provide a clearer picture of each school. Still, much of the report is based on test scores. We urge readers to approach test scores with caution. Test results may not adequately represent students’ achievement due to personal factors such as students’ test anxiety, and/or technical reasons for score fluctuations.

This report isn’t a substitute for visiting schools and observing in classrooms. We hope readers will consider the report as a tool for framing further questions as they continue to seek information about the quality of our schools.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the passing of our dear friend and former data analyst, Daniel Morrow. Dan’s wit and attention to detail were an integral part of this project over the past three years. Rest in peace.

See pages 114-115 for more information about any indicator.

What are the PSSA tests and Keystone exams?

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, or PSSA, is the state test for 3rd through 8th graders. Testing takes place in the spring.

PSSA content area	Grades tested
English Language Arts (ELA) & Math.....	3-8
Science	4, 8

The **Keystones** are state end-of-course exams, given at various times throughout the school year. In 2017-18, students took Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone exams. Students may take the exams more than once.

Scores for both PSSA tests and Keystone exams are rated “Advanced” (above grade level), “Proficient” (at grade level), “Basic” (not consistently at grade level), or “Below Basic” (below grade level).

A small number of students who receive special education services take an alternate test.