School Works 2014-15
Results of Interviews
with K-12 Principals

Agenda
✓ About A+ Schools and School Works
✓ Results
  ✓ Mission Driven Schools
  ✓ Great Teaching
  ✓ Fair Funding, Smart Spending
✓ Recommendations
It is possible for Pittsburgh to be known as a city whose public schools have high standards, great teaching, and give all students—regardless of race or background—an opportunity for an excellent education.

**Equitable Education**

Provides each student with the individual support to reach and exceed a shared standard of success, which includes graduating from high school and completing post-secondary education or training.
Community action research aimed to assist the public in understanding what resources and opportunities exist for students in PPS and to develop a plan for community action to ensure we have an equitable school system in Pittsburgh.

Schools can work for all students

- Mission Driven
- Great Teaching
- Schools that Work
- Fair Funding
- Smart Spending
Measuring if schools work

- More results than we can share
- Limitations
- Trends based on school factors:

- **Chronic absenteeism**
  - % students who missed at least 10% of days—excused or not—in Oct-Nov 2014

- **Suspensions**
  - % students with at least one out-of-school suspension in Oct-Nov 2014

- **Vulnerability**
  - Low achievement, low growth, high gaps
  - High % of students with need

Mission Driven Schools
are safe, respectful, and positive places where students are engaged
Schools can impact attendance

- social and emotional learning
- high expectations
- making it positive
- academic rigor

*Principals of vulnerable schools reported less of these things happening*

High expectations matter!

*Schools whose teachers have high expectations of students have lower suspension rates and chronic absenteeism.*
Research supports that effort-based schools lead to student success

- Effort can produce high achievement
- High standards and academic rigor for ALL
- Students receive as much time and instruction as needed

When kids say, “I can’t do that,” always add, “NOT YET!”


Table Discussion

When have you risen to the occasion because of someone’s expectations of you?
Mission Driven Schools emphasize accountability, building character, making amends, and keeping students in school.

80% of principals report effectively preventing and responding to misbehavior.

- **Preventing**
  - Teaching expectations
  - Replacing bad behaviors
  - Modeling expectations

- **Responding**
  - Private discipline
  - Addressing cause
  - Accountability
  - Restoring relationships
  - Make-up work

*Principals of vulnerable schools reported less of these things happening*
Good news
- Behavior/SEL supports increasing
- Exclusionary discipline decreasing
- Student Bill of Rights created change

Bad news
- Suspensions high in some schools
- Black students suspended more
- Zero tolerance still practiced

Exclusionary discipline has negative long-term consequences
Restorative practices are a positive alternative to exclusionary discipline

- Strong relationships build strong communities and prevent misbehavior
- Discipline helps students:
  - understand misbehavior
  - be accountable to those impacted
  - repair and rebuild relationships

Principals report interest in restorative practices

- 46 want to learn more
- 33 report using them
- The rest believe they could be successful

Challenges:
- staff buy-in
- time
- parent support
What schools do predicts suspension rates more than students’ behavior

- Positive school cultures
- Academic rigor
- Supports

Lower suspension rates = better attendance

Table Discussion

Scenario: Two students have an incident with name-calling and pushing.

Discuss alternatives to giving them out-of-school suspensions.
Polling

Black students were given suspensions three times more frequently than their white peers last fall - how much do you believe this a problem?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- A little
- Not at all

How important is it for schools to eliminate zero tolerance policies and only remove students when there is a real and immediate safety threat to the school community?

How important is it for schools to provide training, support, and time for schools to implement restorative practices?

Great Teaching

Great schools hire, keep, and support great teachers
Most principals have difficulty finding effective substitutes. Principals at vulnerable schools have more difficulty retaining effective teachers.

Current staffing policies present barriers to hiring effective teachers.
What are forced placements?

Placement process for voluntary and involuntary transfers

In June of each year, after the two hiring rounds are over, the central office tries to match unassigned teachers with the right assignment. If no match results, the district force places teachers who would otherwise not have a position, whether or not a school has requested the teacher.

When are new teachers hired?

District hiring timeline

The district's goal is to place all voluntary and displaced teachers in new positions before the end of the school year; however, new hires are not interviewed and salaried until the summer months.
More vulnerable schools have higher teacher turnover from year to year

Our job is to teach the students we have. Not the ones we would like to have. Not the ones we used to have. Those we have right now. All of them.

Dr. Kevin Maxwell

Table Discussion

How has teacher turnover impacted you (as a student, parent, teacher, etc.)?

Fewer with high expectations, using different methods
Polling

Principals in vulnerable schools report challenges with hiring and retaining effective teachers - how much do you think this is a problem?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- A little
- Not at all

Of the solutions named by principals, what are your top two priorities?

- Allow school leaders to hire their own teams (eliminate forced placements)
- Allow schools to keep their best teachers (make quality matter in decisions about who teaches where)
- Attract a more highly qualified pool of candidates (eliminate eligibility list requirements - PA Law)
- Allow school leaders to hire new teachers earlier (change the hiring timeline)

Fair Funding & Smart Spending

Great schools spend their money in smart ways to help all their students succeed.
Resources for rigor less likely in vulnerable schools:

- Algebra
- College/career counseling
- PRC teams

Principals report needing more people to support students

- Bus monitors
- Mental health providers
- Classroom volunteers
- Tutors
Students from low-income families affected by challenges not being addressed by funding

- Lower achievement
- More students opting out
- Higher costs per student as enrollment declines

Fair Funding, Smart Spending

Lower expectations → Less rigor → Less student engagement → Less student success

Staff turnover School instability ↔ Higher % students with need ↔ Parents opt out

Lower enrollment Higher costs
Final Activity

Imagine a future where all of Pittsburgh’s public schools have high standards, great teaching, and give all students—regardless of race or background—an opportunity for an excellent education.

Create a headline that reflects this public education system.

Recommendations

ALL SCHOOLS:
Mission Driven
Great Teaching
Fair Funding Smart Spending
Mission Driven Schools

Demonstrate high expectations for students

- Model expectations & teach students how to replace inappropriate behaviors
- Increase academic rigor
- Develop social and emotional learning

Mission Driven Schools

Emphasize accountability, building character, making amends, and keeping students in school

- Remove students only when there is a real and immediate safety threat
- Eliminate zero tolerance policies and replace them with restorative practices
- Provide training, support, and time for schools to implement restorative practices
- Provide support for parents and students to understand and use restorative practices
Great Teaching
Hire, keep, and support great teachers

- Hire new teachers earlier and provide them with mentors
- Eliminate forced placements
- Develop a position for distinguished teachers at high needs schools
- Keep our best teachers across the district, especially in our most vulnerable schools

Fair Funding Smart Spending
Spend money in ways that help all students succeed

- Offer Algebra in every school
- Assign all high school students an adult to help apply to college/training
- Allow parents and community partners to play key roles in schools
- Spend money in ways that positively impact students’ success
Take Action

- Vote for School Board
- Host a house party
- Volunteer to talk to voters
- Join Parent Nation, Board Watch, or schedule a workshop
- Support Fair Education Funding - petition
- Ask PPS for bilingual support in schools - petition

Final Poll

What are you willing to do in order to support every school becoming a great choice for students? Please choose two.

- Vote for School Board on May 19
- Host a house party to discuss these issues
- Volunteer to talk to voters about School Board elections
- Schedule a workshop to learn more about restorative or effort-based practices in schools
- Have a conversation with a school staff member about supporting restorative practices in their school
- Stay in touch with A+ Schools to learn more about the issues
Save the Dates!

• **April 23** - Report to the Community: Cover Art Competition (*Boom Concepts Art Gallery, 5139 Penn Avenue*)

• **May 6** - City Wide School Board Candidate Forum (7-9p, *Kaufmann Center, 1825 Centre Avenue*)

• **May 19** - Primary Election (Visit [www.votespa.com](http://www.votespa.com) to find your polling location)

• **June 18** - Change Maker Event

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Thank you!
Resources

Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2012
University of Pittsburgh's Learning Institute
Civil Rights Project of UCLA - recent study on suspensions