



**Contact:** James Fogarty, A+ Schools  
(412) 697-1298, ext. 100  
[jfogarty@aplusschools.org](mailto:jfogarty@aplusschools.org)

## **A+ Schools Releases 2012 Report on School Progress in Pittsburgh Scores Dip as Achievement Gap Widens, College and Career Readiness Drops**

PITTSBURGH, PA – Nov. 12, 2012 – A+ Schools, Pittsburgh's community advocate for educational equity and excellence, today released its *Eighth Annual Report to the Community on Public School Progress in Pittsburgh*. The report provides parents, community leaders and others interested in public education with a fair and comprehensive look at the progress of each school in the Pittsburgh Public School District.

Carey Harris, executive director of A+ Schools, said after years of steady improvement, schools across the district took a step backward in 2011-12 in terms of student achievement and a widening of the achievement gap — the difference between the percentage of black and white students who scored proficient or advanced on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests. Other disappointing signs include decreases in the graduation rate, declining grade point averages (GPAs), and fewer students qualifying for Pittsburgh Promise scholarships.

"It was a rough year," Harris said. "While the trends are consistent with what happened across the state last year, that is no consolation. Our schools, our kids, continue to need our help. We have much work to do to ensure our schools work for every child."

According to Harris, the 2012 report shows declines in almost every area. It marks the first time in eight years of producing the report that A+ Schools has delivered so much bad news.

There were a few positive signs. More Pittsburgh students scored in the proficient and advanced ranges for reading in grades 6-8 and grade 11 compared to four years ago — with gains far exceeding the state's gains. And, in math, grades 6-8 also experienced gains exceeding the state. But, Pittsburgh students in grades 3-5 scored lower in both reading and math — mirroring state trends, but with greater losses. And, 11th grade math scores remained static while state scores showed gains.

Harris also pointed to a worsening gap between black and white student achievement — a disappointing turnaround after three years of narrowing in reading and one in math. In reading, the gap edged up 1.3 percentage points to 31.9 percent. In math, the gap increased by 3.6 percentage points to 30.9 percent — the largest gap in four years.

— more —

Other findings in the report show:

- Enrollment declined last year by 1,052 students to 24,918.
- The district graduation rate decreased slightly to 68.5 percent.
- Nearly 58 percent of all Pittsburgh seniors earned the 2.5 or higher GPA needed to qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship — a decrease of 1 percentage point.
- The number of black seniors earning a qualifying GPA dropped 4 percentage points to 39 percent, while the number of white students earning a 2.5 or higher GPA remained at 77 percent.
- The number of students enrolled in one or more AP courses increased by 1 percentage point to 15.2 percent.

Published annually, the *A+ Schools Report to the Community* provides information on PSSA achievement based on the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS), which analyzes whether or not selected grade levels in a school have made at least a year's worth of progress, regardless of the starting point. The A+ report also shows how students performed across the four PSSA score ranges by race and family income status.

Harris urged the Pittsburgh community to review the report as a tool for asking questions and seeking information about the quality of city schools. She also encouraged parents and interested community members to volunteer for A+ Schools' **School Works** initiative, which will begin interviewing school principals throughout the district in February on their needs and barriers to success. Parents also can become involved in **Parent Nation** school teams being formed in some of the more vulnerable schools.

A+ Schools will mail the report this week directly to 20,000 city households with children enrolled in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and children ages 5 and under. In addition, the report will be available in local libraries, city schools and at elected officials' offices, or by calling A+ Schools at 412-697-1298. The full report — and information on the A+ School Works and Parent Nation programs — also can be accessed online at [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org).

#### **Opportunities to Learn More**

A+ Schools is offering tailored presentations to school and community groups interested in learning more about the report and how to use it. To arrange a presentation, contact A+ Schools at 412-697-1298, or visit the A+ Schools website at [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org).

*A+ Schools is the community advocate and leader for educational equity and excellence in Pittsburgh's Public Schools. It serves as a community force advancing the highest educational achievement and character development for every public school student. Its core purpose and focus of work is to increase educational equity in Pittsburgh schools. For more information, contact A+ Schools at 412-697-1298 or visit [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org).*

###