

## June 2012 Board Watch Report Card

### **Pittsburgh School Board Shows Policy Leadership** *Maintains B- on Board Watch "Report Card" Despite Significant Shifts*

#### **Progress in Policy Leadership**

A+ Schools applauds the School Board for making two significant decisions reaffirming its focus on student achievement and its role as the policy making body of Pittsburgh Public Schools.

In April, the School Board decided in an 8-1 vote to begin using a different meeting structure. Instead of reviewing each agenda item separately, Board members now use Agenda Review meetings to choose the specific topics to discuss during Legislative Sessions. All other topics are grouped together and voted on collectively by the School Board. . Although this new structure may be difficult to adjust to, A+ Schools encourages the School Board to wait at least six months before making any additional changes. We believe the new structure will provide more time for the School Board to set and monitor policies and will lead to a high-performing school system where all students achieve at high level.

Also in April, the School Board passed a resolution entitled "[Development of a Teacher Furlough Process that Puts Children First](#)". In its April 25 resolution, the School Board called for Superintendent Linda Lane to work with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers to use factors beyond seniority in making decisions about teacher layoffs. Recognizing that making teacher layoffs solely on seniority will disproportionately impact on the District's most vulnerable schools, the School Board asked that the process also take into account data on teacher performance. Passage of this resolution underscores the School Board's priority to ensure maximum achievement and equitable distribution of resources for all students.

The School Board has made courageous decisions that focus on its goals and policymaking role during a time of challenging budget cuts, school transitions, and furloughs of school-based professionals. These actions keep the best interests of Pittsburgh Public School students at the center of the School Board's work. We encourage continued leadership by the School Board in these areas!

#### **Highlights**

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

- **Focus and Mission** – the grade decreased since last February to a C+, which means that on average, volunteers reported that the Board spent about half of their meeting time managing time effectively, focusing on ways to achieve the district's goals, and prioritizing student outcomes.
- **Transparency** – the grade decreased slightly to a B, which means that on average, volunteers agreed that



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

Focus and Mission	3.20	C+
Transparency	3.71	B
Conduct	4.20	B+
Role Clarity	2.61	C-
Competency	3.23	C+
Overall	3.39	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.



they felt welcome at the meeting 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. But, they reported that most of the Board handled differences of opinion respectfully.
- **Role Clarity** – the grade decreased slightly to a C-, which means that on average, volunteers reported that the Board spent slightly less than half of their meeting time focused on monitoring the extent to which the district is making progress toward achieving its goals and using policy as a way to create solutions to their concerns. It also means that on average, the Board spent slightly less than half of their 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 decreased to a C+, which means that on average, volunteers reported that about half the Board was 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.

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

*Since the launch of Board Watch in January 2009, A+ Schools has issued 12 report cards on Pittsburgh School Board governance practices based on observations of meetings by trained volunteers.*

*The June 2012 report card is the fifth 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.*

### Previous Report Card Scores based on Version 2.0 reporting form

	May 2011	Aug 2011	Feb 2012
Focus and Mission	3.51 B-	2.98 C	3.69 B
Transparency	4.12 B+	4.00 B+	4.01 B+
Conduct	4.19 B+	3.94 B+	4.10 B+
Role Clarity	2.85 C	2.60 C-	2.81 C
Competency	3.44 B-	3.33 B-	3.43 B-
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.62 B-</b>	<b>3.37 B-</b>	<b>3.61 B-</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
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-
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-
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
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+
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-
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.32 C+</b>	<b>3.35 B-</b>	<b>3.62 B-</b>	<b>3.36 B-</b>	<b>3.44 B-</b>	<b>3.53 B-</b>	<b>3.53 B-</b>	<b>3.74 B</b>