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For Immediate Release

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MGT Equity Audit Validates Superintendent's Priority Goals and Early Moves to Update Curriculum, Reinforce Restorative Practices Implementation and Invest in Tutoring for All Students

District's First-Ever Racial Equity Audit Results in 61 Recommendations for Supporting Black and African American Children and Implementing Cultural Changes Throughout the System That Narrow Achievement Disparities

PITTSBURGH, September 12, 2023 –Today, MGT presented findings and recommendations from the first-ever independent racial equity audit of the Pittsburgh Public Schools' system of education for its African American students at the Board's Education Committee Meeting. Recommended by the Equity Advisory Panel, initiated by the Superintendent and approved by the Board this past Spring, the audit provides a starting point in evaluating the current state of equity in Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS). The report's examination of the impact of District policies, programs and practices on students relative to their race, will guide current initiatives underway and the development of strategies to achieve items listed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PPS and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC).

"As a public school district, we are responsible for the education of all students who enter our doors, regardless of race, culture, disability, and socio-economic backgrounds," said Superintendent, Dr. Wayne N. Walters. "It is time that we put an end to the racial inequities that persist and disproportionately impact our African American students. Through this independent racial equity audit, we seek to understand the nature, magnitude and root causes of these disparities and work tirelessly and courageously to address policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that have resulted in persistent racial achievement disparities."

Prior to receiving MGT's findings and recommendations, Dr. Walters, has taken several actions steps identified within his five student-focused priority goals developed to improve student outcomes and eliminate racial disparities in achievement, including:

- Launching a Summer Leadership Academy to build awareness of specific culturally responsive, evidence-based training, tools, and instructional practices.
- Providing 19,000 students in grades K-12 with 24/7 access to online tutoring through Tutor.com, including access to advanced placement support and SAT courses.
- Sponsoring the first district-wide mental health wellness fair developed by students for students.
- Distributing new restorative practices resources and identifying restorative practices point persons for each school.



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- Seeking community input on Design Principles for PPS via an online survey and nine audience-specific virtual and in-person focus groups to address equity, excellence and efficiency.

MGT Racial Equity Assessment at a Glance

The 148-page report is the result of MGT's mixed-methods study that utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis includes results from surveys of staff, parents and caregivers and focus groups. MGT additionally reviewed PPS data, as well as District policies in the areas of academic performance, community and family engagement, discipline and behavior, and organizational leadership for equity.

Based on its review, MGT shared a total of 61 recommendations in five key areas from the MOU and three support areas identified by MGT as integral to the success of Racial Equity within PPS:

- Instructional Support
- Equity in Discipline
- Reducing the Achievement Gap
- Equity in Special Education and Special Programs
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Policy
- Family and Community Engagement
- Revisiting Prior Action Items

Some key recommendations within each area include:

- *Instructional Support:* Commit to and provide Administration and Faculty ongoing professional development and training opportunities focused on racial equity, cultural competency, and culturally responsive strategies.
- Provide mental health training and support for students, staff, and faculty that is proactive, preventative, trauma responsive and healing centered.
- *Equity in Discipline:* Prioritize and communicate clearly outlined Restorative Practices policy and progress, including specific logic model for infractions, ways to avoid retributive penalties, and specific ways Restorative Practices ensure all students have equitable access to the process.
- *Reducing the Achievement Gap:* Consider Curriculum Infusion models to ensure fidelity to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, embedding racial equity and cultural competence within the curriculum.
- *Equity in Special education and Special Programs:* Ensure that Advanced Placement and Centers for Advanced Studies students all have access to similar supports including school-supported versus independent coursework support (e.g., current PS example: Tutor.com)
- *Policy:* Modify language where possible to ensure gender-neutral language.
- *Family and Community Engagement:* Meet families, caregivers, and community members where they are. Consider resource learning sessions that take place where families and communities congregate.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Establish Racial Equity accountability metrics and transparent recommended, actionable, research-based practices led by the Administration and Executive Office, the Office of Equity, and the School Board.



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- *Revisiting Prior Action Items:* Update On-Track to Equity Implementation Plan to consider continued gaps, report any progress towards the plan and any regression in the last four years resulting from the pandemic and subsequent recession.

The full report and Board presentation can be found on the [District's website](#).

In Other Business: Superintendent Releases 2023 Student Achievement Results

Tonight, Dr. Walters also released District-level 2023 student achievement results on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Keystone exams. The PSSA measures individual student performance and determines the level to which school programs enable students to reach Pennsylvania proficiency standards in ELA and Mathematics in Grades 3-8 and Science in Grades 4 and 8. Keystone Exams are end-of-course exams aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards that measure student learning in Algebra 1, Literature and Biology. High school students take these exams after completing the corresponding course. Although students may take the Keystone Exams at various times throughout their high school career, results for State accountability purposes are attributed to the school when the student reaches 11th Grade.

Results shared this evening show the District achieved a second consecutive year of moderate gains on the PSSA in the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced* show across all subject areas. Students saw the largest gains in Mathematics, moving from 20.6 percent to 25.7 percent *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Additional results demonstrate less students in the District are performing at the lowest level, *Below Basic*, across all subjects, with the greatest reduction also in Mathematics moving down from 53.7 percent to 46.8 percent.

Students in 3rd and 5th grade led the way with the largest gains in students performing at the *Proficient* and *Advanced* levels in English Language Arts (ELA) PSSA. Third grade also had the largest decrease of students performing Below Basic on the ELA exam. While all student race groups had increases in the percentage of students performing at the *Proficient* or *Advanced* in Mathematics, gains made by African American students were less than half of the gains made by White students. Students with Individualized Education Plans (special education) also saw increases in Mathematics proficiency across most grade levels. In Science, students in both 4th and 8th grade had increases in proficiency for the second consecutive year.

The District continues to see fluctuations in 11th grade accountability performance due to the COVID-related waiver granted by the state for students in 2020. Results show the proficiency in Science increased across all subgroups, and the racial achievement disparity between African American students and White students shrank in Mathematics by 11.6 percent. While demonstrated proficiency increased for Science in 2023, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced is still 20.3% less than in 2021. To view district-level grade-by-grade results on each exam visit the [District website](#) for tonight's presentation. District and school-level accountability results will be added to the District's Data Dashboard in the coming weeks.

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