

May 2011 Board Watch Report Card

Pittsburgh School Board Earns a B- on Latest Board Watch “Report Card” New Reporting Form Raises Expectations for School Board Governance

Since the launch of Board Watch in January 2009, A+ Schools has issued nine report cards on Pittsburgh School Board governance practices based on volunteers’ observations of meetings. The May 2011 report card shows grades and scores generated by Board Watch volunteers using a new reporting form (Version 2.0) introduced by A+ Schools at the beginning of the grading period.

This new form reflects higher expectations for the School Board’s governance and allows for more specific feedback and recommendations. Many thanks to our Board Watch volunteers for helping to ensure that the Pittsburgh School Board continues to increase its effectiveness and focus efforts on improving outcomes for all PPS students.

Highlights

- Report card reflects grades and scores generated using a new reporting form (Version 2.0) introduced by A+ Schools in the May 2011 grading period.
- The Board’s lowest grade is a C for role clarity.
- The Board’s highest grades are a B+ for conduct and transparency.
- Previous scores are listed separately and without comparison to current scores because they are based on a different reporting form.

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



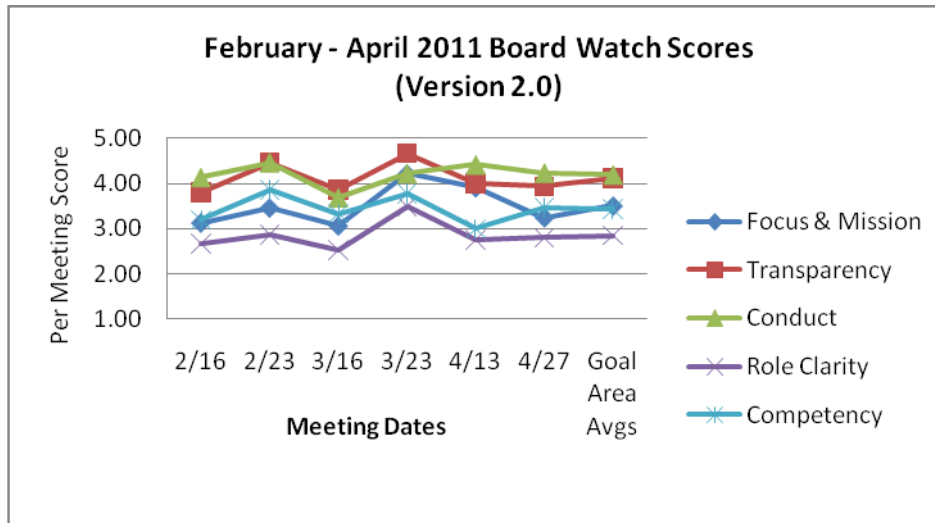
**May 2011 Report Card* Issued to
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Board of Directors**

Focus and Mission	3.51	B-
Transparency	4.12	B+
Conduct	4.19	B+
Role Clarity	2.85	C
Competency	3.44	B-
Overall	3.62	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.



A+ Schools
Pittsburgh's Community Alliance for Public Education



Previous Report Card Scores*

	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-
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

*Based on previous reporting form (Version 1.0)

Recommendations: FOCUS ON POLICY

The area of greatest challenge for the School Board continues to be ROLE CLARITY. Fulfilling its role as a reform School Board means focusing time and energy on reviewing, modifying and setting policies that are focused on achieving the district's goals. School Board leadership requires planning for change and monitoring factors that would indicate success, not just reacting to proposed changes.

While School Board members may raise the level of conversation by addressing how to achieve their collective goals rather than primarily reacting to specific expenditures and routine administrative details, improvements in scores requires deeper, more structural changes. Much work is still needed in the area of creating a deliberate time and process for policymaking.

Some ways that the Board can do that are as follows:

1. Conduct a Board training session to create the opportunity to learn about new ways of governing as policymakers.

2. Implement the widely used best practice of the consent agenda as a way to minimize time and attention spent on administrative tasks and allow more time and attention for setting and monitoring policies that result in a high performing school system where all students achieve at high levels.
3. On each board tab, list the district policy number that corresponds to the item for quick reference by Board members and the public. For example, a board tab related to guidance counseling would be related to policy #107.
4. Assign a section of the Board meeting agenda to discussing new policy matters from the list of items that arose in Board meeting conversations.

A+ Schools asks Pittsburgh Public School Board members to better fulfill their role as policymakers by creating a deliberate time and process for the act of policymaking. We also ask the public to support us in our request.