

2009



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
on Public School Progress in Pittsburgh

Inside this report:

How to use this report.....	1
Introduction	2
Executive summary	4
Elementary schools.....	9
Elementary by school.....	10
K-8 schools	30
K-8 by school	32
Middle schools	70
Middle by school	71
6-12 schools.....	81
6-12 by school	82
High schools	83
High by school	84
Charter schools	104
Definitions and sources.....	114
Comparison charts	117
Index.....	125

A+ SCHOOLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Saleem Ghubril, Chair
 Susan Brownlee
 Esther L. Bush
 Joe Costa
 Robert Germany
 Janay Hall
 Scott M. Hollander
 Nancy M. Israel, Ph.D.
 Karris M. Jackson
 Honorable Richard G. King
 Dr. Alan M. Lesgold
 Julia Morris
 Sylvester Pace
 Joslyn Rhodes
 Cynthia Shapira
 Frederick W. Thieman
 Jim Turner
 Sala Udin

STAFF

Carey Harris
Executive Director

Rebekah Jenkins
Manager of Operations

Mayada Mansour
Program Director

Kehinde Oladapo
Public Ally

PROGRESS REPORT

Julia Kaufman, Ph.D.,
 University of Pittsburgh
Data analyst

Julie & Bob Ridge
Design and charting

Faith Schantz
Writing and editing

Denise Vandersal
Assistant



A+ Schools

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

© 2009 A+ Schools

A+ Schools is funded by grants from The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and The Pittsburgh Foundation. The R.K. Mellon Foundation and the Buhl Foundation have provided grants for specific projects. A+ Schools is solely responsible for the contents of this report.

How to use this report

This report is intended to help you define questions and identify areas where you need more information about the Pittsburgh Public Schools and/or the city's charter schools. Here are some ways that you can use the information presented here, as a parent or guardian and/or a concerned citizen.

1. If you have a child in school, ask your principal or a teacher for more information about the data reported here. You might ask:
 - How do you monitor student achievement data for the school?
 - How much did my child's grade grow in achievement according to PVAAS last year? Did all students at all achievement levels (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic) make at least a year's worth of growth? (PVAAS is the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System: see page 117.)
 - What strategies are in place to make sure that students make at least a year's worth of growth?
 - What extra supports are available to children in areas where they struggle academically?
 - What can be done to increase student attendance?
 - How does the school keep students on track for the Pittsburgh Promise?
 - Which students have access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses?
 - What kinds of supports are available for students to help them plan for post-secondary education and training?
 - How can we encourage our students to participate in more academic competitions, service projects,

community leadership opportunities, and arts events and competitions? Which students have access to information about these opportunities?

- What parent organization can I join to be more involved in the school? (If the school doesn't have one, then start one!)
2. If you work for a community organization, consider how you can contribute to the success of a school. Ask the principal or a teacher about the school's overall goals and its plans to raise student achievement. Compare the plan to the information in the report. Does the plan appear to address school needs? Are there gaps that your organization could fill?
 3. Connect with a school near you to find opportunities to mentor, tutor, or volunteer in other ways.
 4. Discuss the report with your school board representative, and ask about ways that the district's leadership is working to address student achievement.

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

Mailed copies of the report include a postage-paid feedback form which you 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. If you find this report valuable, please let us know! Your interest will help us raise resources to continue its publication.

Introduction

This September, the Pittsburgh Public Schools was showcased for the world when students at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12 performed during the G-20 Summit. The district had just become a finalist to receive a significant grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for a teacher effectiveness initiative. A brand new 6-12 school and two reconfigured 6-12 schools opened, part of an ongoing process of high school reform. And recent graduates from a range of city neighborhoods began their college careers with scholarships from the Pittsburgh Promise.

These highlights raise questions that affect every student, every teacher, and the community overall. How does arts education influence student achievement—and make a difference in students' lives? How can teacher effectiveness be measured and improved, and how will the community be involved in the new initiative? How important is grade configuration (such as 6-12 vs. 9-12)? What kinds of high schools do we want? What can we do to help more of the city's young people prepare and pay for college?

These questions, in turn, underline the importance of data—

What is the PSSA?

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

Content area	Grades tested
Reading & Math	3-8, 11
Science	4, 8, 11
Writing	5, 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.

information that can provide context for important school- and district-related conversations and decisions. A+ Schools publishes a *Report to the Community* each year to provide such information in a common, accessible format. As it has always been, the focus of the report is progress: the progress each public school in Pittsburgh is making.

This year's report differs from previous reports in several ways. First, **some information about the state test, the PSSA, has changed.** The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides data for combined grade levels (third through fifth and sixth through eighth) as well as individual tested grades. In last year's report, for grades five, eight, and eleven, we showed 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”). This year we report those data for grade spans (third through fifth and sixth through eighth), for elementary, K-8, and middle schools. We also report an additional tested content area, PSSA Science. (See box for more information on the PSSA.)

Second, **all of the charter schools within the city have been included in this report.** (Charter schools are free, public schools operated independently of school districts.) The charter schools section begins immediately after district high schools. Charter schools have also been included in the school comparisons charts beginning on page 118, and in the charts of growth in PSSA achievement based on the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System, or PVAAS (see page 117 for more information). We thank the schools that provided information.

Third, **this year's report does not contain student disciplinary actions**, which were not available in time from PDE.

Finally, **the report includes an executive summary** which was published separately in the past. The executive summary, beginning on page 4, is an analysis of some aspects of the reported data and an examination of trends.

The report also contains:

- Data about each school for the **2008-09 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

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.

Please visit our Web site at www.aplusschools.org to donate to A+ Schools via Pittsburghgives.org, a resource of The Pittsburgh Foundation.

are increasing or decreasing over time

- 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:

- School name, names of principals/administrators, and contact information
- Special education services by school

Other changes that took place in the current school year are not reflected in the report, because the report is based on the 2008-09 school year. Those changes include:

- Pittsburgh Science & Technology Academy opened with grades six through nine (becoming 6-12 by 2012).
- The Frick and Schenley International Baccalaureate programs are now both located at the former Reizenstein School building. (The school's name and permanent location have not yet been determined.) The report includes a page for Frick with data from 2008-09.
- Rogers and CAPA have merged into a 6-12 program, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12, at the CAPA location. The report includes a page for Rogers with data from 2008-09.
- Miller and Vann, previously K-8 schools, are now elementary schools. The report groups both schools in the K-8 section, with their current names.

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 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

Continued on page 4

Introduction *(continued from page 3)*

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. 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 pages 114 through 116 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.

Deadline for registration: December 12, 2009

Deadline for Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12: November 13

Some aspects of the application process have changed. For more information, visit the district Web site at www.pps.k12.pa.us, or call the parent hotline: 412-622-7920.

Executive summary

This executive summary provides an overall analysis of trends across public schools in Pittsburgh, based on data in this and previous A+ Schools reports. While this summary does not address every indicator, we hope it will help readers who want to take a closer look at progress.

This summary seeks to address the following questions.

- What are the characteristics of the district and its schools?
- What has been the trend in academic achievement as measured by PSSA scores?
- To what extent are students making growth as measured by PVAAS?
- What progress has been made in reducing the achievement disparity in the district and across schools, including charter schools?
- To what extent are high school students being prepared for post-secondary education and training?

Note: While we mention charter schools at various points in our analysis, they are not included in any grade-level or district-level aggregations in this executive summary.

Findings for the 2009 Report to the Community

Characteristics of the district and its schools

Pittsburgh Public Schools snapshot

Enrollment

The table on page 5 describes the general student population within each type of school configuration in the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS). When we looked for factors related to enrollment, we found that student enrollment was negatively correlated with the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (Pearson correlation coefficient: $-.40$, $p < .01$). In other words, schools with higher percentages of low-income

Student demographic information at each grade-level configuration for 2008-09

	Number of schools	Average enrollment	Range of enrollment	Percent black	Percent white	Percent other	Percent eligible for free/reduced lunch	Average student stability rate	Student attendance rate
District				56.8%	35.1%	8.1%	68.9%	84.5%	91.4%
K-5	20	335	202 to 553	49.0	39.1	11.8	71.4	88.1	94.3
K-8	19	424	258 to 734	64.4	28.1	7.5	76.3	83.9	93.0
6-8	10	356	207 to 560	52.0	39.5	8.5	69.3	89.6	93.1
9-12	10	731	328 to 1397	54.6	39.5	5.9	58.4	81.9	86.1

Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

students are more likely to have smaller populations.

Stability, attendance, and achievement

The student stability rate describes the extent to which a population at a school has remained unchanged over an entire academic year (see “Definitions and sources”). A higher rate indicates a more stable student population. When we looked for factors related to stability, we found that stability and achievement (defined as the percentage of students who are Proficient and Advanced) were positively correlated (Pearson correlation coefficient of .76 for reading and .76 for math, $p < .01$). In other words, schools with more stable populations were more likely to have higher achievement. When we compared school configurations, we saw that student attendance is much lower in high schools compared to elementary, K-8s, or middle schools. Student attendance is also highly related to student achievement (Pearson correlation coefficient of .58 for reading and .78 for math, $p < .01$).

Academic achievement as measured by the PSSA

PPS compared to PA

From 2005-06 to 2008-09, the percentages of PPS students who scored in the Proficient and Advanced ranges increased in both reading and math in almost all tested grades. Grades 6-8 showed the greatest increase in math (9-12 percentage points), while 3rd and 8th grades showed the largest increases in reading (10 and 12.3 percentage points). These trends are fairly similar to statewide trends (see chart).

Percentage point changes in Proficient/Advanced students from 2005-06 to 2008-09

Grade	State Reading 2006-09	PPS Reading 2006-09	State Mathematics 2006-09	PPS Mathematics 2006-09
3	+8.0	+10.0	-1.3	+0.3
4	+4.5	+2.2	+4.6	-0.1
5	+3.9	+5.4	+6.6	+5.1
6	+1.7	-4.0	+7.7	+10.0
7	+3.3	+1.3	+8.8	+9.2
8	+9.9	+12.3	+9.1	+11.5
11	+0.1	-0.8	+3.6	+2.8

Methodology

The executive summary analysis was conducted using data in the full report and previous reports. These data were collected from the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, charter schools within the city, and other sources (see “Definitions and sources”). The executive summary findings were developed by Julia Kaufman, Ph.D., executive director of the Learning Policy Center at the University of Pittsburgh, using statistical methods including analysis of variance, regression analysis, T tests, and other methods.

Continued on page 6

Executive summary

(continued from page 5)

Changes in proficiency over time

The chart to the right shows the percentage of schools with a change in the percentage of Proficient and Advanced students in both reading and math. For this section, we measured gains

from 2006-07 to 2008-09 because many K-8 schools opened in 2006-07.

	Percent with increase in both Reading and Mathematics	Percent with decrease in both Reading and Mathematics
Elementary (5th grade)	25%	15%
K-8 (5th grade)	68	16
K-8 (8th grade)	74	0
Middle (8th grade)	70	10
High (11th grade)	50	30

Highlights of the findings

What is the trend in PSSA achievement in the district?

- In most grades, more students are scoring in the Proficient/Advanced ranges.
- Grades 6-8 had the greatest increases in math.
- Grades 3 and 8 had the greatest increases in reading.
- High schools had the lowest overall gains.
- Most of the schools performing better than the district overall are magnet schools (whole school magnets and schools with magnet programs).

Where are students showing growth, regardless of their starting scores?*

- Middle and K-8 schools showed the most growth, followed by elementaries.

What about the racial achievement gap?

- Elementaries have the smallest gap, followed by middles, then K-8s, then high schools.
- For most grades, the gap has narrowed in math over time but widened in reading.
- Black students' scores are higher in some magnet schools and charter schools.

Are seniors prepared for college? What is the racial gap?

- In six out of ten high schools, over 60% overall had GPAs that qualified them for the Pittsburgh Promise. For black students, that percentage held true in only two schools.
- Three schools enrolled more than 10% of their students overall in AP courses, but half of all high schools enrolled less than 5% of their black students.

* Excluding high schools

When comparing 2006-07 scores to 2008-09 scores:

- 10% of elementary schools, 21% of K-8s (both 5th and 8th grades), and 20% of middle schools showed gains by more than ten percentage points in both reading and math.
- High schools showed overall increases of fewer than ten percentage points in both reading and math.

Some schools showed steady increases from year to year as well as overall increases, including:

- 26% of K-8s in 5th grade, 26% of K-8s in 8th grade, in both reading and math
- 30% of middle schools, in both reading and math

No elementary or high schools showed steady increases over time in both reading and math.

Which schools scored better than the district aggregate over the same time period? Fifteen percent of the district's schools scored higher in reading or math for 2007-08 and 2008-09. All but one of those schools were magnet schools or schools with magnet programs. (We counted any school as a magnet if it was a whole-school magnet or neighborhood school with a magnet component.) Schools that scored higher than the district aggregate included:

- Four elementary schools, all international studies magnets
- Three K-8 schools, two magnets and one non-magnet
- One magnet middle school and one magnet high school

In looking more closely at the 16 magnet schools, we observed that the percentage of all students and the percentage of black students who are Proficient and Advanced are greater in magnet schools than in non-magnet schools, even when

accounting for any differences between magnet and non-magnet schools in regard to the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch ($p < .001$ in linear regressions on percentage Proficient and Advanced in reading and in math). We also found that magnet schools have higher attendance and stability rates, regardless of the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch ($p < .001$ in linear regressions on percentage Proficient and Advanced in reading and in math).

Growth as measured by PVAAS

Overall, most grades showed growth in reading and math across schools where PVAAS is reported. (This report does not include a high school PVAAS indicator.) In both content areas, 69% of tested grades (in all elementary, K-8 and middle schools) made growth as reported by PVAAS in 2009 compared with 71% in 2008.

- Trends over time: One school at each level—elementary, K-8, and middle—showed growth for two years in a row (PVAAS Normal Curve Equivalent gains in 2008 and 2009) in both content areas for all tested grades.
- Elementary schools: According to 2009 PVAAS data, 15% of district elementary schools showed at least a year's worth of growth in both content areas for all tested grades. Of all possible grades in each content area (4th grade math, 4th grade reading, 5th grade math, 5th grade reading), 55%, or 44/80, showed growth.
- K-8 schools: 11% of district K-8s showed at least a year's

worth of growth in both content areas for all tested grades, as did the only K-8 charter school with PVAAS data. Of all possible tested grades in each content area, 73%, or 139/190, showed growth.

- Middle schools: 30% of district middle schools showed at least a year's worth of growth in both content areas for all tested grades. Of all possible tested grades in each content area, 77%, or 42/60, showed growth.

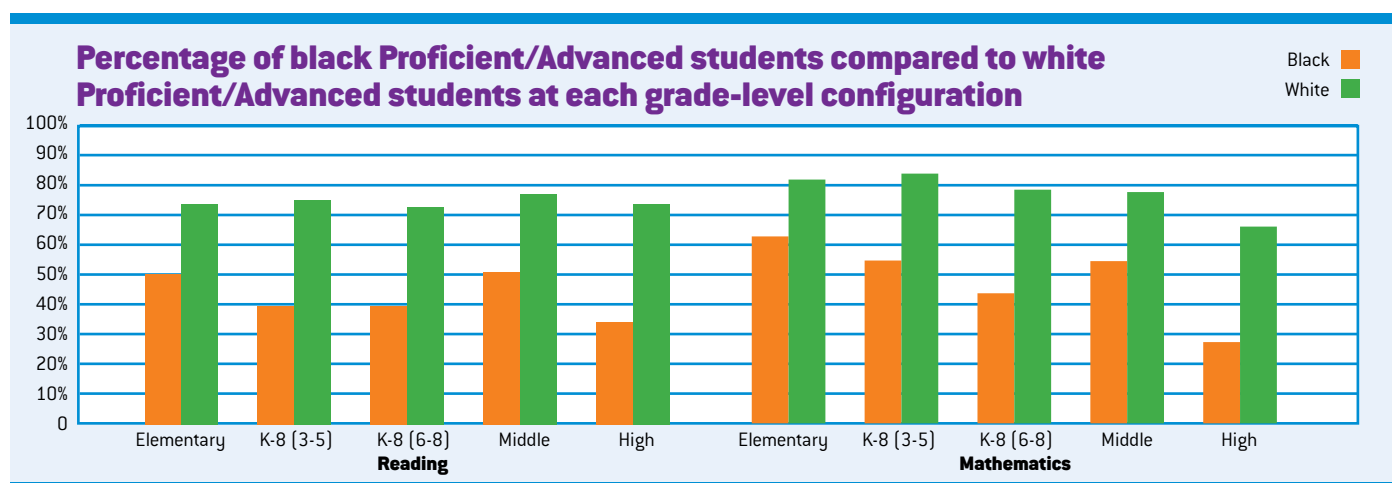
Achievement disparity

The current achievement gap

We have defined the district's achievement gap as the difference between black and white students who scored in the Proficient and Advanced ranges. We looked at these data by grade or grade span.

The gap for the district overall is 30.5 percentage points for reading and 27.3 percentage points for math. The graph below shows the gap for each grade configuration.

- Elementary schools have a 23.6 percentage point gap in reading and a 19.1 percentage point gap in math.
- K-8 schools have a 35.7 percentage point gap in reading and a 29.2 percentage point gap in math for grades 3-5. For grades 6-8, the gap is 33.4 in reading and 34.8 in math.
- Middle schools have a 26.2 percentage point gap in reading and a 23.2 percentage point gap in math.
- High schools have a 39.6 percentage point gap in reading and a 38.8 percentage point gap in math.



Continued on page 8

Executive summary

(continued from page 7)

The chart below describes the percentage of schools with an achievement gap smaller or larger than the district's. Some schools within each grade-level configuration were not included because there were less than ten white or black students in the grade span or school.

	Percent with a gap smaller than the district's for Reading	Percent with a gap smaller than the district's for Math
Elementary (3rd-5th grades)	55%	60%
K-8 (3rd-5th grades)	42	42
K-8 (6th-8th grades)	21	26
Middle (6th-8th grades)	80	70
High (11th grade)	40	50

Is the achievement gap getting wider or narrower?

From 2005-06 to 2008-09, the gap has narrowed in math for all but 3rd grade by anywhere from .9 to 7.5 percentage points. However, in reading, the achievement gap increased between 2005-06 and 2008-09, for 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 11th grades (increases of anywhere from .4 to .8 percentage points except in 11th grade reading, where the increase is 6.4 percentage points). This trend is the opposite of the state trend, where the achievement gap has narrowed for both reading and math at all grade levels over the same time period.

Schools where black students are performing above the district average

In some schools, black students are performing above the district average for black students in reading and/or math, including:

- Three elementary schools (all magnet schools) for 2008 and 2009
- Three K-8 schools (including two magnet schools) for 2008 and 2009
- Two middle schools in 2009
- One middle school and one high school (both magnet schools), for 2008 and 2009

Additionally, black students in one charter elementary school, and 6th-8th grade black students in two charter schools, are performing above the PPS district average for black students in both reading and math.

Readiness for post-secondary education

To qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship in 2009, seniors needed a grade point average (GPA) of 2.25 or higher, along with city residency, attendance, and other requirements. We looked at the extent to which students from our high schools would qualify for the Promise scholarship by GPA as an indicator of readiness for post-secondary education and training. We also looked at participation in Advanced Placement courses. We observed the following:

- In six out of ten high schools, over 60% of the graduating class overall was eligible for the Promise by GPA. However, for black students, that percentage held true for only two out of ten schools.
- In three out of ten high schools, more than 10% of students overall were enrolled in AP courses. In two high schools, more than 10% of black students were enrolled in AP. However, in half of all high schools, less than 5% of black students were enrolled in AP courses.
- One high school had less than 5% of its students enrolled in AP courses.

Closing

Overall, we see progress being made in almost every school in the district. We have good examples of district and charter schools that are beating the odds and educating all students to high levels. We congratulate students, teachers, principals, parents, and community service providers for their hard work.

Of course there is much more work to be done to make sure that for every child, in every school, school works. We are particularly concerned about the persistent racial achievement disparity, especially in our high schools, and the implications for post-secondary education and eligibility for the Pittsburgh Promise. We hope this report motivates readers to act. Our students need your help to prepare for life beyond high school. Please consider what you can do, by becoming a tutor, a 6th grade mentor, a classroom volunteer, or an advocate for change. Visit our Web site at www.aplusschools.org for more information on how you can get involved.