

5 Priority Goals



The five priority goals articulate key strategies aimed at improving Culture, Systems, and Instruction in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Implementing these priority goals begins with inquiry. The conclusions emerging from this process will outline a collaborative and strategic approach to solve our challenges with student experiences and outcomes.

The following pages reintroduce each priority goal accompanied by its context. The context provides a clear rationale for each student-focused priority goal. Following the context are action steps designed to advance implementation of these goals.

Priority Goal #1

Invest in culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices.

Priority Goal #2

Construct safety, health, and wellness protocols.

Priority Goal #3

Expand stakeholder communication and partnerships.

Priority Goal #4

Design effective organizational systems.

Priority Goal #5

Strategically allocate resources to ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.



Priority Goal 1



Goal #1: Invest in culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices.

CONTEXT

Pittsburgh Public Schools is currently challenged to make significant improvements in student outcomes and eliminate racial achievement disparities as evidenced by Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and Keystone Exam results. Additionally, navigating ever-changing public health issues externally while managing COVID-19 mitigation strategies internally has magnified challenges and opportunities for our school district.

A well-designed and implemented high-quality teaching and learning process that results in improved student outcomes is a core goal of our school district. To meet this goal, an investment in culturally responsive, evidence-based professional learning is required. Using instructional tools and resources, collaborative professional learning communities, observations of practice, growth-oriented feedback, and progress monitoring, we will support and hone teacher skills and practice. Improved instructional practice is paramount for student success and improved outcomes.

ACTION STEPS

1. Launch a Summer Leadership Academy to build awareness of specific culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices for our district.
2. Assess our current system of delivery and assessment of professional learning.
3. Engage stakeholders (students, staff, families, and community) regarding culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices.
4. Identify, review, and assess current district instructional practices and tools that are culturally responsive and evidence-based.
5. Create and share core messaging and rationale regarding the need to invest in culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices.
6. Assess resource needs for delivering tools, resources, and professional learning.
7. Engage in the development of a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the extent and supports needed to improve teaching and learning outcomes.



Priority Goal 2



Goal #2: Construct safety, health, and wellness protocols.

CONTEXT

The narrative of what it means for school districts to address the health, safety and well-being of its customers is multi-faceted and has certainly evolved during the pandemic. This evolution has elevated the importance of COVID-19, and other contagion, mitigation, health care access, safety in schools, trauma informed care, social and emotional wellness, physical and mental health, nutrition, and food security when providing service to students, staff, and families. Understanding our core focus is the improvement of student outcomes, the safety, health and wellness of our students and staff are critical issues, that if not addressed, can create significant challenges for student and staff success. Protocols serve as regulations and guidance for the school community. The development of protocols becomes vital to ensure coherence, accountability, and support for students and staff of our district.

ACTION STEPS

1. Formalize and communicate definitions of student and staff safety, health, and wellness in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.
2. Identify, review, and assess existing safety, health, and wellness protocols.
3. Create an informational resource outlining the potential impact of safety, health, and wellness protocols in supporting the improvement of staff and student experiences and outcomes.
4. Confirm levels of understanding among stakeholders regarding PPS safety, health, and wellness protocols.
5. Create and expand opportunities for stakeholder engagement regarding potential improvements to our safety, health, and wellness protocols.
6. Assess resource needs for constructing robust safety, health and wellness protocols.
7. Invest in research, development of design, support and accountability tools to ensure the implementation of robust safety, health, and wellness protocols.



Priority Goal **3**

Goal #3: Expand stakeholder communication and partnerships.

CONTEXT

In a September 2020 Getting Smart article by Julia Pile and Laura Gilchrist, the authors state, “In stakeholders lie the resources, information, and opportunities, the love, caring and wisdom needed to support the goals of the education system — creating the conditions for our kids to thrive now and in the future.” As a school district, we have received feedback that highlights internal and external trust issues. These trust issues have been attributed to poor communication and a lack of transparency. In the spirit of improving student outcomes through the effective utilization of stakeholders, communication can serve as relationship shapers, people connectors, information disseminators, culture builders, opportunity makers, all in the service of students, staff, and families. Expanding stakeholder communication and partnerships will support the creation of robust, innovative, empowering, and joyful educational experiences.

ACTION STEPS

1. Review school-based goals and initiatives aligned to existing partnership agreements, outcomes, and communication approaches.
2. Assess existing frameworks and expectations for partnership development and communication protocols and their alignment with our district mission, vision, and policies.
3. Investigate potential local, regional, and national partnerships in alignment with our district mission, vision, and policies.
4. Create and expand opportunities for stakeholder feedback regarding ways to establish trust, create transparency, improve communication, and expand partnerships.
5. Create an informational resource outlining the potential impact of effective communication and expanded and aligned partnerships to support the improvement of student experiences and outcomes.
6. Assess resource needs for existing relationships and expand stakeholder communication and partnerships to create a cohesive structure.
7. Invest in the development of support and accountability tools to ensure high expectations for stakeholder communication and partnership expansion.

Priority Goal **4**

Goal #4: Design effective organizational systems.

CONTEXT

The designing of systems elevates data-informed decision-making, progress monitoring, and equity drivers to inform organizational effectiveness. Additionally, systems design establishes avenues for organization, transformation, innovation, reform, and change at scale, especially in spaces where systems are lacking. Our district's Theory of Action outlines Systems as one of three (Culture, Systems, Instruction) connected set of propositions that will lead to improved practices. Based on qualitative feedback, one identified criticism is our lack of systems for supporting and advancing the multi-faceted work of the school district. Furthermore, the lack of systems ranges from equitable delivery of instructional support and services to our students, to quality conditions and environments for learning, to needed adjustments in mindset, policies, and collective responsibility for district improvement. An investment in designing effective and aligned systems would clarify processes, protocols, and expectations in ways that empower staff to perform at high levels.

ACTION STEPS

1. Assess how district policies are communicated and implemented throughout the organization to impact performance and outcomes.
2. Assess how organizational systems are designed, vetted, communicated, and implemented to all applicable stakeholders.
3. Inventory the ownership, residence, and accessibility of current systems.
4. Assess the internal and external communication, relevance, and efficacy of current systems.
5. Create and expand opportunities for stakeholder feedback regarding existing processes and procedures and their ability to hinder or empower access and high-quality performance.
6. Create and expand opportunities for stakeholder feedback regarding potential new and relevant processes and procedures to inform the design of effective organizational systems.
7. Assess resource needs for designing, vetting, communicating, and implementing equitable and effective organizational systems.



Priority Goal 5



Goal #5: Strategically allocate resources to ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.

CONTEXT

Every child living within Pittsburgh Public Schools' footprint is entitled to a high-quality and robust educational experience, regardless of race, zip code, gender (including gender identity or expression), disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and economic designation. Therefore, our schools must strategically allocate resources and become vibrant community hubs that demonstrate fiscal responsibility through efficient operations while maintaining safe, effective, modern learning environments. Additionally, Pittsburgh Public Schools is committed to eliminating racial achievement disparities by investing in research, curriculum, assessment, data analysis, and accountability constructs that are culturally responsive and prioritize student needs and outcomes. To actualize this desire, we must utilize an equity lens of access, support, and services to drive decisions that impact student learning experiences and outcomes informed by data. Understanding that our mission is rooted in creating community, we embrace consistent collaboration, partnerships, and relationships with key stakeholders, inclusive of the most marginalized, to create optimal student learning experiences.

ACTION STEPS

1. Formalize and communicate definitions of equity, excellence, and efficiency in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.
2. Evaluate and assess how financial resources are currently allocated in ways that ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.
3. Investigate exemplar resources allocation models that advance equity, excellence, and efficiency.
4. Work collaboratively with the Board of Directors and Leadership Team to create design principles that inform the strategic allocation and optimization of resources (human, financial, physical plant, infrastructure, instructional, etc.) to ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.
5. Create an informational resource outlining the potential impact of resource allocation rooted in equity, excellence, and efficiency to support the improvement of student experiences and outcomes.
6. Create and expand opportunities for stakeholder feedback regarding needed resources to ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.
7. Design collaborative stakeholder teams to create core recommendations that begin the journey of addressing strategic allocation of resources to ensure equity, excellence, and efficiency.

