

## THEMES:

Expectations----Resources----Economic Development-----Kids First/Voice---Advocacy

### Equity in Education Subcommittee – *DRAFT* Recommendations

*Wednesday, December 18, 2013*

#### 1) Fulfill the city's PROMISE:

The Pittsburgh Promise forces a change in expectations and has the ability to level the playing fields when it comes to financial need and access to higher education. The Mayor has the opportunity to move the Promise for dream to permanent reality and, thereby, ensure equity in expectations not for two terms or a bit more but for entire generations. Become a champion of the Pittsburgh Promise. In addition to significant financial support, the Pittsburgh Promise elevates expectations and outcomes for all students.

#### 2) Be an active and vocal advocate promoting equitable spending and allocation of district resources :

Challenge the district to commit to a distribution of resources that is based on need not uniformity (quality teaching, resources like books and computers, student support services (IEP's and ADD, ADHD) and opportunities for enrichment both in school and out of school).

#### 3) Recruit and retain diverse talent in the city, Quality Teachers:

One thing that has shown to get results is creating pay incentives for high value-added teachers to transfer to low-performing schools. The mayor-elect could help finance this pay incentive for high-quality teachers to work (and remain) in the schools that need it most. Help PPS in their effort to recruit a more diverse pool of teachers.

#### 4) Support and advocate for equity in Early Childhood Education:

Improve access to quality early childhood education. Within the first four years, a child from a high-income family will experience 30 million more words than a low-income child. PPS has had to cut back on early childhood education in face of budget cuts, and the city and the Pittsburgh community could step in to make this a city priority to offer early childhood programs for low-income children.

#### 5) Establish Pittsburgh for all:

(English language learners and immigrant/refugee students.) There are pockets of immigrants/refugees that have settled into specific locations in the city (e.g., Somali Bantu in Lawrenceville and Northview Heights, Bhutanese in the Hilltop neighborhoods). While they've often received social services support upon arrival, there needs to be a more coordinated effort to support immigrant/refugee transitions into communities by reaching out to established community groups. Too often we've seen neighborhoods unprepared for these transitions, causing tensions that have spilled into the schools and created school climate problems. Diversity should be celebrated in our schools and in our communities.

#### 6) Establish an office dedicated to providing equitable access to high quality Out of School Time learning :

Some groups are doing great work in bringing various stakeholders together to craft coordinated plans for out-of-school resources and afterschool programming in specific neighborhoods. The city could also provide leadership on this by convening these groups in the neediest neighborhoods to identify opportunities and gaps and to get all agencies coordinating their efforts as part of a larger plan to make sure the particular needs of each neighborhood are being met. Also participate and advocate for city-wide mentorship programs for education in which each student is assigned a volunteer mentor who can

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supplement families in supporting students in their educational goals and helping them formulate appropriate solutions to any problems within the school environment.

#### 10) Advocate for the elimination of student tracking systems that segregate:

Eliminate tracking in order to improve learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students (including African American, Latino students, and English language learners). Our so-called integrated high schools are among the most heavily internally segregated schools in the country (see demographic data on demographics of CAS as compared to general courses at Alderdice, for example). We are disproportionately failing learners in the lower tracks.

#### 11) Support efforts that provide development in culturally relevant pedagogy:

Ensure that educators are prepared to successfully work with Children and Adolescents of Color. There have been isolated and sporadic attempts to provide professional development in culturally relevant pedagogy (based on the RISE rubric, Element 3) in the different disciplines, but no concerted, systemic efforts. For this work to be sustained, we do not need to rely on outside experts when there is local expertise.

#### 12) Provide assistance and services to PPS through departments of Planning and Real Estate:

Direct the planning and real estate departments to assist PPS in finding candidates to purchase those vacant PPS buildings. It would be a win-win for the city and board in that PPS would receive the revenues and the city would move, in some cases, market real estate back onto the tax rolls. The city should not do this without an express written agreement that dollars saved in this process will go directly into classroom instruction.

#### 13) Advocate for sound state and federal policies and on behalf of Pittsburgh:

Pittsburgh has to insist that PA Effectively implement the Common Core State Standards which are a set of uniform and rigorous academic standards that all children in every public school should receive to prepare them for college and/or career. Effective implementation includes joining one of the national testing consortia: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Pa has opted to create a set of standards that are a hybrid of its previous academic standards and the Common Core Standards. IN addition PA under this current administration has opted out of the national testing consortium which gives us no way to measure the quality of our children's education against children across the country. In essence we will not truly know if our education system in PA is equitable.

#### 14) Address dynamics impact the community context where education is taking place:

Environment and community context directly impact education. Children who are immersed in concentrated poverty (socio-economic disparities, lack of economic development including dilapidated housing), violence, and hopelessness are at a high risk of low academic performance and/or dropping out. Develop sound economic development, employment and public safety plans that include PPS police and the needs of our schools.

#### 15) Establish regular contact with education advocates:

Involve and consult education advocates in each neighborhood to assess the needs of the students in the city's unique communities and to gain insight, guidance and support for issues relating to equity in education. Involve city council members and school board members. Go to the neighborhoods.

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### 13) Sign the A<sup>+</sup> Schools pledge and support initiatives that offer equitable funding :

Support efforts that encourage the district to invest more heavily in schools that feature students with low achievement or disadvantaged backgrounds.

### 14) Coordinate a citywide learning initiative for families

Studies show that a large portion of what students do learn in school is lost during the summer, if students are not engaged in continuous learning and literacy activities (specifically targeted in neighborhoods with low educational achievement). Utilize our public library system, museums, and Pittsburgh's other great community education organizations to ensure that students retain the education they receive. Such a program could be modeled after Chicago's "Summer of Learning" with a focus on accessibility.

### 15) Create citywide family support initiative to promote engagement:

Family support and mentorship is integral to any student's educational opportunity. Facilitate the ability of families to engage with their child's education, perhaps by providing certified child-watching services through volunteers so that parents of multi-child families can attend more school events, by talking with local employers to devise scheduling solutions--without fear of reprisal--so that single working parents who would otherwise be unable can take time to visit with teachers or attend school events.

### 16) Encourage cross-district collaboration :

Not all the challenges it faces are unique to the Pittsburgh Schools. In fact, taken as a whole, the neighboring school districts face some similar challenges. The Mayor can use his position of leadership to encourage cross-district collaboration in areas with common goals and objectives, including improving attendance, school climate, data sharing and school funding. In this way, he can help us all begin to see equity in a larger context.

### 17) Establish City-run and promoted book drives with a focus on culturally relevant texts:

School libraries widely vary in quality, book stock, and accessibility due to staffing limitations -- some schools only have a librarian that visits one day out of every six, leaving libraries closed over 70% of the time. This harms the schools' ability to foster reading as a core value -- weakening both test scores and students' ability to comprehend the complex texts they might encounter in STEM subjects. City-run and promoted book drives with a focus on culturally relevant texts could be the solution. Develop partnerships with local business to renovate school libraries in need--community volunteering initiatives to provide staffing during times when MLIS librarians are unavailable. These volunteers can be trained in collaboration with school library staff, MLIS students from local universities, the Carnegie Library system, or nonprofits such as, Reading is Fundamental.

### 18) Develop workforce/career technical partnerships tied to unique to our region:

Not all students go or should track to college, we can elevate and create a compelling high school experience beyond college prep. Develop workforce/career Technical partnerships tied to real healthcare, oil & gas, technology & manufacturing (e.g. 3D printing) companies and real unique to our region.

**Equity in Education Sub-Committee Meeting**  
**Location- Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**  
*12/16/2013*

Meeting Notes:

**What should the Mayor do?**

- Concentration of Needy Kids in One Area (feeder pattern is broken)
  - Every school should have appeal
- Recreate Neighborhood Schools – All Good Schools
  - Parent Engagement
- Collaborations Dist./with School Board
  - What's in that 21K? that we are spending
- Board Can't do All the Work
  - Encourage Out of School Time -OST programs work collaboration
- Advocate for Agenda Items for the School Board
  - Consent Agenda
  - Kidsburgh/Promote the Promise
- Early Childhood/ Streamline
- Research Pattern Broken Systems
  - Globally/Collaborate With District other districts

**Issues/Opportunities:**

- No clearing house for what is working
- Use Planning dept./URA
- No Authority over the District but has Political power and appeal
- All schools should be world class school
- Mentoring is important /Put caring adults in school
- District Funding : 21K
  - Better spending

**Recommendations:**

**1) Regular contact with Education Advocates**

- Community forum/rotate communities
  - How are we spending money and how making sure it's equitable?
  - Open groups not appointed/collab.
  - Meet in neighborhoods

**2) Promise fulfill it (Pittsburgh Promise)**

- Be a champion
- Ensure that that promise is being utilized by al

## Power and Control

### School Board ☐ Elected 'Superintendent

- No Power Over the School System
  - formally getting involved
  - take a stand and advocate
  - mayor can take control of the school district
  - well positioned to look a inequities
  - Resource disparities
    - No books?? Some students are not permitted to take books home

## Questions/Challenges/Goals

- All kids have same expectations of success
- How do we spend 21K a year ☐ here books
- Children don't feel defeated before walking in
- Safety and economic development
- Develop a collaborative for the transition committees

## Themes (Our Team):

### Advocacy

- Administrators ☐ Staff (teachers) who have access to involvement in communities they serve. I.E. visibility in community events ☐ activities. Trust b/w school ☐ parents ☐ community is key.
- Stronger communication among all stakeholders consistently (community ☐ parents ☐ administrators ☐ board members ☐ teachers ☐ students ☐ etc) to ensure sharing ☐ collaboration of best practices.
- Making all schools attractive ☐ publicizing the great things happening in all schools ☐ not just CAPA ☐ etc.
- Equity.
  - 1) All schools would be equally appealing for students ☐ parents ☐ teachers ☐ etc.
  - 2) Early childhood investment.
  - ☐) ADOPT KIDSBURGH.
- Partner with Allies For Children
- Full employment

### "Kids" First

- Equity provides each student w/individual support to reach and exceed shared standard of success
- Every Pittsburgh family has access to high quality Pre K programs regardless of income or zipcode
- Every Pittsburgh family has a high quality public school option regardless of their zipcode
- A district-wide culturally relevant curriculum inclusive of all students
- Mentoring programs, Job shadowing programs, Continue the 'Promise'
- Kids know that we believe in them ☐ that they achieve to succeed ☐
- Equal opportunity to achieve according to individual aspirations.

- A much better place—a place where all children are served according to their needs—desegregated
- All students leave school prepared for their next step in life (college—trade school—workforce)
- 100% participation of age eligible children in head start through a diverse high school experience

### Economic development

- Students will feel safe & welcomed in school and on their way to school
- Continue to revitalize low income neighborhoods. Strong communities & resources
- Quality schools that become the underpinning for continued economic development—youth who are employable & who are incredible & talented workforce of the future.
- Enriched neighborhoods that incentivizes renewed economic development ← housing
- Reintroduce adult education programs in daytime to get taxpayers engaged

### Resources

- Equitable Funding Evenly Distributed
- Equal funding levels across buildings—schools—communities. Where is money going? Mayoral oversight.—All students have access to the resources needed for them to learn.
- All students have qualified teachers.
- Each school has the same expectations for excellence.
- Equity in education would mean that all children would have equal access to
  - effective leadership at the school level
  - excellent learning environments
  - resources that connect classroom & out of classroom learning
  - support structure to address issues that interfere with learning (safety—health—food—etc)
- Access in budget to reduce class size provided by sale of all currently unoccupied buildings & sale of Bd. Bldg.
- Consistent—Daily —Access to quality reading material for all students.
- With construction junction...auction all school contents not in use...furnishings, etc.

### Expectations

- Overall achievement increases
- 100% graduate—go to college or training
- Race is no longer a predictor of who achieves—graduates—or matriculates into post-secondary education or training
- All schools would have effective teachers—equitable program choices—and subject options and high expectations for success for all students. No exceptions.
- Every child to be provided the opportunity to exceed the expectation of achieving/exceeding the proficiency percentile that is currently in place.
- All children would grow up learning to their fullest potential and ready to live out the promise of their greatest dreams
- All students will be trained as independent critical thinkers.
- Words: Inspirational—Community Pride

- An environment where no bias exists between the different schools. By going equal opportunity to all students within all schools there would be a learning environment where students are not defeated before they even enter the school system.
- Compliance with Title IX in all sports programs.

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