

SCHOOL WORKS 2010 Outcomes

When students have access to excellent teaching, rigorous courses, learning tools, and appropriate support, they can succeed, regardless of background or circumstance. A+ Schools' aim is to ensure that School Works for all students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools – especially our low-income African American students – so that the racial achievement gap disappears and all students achieve at high levels.

In the second year of the School Works initiative, volunteers visited Pittsburgh Public Schools' middle and high schools (including two charter schools) to ask 22 principals and 20 guidance counselors how their schools were functioning. They also asked about the implementation of A+ Schools' first year [School Works priorities](#) and the Empowering Effective Teachers Plan. School Works 2010 findings show overall improvement in the school policies and practices we prioritized, including improved hiring, more effective teaching, better course offerings and an improved learning environment for students.

Improved Hiring Process

- Ninety percent of principals said they completed teacher hiring by the first day of school (for teachers), compared to 81 percent in 2009.
- Fewer principals experienced hiring challenges in 2010; 19 percent fewer principals reported not having enough quality candidates and 15 percent fewer reported not having enough candidates, in general.
- According to principals, of the 126 new teachers hired, 78 percent demonstrated a passion for teaching students at their school and 70 percent provided evidence of effectiveness.

More Effective Teachers

- All 20 PPS principals said they were implementing the Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE).
- Eight of nine principals in the second year of RISE said it was proving effective in identifying and developing effective teachers.
- All high schools reported having Promise Readiness Corps teams in place which are teams of highly effective teachers that work together to support 9th and 10th grade students.

Positive Teaching and Learning Environments

- Schools indicated progress in both behavior management and dropout prevention.
- Seven more principals (19 schools) reported having a system of identifying students at-risk of dropping out and coordinating an intervention.
- The suspension rate dropped from 36 to 27 percent, despite an increase in the number of referrals received by principals, indicating that schools are using other disciplinary measures to manage student behavior.

Improved Access to Rigorous Courses, College/Career Preparation

- Three more schools (16 schools) reported having plans in place to intentionally teach students note taking, good study habits, organization and time management skills.
- Three more schools (20 schools) reported taking steps to update students on their Pittsburgh Promise eligibility more than once a year.
- Following the School Works 2010 interviews, the PPS board adopted a new policy allowing students not identified as gifted to enroll in Center for Advanced Studies courses if they have met other achievement-related criteria.

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