



# REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2008



**ON PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRESS  
IN PITTSBURGH**

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## PROGRESS REPORT

Carol S. Parke, Ph.D., Duquesne University  
**Data analyst**

Julie & Bob Ridge  
**Design and charting**

Faith Schantz  
**Writing and editing**

Wendy HuWalt  
**Assistant**



## A+ Schools

Regional Enterprise Tower  
 425 Sixth Avenue, Room 1850  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
 412-258-2660  
 info@aplusschools.org  
 www.aplusschools.org

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## How to use this report

This report is intended to help readers define questions and identify areas where they need more information about a school. Here are some possible next steps.

- Ask the principal or a teacher about the school’s plan to raise student achievement. Ask for specifics: “What is being done right now to help struggling readers?” Compare the plan to the information in the report: does the plan appear to address school needs?
- Ask the principal or a parent leader to schedule a parent/community meeting to discuss this report. Ask participants to help define the school’s needs based on data shown here. Discuss the school’s plan to address them and how the community can help.
- If you are a parent, join a parent group at your school. Research shows that most high-achieving schools have high levels of parent involvement. Share your ideas for increasing parent participation, or your strategies for the school improvement plan.

**Call A+ Schools at 412-258-2660 if you need help interpreting this report, to discuss school improvement strategies, to request a facilitator for a parent or community meeting, or for help planning a classroom visit.**

Mailed copies of the report include a postage-paid feedback form which readers can use to comment on any aspect of the report. If your copy does not include a feedback form and you would like to share your views, please contact us at 412-258-2660 or [info@aplusschools.org](mailto:info@aplusschools.org).

# How to read this report

Pages are color-coded by level:

- Elementary
- K-8
- Middle
- High
- Charter

## The outer columns show

Basic information, such as:

- School location and size

Background for student achievement information, such as:

- Stability:
- Do students stay, or move in and out of the school?
  - Has the principal changed recently?

- Attendance:
- Do students come to school regularly? Do teachers?

- Safety:
- How many incidents were reported?

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Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5

Traditional Academy magnet school

810 Arch St., 15212  
Allegheny Center  
412-323-4100  
Principal: Viola Burgess  
Number of teachers: 21

**Enrollment/Attendance**  
400 students (1/08)  
District average (K-5): 340

African-American: 58.3%  
White: 33.5%  
Other: 8.3%

Student stability rate: 94.3%  
Principal stability: 2 principals in the last four years

Student daily attendance: 95.9%  
Teacher daily attendance: 97.6%

**Special education**  
Learning support  
Emotional support

**Family income status**  
77.4% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch.  
District average (K-5 & K-8): 73.3%

**Student disciplinary actions 2006-07**  
*For violence, weapons, and controlled substances*  
Number of incidents: 42  
Number of incidents per 100 students: 10.3  
Number of expulsions: 0

**Percentage of students at Proficient on PSSA tests**

	Allegheny
Reading 2008 (3rd)	64.7%
Math 2008 (3rd)	91.3
Writing 2008 (5th)	21.1

\*All district elementary and K-8 schools

**Reading (Fifth grade)**

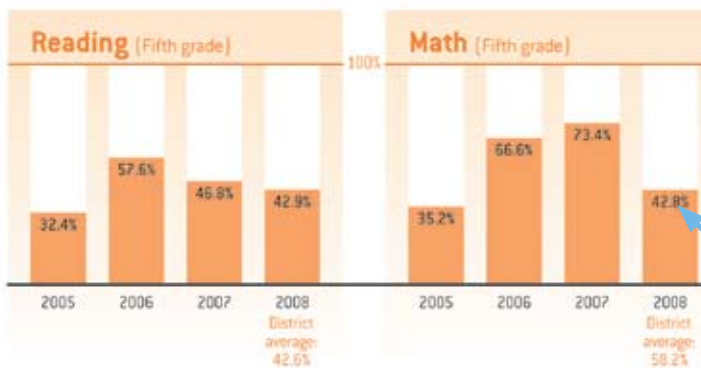
**Percentage of students at each level by subgroup, 2008**

**Social accomplishments**

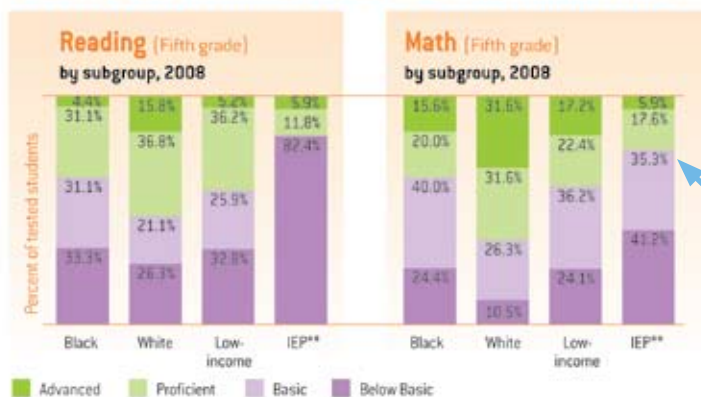
### Percentage of students at Proficient/Advanced levels on PSSA tests

	Allegheny	Districtwide*
Reading 2008 (3rd)	64.7%	64.4%
Math 2008 (3rd)	91.3	73.0
Writing 2008 (5th)	21.1	34.1

\* All district elementary and K-8 schools



### Percentage of students at each PSSA achievement level



\*\* Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for special education, excluding students identified as "gifted"

### Special accomplishments

- Student artwork exhibited at Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
- Students read essays on "Saturday Light Brigade" radio show
- National City Bank African American History contest winners

The center of the page shows student achievement information:

What percentage of students scored satisfactory or better last year?

What percentage of students have scored satisfactory or better over time?

How did different groups of students perform last year?

# Introduction



As citizens, we care about our public schools. The quality of the schools affects the City of Pittsburgh on every level—from the well-being of our children and the health of our neighborhoods to the influence of graduates on economic stability and the vibrancy of civic and cultural life.

A+ Schools publishes a *Report to the Community* each year to provide citizens with common, accessible information about the progress each public school is making in Pittsburgh. Since 2005, we have also produced a Web-only report with additional information about each school. This year we have merged the two reports in order to publish the data in one format.

This expanded report differs from previous reports in a number of ways. Most importantly, **test information has changed** in two

respects. First, the report presents more detailed information about achievement on the state test, the PSSA. For grades five, eight, and eleven, we show how students performed across the four score ranges of the PSSA, by race, family income status, and IEP status (students who receive special education services, other than “gifted”). We have included data for an additional tested grade, sixth, and another tested content area, PSSA Writing. (See the box for more information on the PSSA.) Second, we no longer report on tests given by the district. The district still tests students throughout the year, but the purpose has changed. Rather than testing to summarize students’ achievement gains or losses, the goal is now to help teachers target their instruction to individual student learning needs during the year. Results are not reported.

The current report offers **more ways for readers to compare schools**, beginning on page 108. While our summary of district schools’ “strengths and challenges” no longer appears on school pages, we have retained the chart, which shows how each school compares to district averages for selected indicators (categories of data). This year we also present a new chart of growth in PSSA achievement for each school (except high schools), based on the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System, or PVAAS (see page 108 for more information). Unlike other measures in this report which compare PSSA scores to a standard of proficiency, PVAAS analyzes whether or not selected grade levels in a school have made at least a year’s worth of progress, no matter where the starting point was.

Other changes in this year’s report include:

- Indicators previously published only on the Web: teacher attendance, student and principal stability, and student disciplinary actions
- Expanded high school indicators: percent eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship (grade point average eligibility), college-bound seniors, and four years of SAT scores
- Graduation rates defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (graduation rates published previously in this report were computed by the RAND Corporation, but have not been updated by RAND)
- “Special accomplishments” for each school, replacing “special features”

## What is the PSSA?

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, or PSSA, is the state test. Testing takes place from late winter through spring.

Subject	Grades tested
Reading & Math	3-8, 11
Writing	5, 8, 11
Science*	4, 8, 11

Scores are rated “Advanced” (above grade level), “Proficient” (satisfactory), “Basic” (unsatisfactory, but some answers were correct), or “Below Basic” (the student showed little or no understanding of the questions or didn’t try to answer them).

A small number of students who receive special education services take an alternate test.

*\*Students were tested in 2008 but scores were not released by the state.*

To accommodate the additional information, two pages have been devoted to each K-8 school and high school.

Other information in the report includes:

- Data about each school for the **2007-08** school year
- How each school compares to district averages
- How each school measures up to the state standard—“proficiency” on PSSA tests—and whether proficiency levels are increasing or decreasing over time for selected grades
- Information about each level (elementary, K-8, middle, high) on the cover page of each section

Information that reflects the **current year** as a service to readers includes names of principals/administrators, school name, and contact information.

Readers will note that many schools only show test data beginning with 2007, while others show four years of data. In 2006, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) changed the status of 21 schools in the Pittsburgh district to “new,” due to shifts in Pittsburgh’s school population caused by school closings, openings, and reconstitutions. For those schools, PDE doesn’t consider scores from previous years for the purposes of its accountability system. Therefore in this report, **schools declared “new” in 2006 show only two years of PSSA test data.**

This year, the district opened a new school, **University Prep 6-12**, and a new charter school opened in the city, the **Environmental Charter School at Frick Park**. Because this report is based on the 2007-08 school year, these schools aren’t listed. Similarly, the population of **Pittsburgh Schenley High School** has been relocated for the 2008-09 school year: ninth graders who would have attended Schenley are enrolled at Pittsburgh Frick 6-9, University Prep 6-12, or another school, while tenth through twelfth graders attend Schenley at the former Reizenstein building. The current Frick name and Schenley address are shown in this report, but again, their data reflect the 2007-08 year.

A section on the **charter schools** located within the city begins on page 100. Charter schools are free, public schools operated independently of school districts. Each has its own mission and measures of student achievement (although all must give

## Please join us for a briefing on PVAAS

the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System

**Wednesday, December 3, 6:00 p.m.**

**University Prep Cafeteria**

1377 Centre Avenue, Hill District

Find out what this new measure of achievement tells us—and what it doesn’t tell us—and hear from PPS administrators about how it’s being used in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Childcare will be available and dinner will be served. Please RSVP by November 26th to [www.aplusschools.org](http://www.aplusschools.org) or **412-258-2660, ext. 101.**

**Call A+ Schools at 412-258-2660 to schedule a presentation on this report for your school, community group, or agency. We’ll review the report, explain how to use it, and answer your questions.**

the PSSA at required grade levels). Not every charter school was able to meet our publication deadline. We thank the schools who provided data for the report.

Once again, we did not include any information about the district’s **special education centers** due to the lack of meaningful achievement indicators for groups of students with diverse special needs. (Test scores and proficiency levels that we report for each school include all students who took the tests, regardless of special education status.)

The **indicators of school progress** were originally selected by an A+ Schools’ committee headed by Dr. Alan Lesgold, dean of the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh. These indicators are based on the best data currently available from schools. We thank the Pittsburgh Public Schools for its cooperation in making data available to A+ Schools.

### No Child Left Behind

The primary rating of schools today is by their “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) under federal “No Child Left Behind” guidelines, which indicates whether the overall performance of students in the school and the performance of various

*Continued on page 6*

# Introduction

*Continued from page 5*

subgroups are meeting federal goals. We believe this one-dimensional “grade” is inadequate. AYP relies almost solely on PSSA results in reading and math. Although it’s based on two years of test scores, AYP is not the true measure of progress its name suggests because it fails to take into account where a school started. One school not making AYP may actually have made great progress, while a school surpassing the AYP threshold may be stagnating. Because our goal is to help identify educational effectiveness, and because we understand that is a complex matter, there is no reference here to a school’s AYP status.

## Reporting by race and family income

Readers may wonder why we report some test results by students’ race and family income. After all, research has shown that the quality of teaching in the classroom is the most important factor in whether or not a student succeeds. We draw these comparisons for two reasons. First, as is the case nationally, Pittsburgh has a large achievement gap between African-American and white students and between students from low-income families and other students. Yet the report shows that in some schools, African-American students and students from low-income families do better than city averages. Second, recent initiatives and interventions instituted by Superintendent Mark Roosevelt and the Pittsburgh Board of Education are designed to close the race and income achievement gaps and to boost achievement for students overall. Over

time, we hope readers will be able to use information from these reports to judge for themselves whether or not these strategies are working.

## Interpreting the report

Much of this report is based on test scores. However, we urge readers to approach test scores with caution. We report test results for selected grade levels, not for every grade in a school. The report shows how a school compares to the state standard over time, not whether individual students’ scores are improving over time. Regardless of which tests or student groups we report on, test results may not adequately represent students’ achievement, due to personal factors such as students’ test anxiety, and/or technical reasons for score fluctuations including changes in the test itself.

This report is not a substitute for visiting schools and observing in classrooms. Many aspects of student learning and school quality can’t be translated into numbers. For example, test scores may not reflect the value for students of keeping writing portfolios, engaging in arts experiences, or conducting science inquiries. Currently, we have no adequate measures of teachers’ enthusiasm for their work, principals’ leadership skills, or meaningful parent and community involvement in a school. We urge readers to consider this report as a tool for framing further questions as they continue to seek information about the quality of our schools.

**See page 106 for more information about any indicator.**

## Key dates for school choice

*When to register your child for a magnet program in the Pittsburgh Public Schools*

Registration for magnet programs takes place the year before a child enters the school.

*All registration:* November 1 to December 12, 2008

Some aspects of the application process have changed. For more information, see the district Web site, [www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us), or call the parent hotline: 412-622-7920.

