



# Imagine a new PPS

*- for our children, parents, and teachers.*

**Table of Contents:**

Overview	Pg. 3
What We Know	Pg. 3
What We Propose	Pg. 4
Keeping Our Word	Pg. 4-7
Imagine The Future: Building on a Solid Foundation	Pg. 7-12
When	Pg. 12
How You Can Help	Pg. 12
Addendum A: Imagine PPS Timeline	Pg. 13

## **Overview**

At Pittsburgh Public Schools, imagining a brighter future for our students' starts with an examination of our own values – and what we know to be true about education's role in the broader Pittsburgh community.

We know education is a fundamental human right. We know that a high-quality education can change lives. We know that education isn't distributed equally, and that this has to change. And speaking of change, we know that the delivery of education is constantly changing.

There is a tremendous need for Pittsburgh Public Schools to make the changes that align with our values while meeting the demands of our employers and our community as a whole. For instance, providing a high-quality, equitable education for a city that has recently been dubbed one of the worst places for African Americans to live is a value. Offering continuous learning, starting at birth, is a value. Respecting our educators and providing ongoing professional development is a value.

## **What We Know**

It is no secret that in our city, our region, and our country, we are facing a severe workforce shortage crisis. As laid out in the Allegheny Conference on Community Development's 2017-18 [Inflection Point Report](#), our region faces a projected shortage of more than 80,000 employees by 2025. The report also highlights a "talent gap" between what is needed of tomorrow's workforce and what graduates know, and calls for a strong partnership between schools, universities, and businesses to close this gap.

What's more, we know that today, not every Pittsburgh student has equal access to the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be successful and competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy and beyond.

We also know that the way today's students learn and engage in their education is changing rapidly. Our high school seniors attending PPS today were born in 2001. This generation and younger do not remember life without the internet, and from a very young age have used tablet or smartphone technologies – at both school and home – to encounter people from all over the world and access information at their fingertips. Our youngest students attending preschool, now at age three, were born in 2016 and will see even greater evolutions in technology and global connectedness than anyone before them.

This rapidly changing world of technology, immediate access to information, and global influence is unprecedented – and demands a change in the way our students engage in learning Pre-K through 12 and beyond.

## ***What We Propose***

Over the next six months, in close partnership with internal and external stakeholders, we will imagine what PPS can be via a rigorous, thoughtful, and deliberate planning process. Building on the successful implementation of several foundational components of the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan; *Expect Great Things*, we are now taking the next big step in implementing the changes necessary to ensure every student who graduates from PPS meets or exceeds the standards laid out in our Graduate Profile (defined on pg. 8).

This process centers on the formation of 12 design teams – led by the District, in partnership with an external community partner, and informed by a mix of PPS staff and community members. Together, the teams will develop action plans for specific projects deemed necessary for equitable achievement of the Graduate Profile. Drawing from both the expertise of the local team members and from successful models/best practices across the country, these groups will focus on 12 areas for improvement. They include what our graduate requirements are; how our student's progress through our system; improving our educational delivery model; updating facilities and school feeder patterns; athletics and technology enhancements; mental health and trauma-informed care; and even the food we serve our kids.

We call this effort ***Imagine PPS***.

## ***Keeping Our Word***

**The good news is that the groundwork has begun.**

In addition to a comprehensive 2017-2022 Strategic Plan; [\*Expect Great Things\*](#), the District convened a working group to strengthen the existing strategic plan and meet the Pennsylvania Department of Education's requirements for a comprehensive plan in January 2018. Working with district staff, parents and representatives from local universities, the philanthropic community, and in partnership with the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL), the following five areas were identified as priorities:

- **Early Childhood Education:** committed to providing students (birth through 8 years of age) with the social-emotional and academic foundational skills that are necessary for success throughout their educational career and life.
- **Gifted Education:** committed to providing *all* students the opportunity to demonstrate their gifts and talents through enriched and accelerated learning.
- **Aligned Instructional Systems:** committed to ensuring that all students entering and exiting any PPS school will leave with the same quality education regardless of zip code.
- **New Teacher Induction:** committed to ensuring all incoming teachers receive effective mentoring, guidance, and support through a comprehensive New Teacher Induction (NTI) process.

- **Job-Embedded Professional Development:** committed to providing job-embedded professional learning that offers an individual and collaborative continuous learning process of inquiry, reflection, and action that occurs during the workday with a specific focus on staff improving student outcomes.

These five areas were prioritized due to their impact on improving outcomes for students in Pittsburgh while also strengthening existing systems and structures for teachers and instructional staff.

## **A great deal has been accomplished since 2016.**

### *Established the Building Blocks for District Transformation*

- Launched five-year Strategic Plan; *Expect Great Things* in Spring 2017
- Completed 91 out of the 137 recommendations by third party educational experts from the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) in five areas as of October 2019:
  - Organizational Structure and Staffing
  - Curriculum/Instructional Programming and Alignment (including English Learners and the Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE))
  - Budget and Business Services
  - Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment
  - Disciplinary Procedures and Protocols
- Released *On Track to Equity: Integrating Equity Throughout PPS*, a comprehensive implementation plan that seeks to reduce racial disparities throughout the District and elevate the achievement levels of African American students.  
([www.pghschools.org/equity](http://www.pghschools.org/equity))

### *Invested in New Curriculum – First in Over a Decade*

- New curriculum in 6-12 ELA and K-5 Mathematics aligned to the PA Core standards.
- New PreK-5 English Language Arts curriculum.
- New supplemental Science resources aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- Developed curriculum frameworks for all courses PreK-12, complete with aligned scope and sequence, formative assessments, syllabi, and course-related materials.

### *Increased Staff Investments*

- Assigned access to an Academic Literacy Coach for 50 out of 54 schools in the District. The coaches work daily to support teachers on an individual level and to foster teacher collaboration for professional learning around literacy.
- Increased nursing support on every campus.
- Hired four regional attendance assistants allowing school counselors more time to focus on supporting students.

- Expanded the number of Learning Environment Specialist 3 – 6 to provide training based on school level needs regarding student behavior.
- Increased library services.
- Hired a Project Manager for Student Voice and launched a Student Advisory Committee ensuring student voice is always at the table.
- Hired a Community Schools Coordinator and designated eight Community Schools locations (four new site managers).

#### *Advanced School Culture and Learning Environments Improvements*

- Implemented a K-2 suspension ban for non-violent offenses approved by the Board of Directors.
- Certified 18 staff members as Restorative Practice trainers.
- Introduced two new Student Codes of Conduct differentiated by age group, with one for children in grades 5 and under and one for children in grades 6-12.
- Embedded Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) in every school.
- Expanded Restorative Practices to all schools.
- Implemented Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Survey across grades 3 – 12.
- Established a partnership with the Pittsburgh Pirates bullying prevention program, Shred Hate in 22 schools.
- Rolled out Active Shooter Training at all schools and in Central Office.

#### *Expanded Post-Secondary Preparation Opportunities*

- Expanded the District's TEALS Program to eight secondary schools, bringing high-tech volunteers into the Advanced Placement Computer Science classrooms across PPS.
- Partnered with the College Board's "All In" Campaign Challenge to provide PPS high school students online personalized learning to boost success on the PSAT and SAT exams.
- Administer the PSAT for 8th and 9th graders and the SAT for 11 graders at no cost to students and families.
- Launched new five-week intensive summer development camp for students who partially meet the CAS criteria through CAS Summer Dreamers.
- PPS Salutatorians and Valedictorians receive guaranteed admission and financial aid at the University of Pittsburgh through the Pittsburgh Public Scholars to Pitt program.
- Launched New CTE Early Childhood Program.

#### *Increased Technology Opportunities for Students and Staff*

- Updated technology in every PreK-8 English Language Arts and Math classroom
- Increased the District's internet bandwidth.
- Piloted the Dynamic Learning Project, a national program supported by Google and Digital Promise that empowers teachers to leverage technology and improve education equity, at

three PPS schools (Pittsburgh King PreK-8, Pittsburgh Langley K-8, and Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8).

- Awarded a grant from the 1Million Project Foundation to provide at-home high-speed internet service to students in need.

#### *Advanced Staff Professional Learning*

- Elevated the oversight of Professional Development to an Assistant Superintendent.
- Increased opportunities for job-embedded professional development and teacher support increasing the number of half days for students from two to eight.
- Held Summer Leadership Academy for school leaders and their leadership teams in 2018 and 2019.
- Invested in professional learning platform to manage professional development opportunities and record staff learning.

#### *Increased Staff Access to Student Data*

- Established a full-staff Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment department to support the production of timely information related to assessment, critical data such as attendance, academic performance, absenteeism and to evaluate program investments and support external research opportunities.
- Invested in a robust student data dashboard for teachers and school leaders.

#### *Improved Transparency and Accountability*

- Launched a Public Dashboard ([www.pghschools.org/dashboards](http://www.pghschools.org/dashboards)) to increase transparency on District and school progress, with regular updates to the Board at its Agenda Review meetings.
- Present data publicly at monthly televised Board Meetings.

## ***Imagine The Future: Building On a Solid Foundation***

As outlined above, the foundational work done to date allows Pittsburgh Public Schools to pivot towards a more proactive, intentional, and aspirational phase of achieving the goals laid out in the *Expect Great Things* strategic plan. Simply put, it is time to *Imagine PPS* in a new way.

Here are the seven components that will allow us to get there:

### **1. Community Champions**

Recognizing the role that PPS and our students play in the broader Pittsburgh community is fundamental to the *Imagine PPS* work. As such, it is critical that leaders drawn from that community be the driving force in moving us forward as an organization.

Community Champions are individuals that serve as experts in their area of focus, or whom have leverage and influence as trusted spokespeople to advocate and lead. They will spearhead the

work of the *Imagine PPS* effort, helping to facilitate learning, create connections, and drive the work of the Design Teams responsible for our 12 Focus Areas (discussed further below).

## 2. Design Teams

Members of the 12 proposed Design Teams will be identified by the District and will include staff, teachers, school leaders, community members, parents, and students. Each team will include between five (5) and 12 members. Under the guidance of the Community Champions and District Design Team Leads, the Design Teams will be responsible for initial **research**, development of an **action plan** for their respective Focus Area, and **recommendations** of next steps – all with the unified goal of helping PPS students fully achieve the Graduate Student Profile as a result of the design team’s work.

- **Research:** Highly successful models and programs exist within schools and communities across the United States. Researching those models will be an important step in identifying the opportunities that could work in Pittsburgh.
- **Action Plan:** The next step will be using this initial research to outline a plan for the work of the Design Team to be operationalized.
- **Recommendations:** At the conclusion of the six-month engagement period, each design team will be responsible for delivering its list of recommended next steps (including a budget and possible support) to PPS Executive Cabinet, allowing the District to synthesize the recommendations from the various teams into a master *Imagine PPS* plan to be presented to the School Board.

## 3. Focus Areas for Each Design Team

The *Expect Great Things* strategic plan and the work done in 2018 to strengthen that plan have identified 12 Focus Areas that will allow PPS to address the challenges students face for achieving the Graduate Student Profile. These Focus Areas Are:

### Student Pathways

#### 1. Student Pathways

The Student Pathways design team will be responsible for updating the District’s existing graduate student profile, revising graduation requirements and master schedules and establishing a pupil progression plan.

A *graduate student profile* is a document used to specify the intellectual, personal, and interpersonal skills that students should have when they graduate. The profile provides a clear visualization of priority goals for teaching and learning that can be easily communicated to students, parents, faculty, and staff to align their collective efforts. Input from the community will help to identify and prioritize these skills/competencies for the school district and create a shared vision of the District’s destination.

*Graduation requirements* are the credits/classes that students must take in order to be eligible for graduation. In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has a

minimum graduation requirement threshold, but local districts can establish their own provided they meet the minimum requirements.

Updated graduation requirements will lead to changes to *master schedules*. Each school must have a *master schedule* in place to schedule teachers, analyze student course requests, and assign teachers and rooms to classes.

A *pupil progression plan* is how a student moves from kindergarten to first grade, first grade to second and so on including the move from a student's senior to post-secondary education or the workforce. It transparently outlines what students need to do to move from one grade to a next for every student and accounts for remediation and acceleration.

## **School Design**

Incorporated in the work of school design will be three separate design teams that will focus their efforts in the following areas.

### **2. *Birth – Age 8 Programming***

The Birth – Age 8 Programming design team will research schools and programs that begin at birth and carry through grade 3. The school model will be a student-centered, play-based educational system grounded in standards that will help students from birth to 3rd grade engage in learning at a higher level.

### **3. *Career Middle School***

The Career Middle School design team will work to research middle school career schools and design a middle school model that provides students with exposure to a variety of careers. Research has identified middle school as a time when students can benefit the most from career exploration. Through a project-based learning model, students will work in teams, learn from real-life scenarios and build self-awareness while they develop a plan for reaching their future goals. The Career Middle School would be closely connected to local and regional corporations, outlining clear pathways to secondary schooling and post-secondary college or job preparatory programming.

### **4. *STEM School – Medical Careers***

The STEM School – Medical Careers design team will research existing schools focused on preparing students for high-demand medical careers. Students would take college preparatory courses focused on educational experiences in science, technology, engineering and mathematics that increase their ability to gain access to careers in medicine and the sciences.

## **Areas of Interest**

### **5. *Mental Health /Trauma Informed Care***

The Mental Health/Trauma Informed Care design team will assess the current programming and staff available to address student mental health and trauma, and determine what additional resources, programs, and staff are needed to ensure students are having their mental health and trauma care needs met.

6. *Arts*

That Arts design team will evaluate the District's current art offerings and determine how arts education can be better integrated into other subject areas and/or if additional arts programming is needed.

7. *"Homemade" Healthy Food*

The "Homemade" Healthy Food design team will study existing models in Boston and Houston and determine how to provide fresh, healthier and more desirable options for meals across all schools with a focus on schools without fully functioning kitchens.

8. *Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) Infrastructure*

The Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) Infrastructure design team will evaluate the current PSE model of regional classrooms and explore ways to restructure and maximize resources to support each student's individual education plan.

9. *Athletics*

The Athletics design team will evaluate current athletic offerings (K-12) and board policies so students at Pittsburgh Public Schools have a competitive advantage as participants in the District's athletic programs.

***School Improvement of Underperforming High Schools***

10. *Pittsburgh Perry High School*

The Perry design team will work in tandem with Perry's leadership team and help to establish ways to strengthen Perry by ensuring foundational elements are in place, and that the community supports the school. The design team will build upon the school's existing school improvement plan, required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Community Champion for Perry school will be the Buhl Foundation

11. *Pittsburgh Millions 6-12*

The Millions design team will work in tandem with Millions's leadership team and help to establish ways to strengthen Millions school by ensuring foundational elements are in place and that the school is supported by the community. The design team will build upon the school's existing school improvement plan, required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The District is working to enlist a Community Champion for the Millions Design Team.

12. *Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12*

The Westinghouse design team will work in tandem with Westinghouse's leadership team and help to establish ways to strengthen Westinghouse school by ensuring all of the foundational elements are in place and that the community supports the school. The design team will build upon the school's existing school improvement plan, required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Community Champion of the Westinghouse design team will be Dr. John Wallace, David E. Epperson Endowed Chair and professor at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work, and the Homewood Children's Village.

In addition to the work of the 12 design teams, the Superintendent's Executive Cabinet will utilize the feedback received as a part of the design team engagement and research process to make System & Structural Improvements in the following four areas:

- *Educational Delivery Model*  
The Executive Cabinet will review the District's current Educational Delivery Model, also known as the school funding formula. The work will include evaluating the current model and aligning a future model with the values identified by the staff and stakeholders of the city. An example may be increasing the number of student service supports such as counselors and social workers, or ensuring every school has a full-time Assistant Principal.
- *School Feeder Patterns*  
The Executive Cabinet will evaluate the District's current school feeder patterns to determine where adjustments could be made so that students are more evenly distributed, while keeping in mind the needs outlined in the most recent *Facilities Master Plan*.
- *Magnet Pathways*  
The Executive Cabinet will evaluate the current magnet schools and programs, and the current magnet school/program pathways, and determine what changes need to be made in terms of school design, program continuity, magnet policy and magnet themes.
- *Technology Enhancements*  
The Executive Cabinet will explore school models in large urban settings that provide a 1:1 model of technology for all students across all grades. The team will also evaluate teacher and district staff technology needs, and develop a plan of action that also includes updated technology, equipment, and infrastructure, to ensure high-speed intranet and cell service at all school facilities.

#### **4. Investment**

The operating budget of the school district will not be enough to make the impact required to ensure the level of change and coordination needed. While the District will work to align its resources with the priorities identified by this process, there will need to be additional ownership, partnership, and influence that ensures increased and sustained investments to realize the collective vision and work. Levels of investment can include everything from added staff capacity to capital projects and infrastructure, to technology enhancements and seed/matching funding. A comprehensive fundraising approach that includes short and long-term investments will be established for successful implementation.

#### **5. Communications**

From start to finish, clear, transparent communications will be required to ensure everyone is well informed and aware of their opportunities for input and knowledge of proposed or approved changes. A robust internal communications effort will accompany the Design Teams' work, ensuring that all teams are working on parallel paths, avoiding overlap, and sharing resources and initial findings as necessary with the other Teams.

Externally, the communications plan will be strategic, audience specific, and frequent. A key component of this will be sharing stories about the district. The stories will be honest portrayals of the current state as well as future state of the district, students, teachers, families, and community partners.

## **6. Implementation**

In order for the Design Teams' work to be successful, each will require clear goals and expectations, as well as the capacity and resources needed to ensure consistent and successful execution of their tasks in a timely way. The work will need to be monitored and evaluated continuously over the course of the implementation. Norms, expectations, and milestones for each Team will be established prior to them beginning work.

## **7. Sustainability**

Any large-scale initiative like *Imagine PPS* requires a sustainability plan that spans leadership changes and accounts for potential roadblocks and resource challenges. It will be essential that the Action Plans resulting from the Design Team's work are adopted and approved with commitments to continue beyond the contracts or terms of District leaders.

## **When**

The *Imagine PPS* engagement and design team work will occur over a six-month period beginning in January 2020 and concluding in June 2020. The work includes three phases. A high-level timeline is included as addendum A.

## **How You Can Help**

We value you as a partner and ask for your support in three ways.

- Provide your input. It is important that we hear from you.
- Contact us about serving as a member of one of our 12 Design Teams.
- Be an advocate for Public Education in the City of Pittsburgh.

## Addendum A: Imagine PPS Timeline

	Nov/Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
<b>Initiation, Project Mobilization &amp; Planning</b>							
1. Develop <i>Imagine PPS</i> concept & work plan	█						
2. Develop descriptions for community engagement							
3. Identify Focus Areas							
4. Create Design Teams for Focus Area and recruit members and Champions		█					
5. Develop communications plan		█					
6. Present Imagine to PPS Board		█					
<b>Phase 1: Communications, Engagement and Design Team Work</b>							
1. Implement communications plan		█	█	█	█	█	█
2. Design Team work sessions		█	█	█	█	█	█
3. Engage in active community listening		█	█	█	█	█	█
<b>Phase 2: Research, Data Gathering &amp; Analysis</b>							
1. Gather data and information from Design Teams		█	█	█	█	█	█
2. Research best practices and analyze data		█	█	█	█	█	█
<b>Phase 3: Design &amp; Solutions Development</b>							
1. Develop recommendations, actions, and timelines resulting from Design Teams' work.				█	█	█	█
2. Review and prioritize recommendations and actions.				█	█	█	█
3. Engage the community for feedback / reactions to recommendations and actions.				█	█	█	█
4. Deliver recommendations to Board.				█	█	█	█
<b>Continuous Throughout Project</b>							
1. Solicit ongoing feedback from stakeholders, Design Team members, community champions, and PPS staff.	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
2. Develop and continuously monitor clear metrics for success.	█	█	█	█	█	█	█