EQUITY: Getting to ALL

A Plan to Accelerate Student Achievement and Eliminate Racial Disparities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh Public Schools

The Pathway to the Promise.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessing the Challenge</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering Effective Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Curriculum Relevance and Fidelity</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the Culture</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Our Support to Schools</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Families and Communities</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing the Challenge

“Each of us has a deep longing to see things right in the world.”

~John Bell
A story on the front page of the April 29, 2012, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette featured the first Pittsburgh Promise graduates. The photograph to the left is of Morgan Watkins in her cap and gown. Morgan, a graduate of Pittsburgh Schenley High School, is a Promise Scholar who received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Equity: Getting to ALL is our plan to Accelerate Student Achievement and Eliminate Racial Disparities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. It is our strategy to make the Promise real for the many students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools who look like Morgan, but do not walk across the stage, neither at high school or at college.

In Pittsburgh Public Schools we are committed to 1) Accelerating Student Achievement, 2) Eliminating Racial Disparities, and 3) Becoming a District of First Choice for students and families – a school system capable of retaining enrollment, attracting families and contributing to Pittsburgh’s rebirth as a vibrant, 21st century city.

As we devote our effort to this work it is important to remember that we currently have schools, teachers and school leaders who are day in and day out effectively preparing African-American students for success. They realize while some of our students come with social capital, which paves the way to their success, many do not. They know that many of our children live in poverty. Some have family issues they must deal with that most of us have never had to cope with, and many have the odds stacked against them in the neighborhoods in which they live. Nonetheless, the teachers who teach these students are undaunted. They see the Promise in the eyes of the children they serve, roll up their sleeves and without reservation, refuse to give up on them, and refuse to let them fail. They know that children and young people want to succeed. They see students who want a relationship with their teachers even when they appear to be pushing them away. They know that talent and leadership can come to school dressed up as disruption and disrespect. They know that every day children and young people may test adults to see how much they care. Dr. Barbara Sizemore describes these teachers in her writings about our District:

"Therefore teachers expected little help from some parents and were overjoyed when they received it. But whether or not the parent was able or willing, their expectations for students remained high. It simply did not matter when the parent was chemically dependent, imprisoned or unconcerned with the students. The teachers and principals always stepped in to fill the gap."
(Walking in Circles, p. 177)

**Excellence For All**

In 2006 the District introduced its reform agenda Excellence for All. Excellence for All reinforces the belief that all children can learn at high levels by setting measurable objectives not only for moving every student toward proficiency, but also for increasing the number of children at the highest levels of achievement. In addition to establishing expectations for improving the achievement of all students, Excellence for All also focused on the need to accelerate the learning of African-American students by targeting incremental gains of five percentage points per year for African-American students compared to other peers. The goals of Excellence for All go beyond the federal and state No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, which focus primarily on getting students to proficiency by 2014. We know that in order for all students to succeed in every aspect of their lives we need to ensure that all students are achieving at high levels.
According to the 2011 report *Globally Challenged: Are U.S. Students Ready to Compete* by Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance, among the nations that participate in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), 22 countries significantly outperform students in the United States in Mathematics, 10 in Reading. While 42% of White students in the United States were identified as proficient in Mathematics only 11% of African-American students, 15% of Hispanic students, and 16% of Native Americans were proficient. In Reading, 40% of White students were proficient with only 13% of African-American students, 5% of Hispanic students, and 18% of Native-American students identified as so. The report went on to show that even while White students in the United States significantly outperform African-American, Hispanic and Native-American students, students from 16 other countries outperform U.S. White students in Mathematics, eight in Reading.

A national conversation is underway, focused on education as the key to our country’s future. Rather than play catch-up, Pittsburgh Public Schools is on the cutting edge of transforming public education. Since the introduction of our *Excellence for All* reform agenda in 2006, we have put in place key elements to improve student achievement, including:

- a rigorous and culturally inclusive PreK-12 curriculum;
- a nationally recognized program to recruit, train, support and compensate principals as instructional leaders (PULSE, Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence);
- an aggressive, comprehensive and ongoing professional development for all instructional personnel;
- instructional support in every school to deepen the work;
- the use of diagnostic assessment to get help to students quickly; and
- expanded early childhood offerings so a child’s school experience gets off to a better start and provides a smooth transition to Kindergarten

At the center of our vision of *Excellence for All* is The Pittsburgh Promise®. The Promise, announced in 2007, inspires and motivates students by providing scholarships, regardless of income, to all colleges and universities in Pennsylvania as well as technical and trade schools that offer two-year degree programs. This incredible gift from the community raises the stakes for us here in Pittsburgh as we work to ensure that every student is Promise-Ready and eligible to receive a scholarship from the Promise.

In 2009, the District was awarded a highly competitive $40 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support our Empowering Effective Teachers plan. At the heart of the Empowering Effective Teachers plan is a bold vision: *Pittsburgh’s teachers will be empowered to do whatever it takes to foster a culture of striving, resilience, and college-readiness so that 80 percent of all students complete a post-secondary degree or workforce certification.* The core academic elements we have put into place support our Empowering Effective Teachers work that will further accelerate the academic growth of our students.
Since 2009 we have put the following additional strategies in place to support core initiatives and increase student achievement:

- The K-11 literacy Response to Instruction and Intervention (Rtii) model that includes 30 minutes of literacy intervention and enrichment daily in every K-5, K-8 and 6-8 school;
- Diagnostic and summative assessments to complement the District K-2 reading program;
- Two periods of mathematics daily for every student;
- A focus on algebraic skills throughout grades K-8; and,
- The Research-Based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE) designed to grow and develop students by continuously advancing the professional practice of teachers.

**Promising Results**

Our reform efforts are showing early results that are promising for all of our children. In 2011, the District made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the second time in the past three years. Making AYP twice is a formidable accomplishment for an urban school district in just nine years since the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law in January 2002.

On the 2011 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) the number of students performing at the *advanced* level increased on 10 of 14 tests, while the number of students performing *below basic* decreased on 13 of 14 PSSA tests. The percentage of students scoring *proficient* or *advanced* in reading for the combined grades 3-8 and 11 grew to 60.5% in 2011 from 56.6% in 2010 and 51.4% in 2007. The percentage of students performing at the advanced level in reading grew to 25.6% in 2011, up from 19.2% in 2007. Since 2002, District students have made progress in every grade level. (see graph below)

As a result of current reforms, students have continued to make gains in proficiency in both Mathematics and Reading. The disparity between African-American and White students in Reading and Mathematics narrowed steadily at all grade levels over the past four years while achievement for both groups rose.
**Reading Disparity:** The disparity has decreased steadily over the past four years from 32.3 to 27.7 points. Although the disparity has narrowed, achievement has increased for both groups.

**Mathematics Disparity:** The disparity has decreased steadily over the past four years from 31.1 to 25.9 points. Although the disparity has narrowed, achievement has increased for both groups.
While these results are promising, we know we have a lot more work to do if we are going to reach our goal of *Excellence for All*. While the disparity in both Reading and Mathematics has narrowed, it will take 40 years to eliminate achievement disparities in Mathematics and 34 years in Reading. While 2011 was our best year in accelerating achievement, it would still take us 24 years to eliminate achievement disparities.

![PSSA Reading: Black/white gap in % Proficient and Advanced](image1)

![PSSA Math: Black/white gap in % Proficient and Advanced](image2)


**Long-standing History of Racial Disparities**

In Pittsburgh, racial disparity refers to the difference between African American and other students on a variety of educational measures. While disparities also exist in relationship to the social-economic status of students, we cannot use poverty as the only root cause of the race-based achievement disparities that exist in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Race is a less comfortable space for us to talk about. Still too often, we see the markers of failure – the over-identification for special education, especially emotional support, for African-American boys, high rates of suspension, and of course, the summative measures of graduation rate and Promise-Readiness.

The future compels us to address this and engage in the self-examination of our racial identities and how they manifest themselves in the learning environment. We must become adept at recognizing institutional racism, whether inadvertent or intended, for it really does not matter which it is, the impact on our students is the same.

We know that there has been a long-standing history of racial disparities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. On August 24, 1992 a complaint against the School District of Pittsburgh was filed with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) charging the District violated sections of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act. The District and the Advocates for African American Students, the group that filed the claim, reached a Conciliation Agreement in September 2006. The Conciliation Agreement included 94 action steps that addressed how the District could reduce racial achievement disparities, provide instructional support, and create an environment of equity for its African-American students. Of these, 80 of the action steps were embedded in the District's reform agenda, *Excellence for All.*
Excellence for All, the District’s roadmap for improving the academic performance of all students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, includes specific targets for African-American students. For example, it notes that “the achievement of African-American students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools will increase at a rate that is five percentage points greater than the gains of their peers.”

The Equity: Getting to All plan acknowledges our progress to date is insufficient and sets specific goals over five years (2017) for eliminating racial disparities within seven years. These goals are divided among three categories: Achievement, College and Career Readiness, and Student Engagement & Special Programs. A complete listing of goals related to the Equity: Getting to All plan can be found in the appendix section.

An Expert Independent Perspective
We sought outside expert eyes to help us identify what, if any, additional school reform efforts we should initiate to achieve higher results. In describing Pittsburgh’s reform efforts urban sociologist Dr. Pedro Noguera said, “Pittsburgh is doing all of the right things. So it’s not about doing more things, rather about doing what you are already doing better.” The diagnosis we received was surprising:

- We do not need to increase the number of initiatives, but refine and improve implementation,
- Address the culture itself.

We must get better at our efforts to plan and prepare for the implementation of initiatives. The implementation of initiatives can be premature when we miss important steps or seek to shorten them. Additionally, the important steps of enlisting, not just telling cannot be overlooked. Too often important constituencies are not informed about what is going to happen. As a result these constituents are not engaged in the creation and/or improvement of an initiative. In order to do these steps appropriately, better planning must take place so adequate time is available to provide for engagement and input.

In the case of principals and schools, getting their acceptance and willingness to implement is crucial. While the level of support will likely never be at 100%, in order for us to know if the initiative really is effective we must achieve 80% fidelity. We will make a planned deliberate effort to gain the support of our school leaders and our teachers to reach a high level of fidelity of implementation.

Effective implementation takes into account the communication, project management, staff training, budget planning, and compliance to any policy or law necessary to ensure initiatives are implemented at the highest level of fidelity. Beyond our internal work to improve, we must engage in a more effective way with our principals, teachers and staff. The District’s Leadership Team must work together and fully design plans, communication efforts and enlistment before they touch schools. Often, initiatives, while well intended, are complicated and burdensome on rollout. Design work must go beyond just getting plans to a level of functionality, like a watch without a face. We must push past, through complexity, to get to the place of ease of use, and clear coherence with the whole, putting the face on the watch, for those who will actually be the end users. Sometimes, this may result in a delayed release and in all cases, we must give careful consideration of the number of initiatives. Better and fewer must be the goal.
We will be assessing the level of implementation on the initiatives found below by February 4, 2013, and reporting our progress to the Board at one of its Education Committee Meetings.

### Current District Initiatives Aimed at Accelerating Student Achievement and Eliminating Racial Disparities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous Culturally Relevant Core Curriculum</td>
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<td>Alignment of Curriculum to Common Core State Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundational Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Support and Accountability Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Educational Delivery Model focused on creating equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformation and Turnaround school models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity Training for teachers, administrators and staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>System to Train, Support, Evaluate and Compensate Principals</td>
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<td>Response to Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Opportunities for teacher leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talent Development Model</td>
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<td>A comprehensive evaluation for teachers using multiple measures</td>
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#### Lessons Learned

There is a cultural change which must take place in order to be successful. Strong cultures in organizations must begin at the top. In order to achieve strong cultures in our classrooms, we must begin to build a culture of “collegiality, caring, and respect” (Fullan, Leading in a Culture of Change p. 57) at the District level. Building coherence and creating a culture of support is not in opposition of accountability. Going forward, we heed our lessons learned:

- When we are clear about priorities, we get better results;
- We must get better at building and learning from our success;
- When we work together, we work smarter and better;
- Our professional development and coaching must improve; and
- We must learn why our successful schools are successful and put systems in place to support and replicate those best practices.

**Equity: Getting to All** requires us to focus our effort and provide "proof" to our community and ourselves that we can change outcomes for students in a substantial, measurable way. The plan builds on the work of *Excellence for All*, and is organized around five strategies to improve student achievement and school performance:

- Empowering Effective Teaching
- Enhancing Curriculum Relevance and Fidelity
- Addressing Culture
- Improving Support to Schools
- Engaging Families and Community
Empowering Effective Teachers

“Evidence shows clearly what most people know intuitively: teachers matter more to student learning than anything else inside the school.”

~John Hattie
Teachers Still #1 Factor in Accelerating Student Achievement

A common misperception is that there is no relationship between the empowering teachers work and addressing the achievement of African-American students. In fact, effective teachers grow all kids. More importantly, to be effective in Pittsburgh Public Schools you must be able to teach African-American students well.

We know that the number one thing that we can do to accelerate student achievement is ensure an effective teacher in every classroom. To that end we have embarked on a seven year human capital transformation that uses multiple measures of effective teaching to drive recruitment, development, evaluation, promotion, retention, recognition and compensation to increase the number of teachers in the District who are effective.

With unprecedented data about the effectiveness of our teaching workforce, we can now say for certain that the most effective teachers produce gains in student achievement that, if accumulated over several years without decay, could erase achievement disparities between African-American and White students, and between Pittsburgh students and statewide averages. Below are our effective teaching reforms that include efforts to make sure that effective teachers and staff are with the students who need them the most.

We have taken significant steps toward ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom. Through RISE (Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation), Administrator Leadership Development, the ITL2 (Instructional Teacher Leader 2), and Differentiated Support, teachers are improving their practice and we are committed to the goal of ensuring that 10% of teachers move up a performance level each year. Marginal teaching is being addressed, as Recruiting and Staffing now looks at mindsets to be sure that we are hiring teachers who are committed to eliminating racial disparities and believe that all students can learn and achieve at high levels.

- **A 90th percentile teacher in Pittsburgh Public Schools produces, on average, a little more than a year of additional learning (in one school year of instruction) relative to a 10th percentile teacher.**

- **The most effective teachers produce gains in student achievement that, if accumulated over several years without decay, could erase achievement disparities between African-American and white students, or between Pittsburgh students and statewide averages.**
RISE (Research-based, Inclusive System of Evaluation)
RISE is a powerful and comprehensive tool to ensure that every teacher receives fair and uniform support and feedback to better inform their professional growth. RISE also seeks to create a system of teacher evaluation based on the continual improvement of teaching practice and the value that a teacher adds to student growth over time. RISE includes a comprehensive rubric for teacher effectiveness made up of four domains (Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Teaching and Learning, and Professional Responsibilities) and 24 components of practice within these domains. Of these components, 3g on the RISE rubric relates specifically to the engagement of African-American (AA) students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3g: Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>3g: Basic</th>
<th>3g: Proficient</th>
<th>3g: Distinguished</th>
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<tr>
<td>Few of AA students are actively engaged in learning the majority of the time based on the task structure of the lesson.</td>
<td>Some AA students are actively engaged in learning</td>
<td>The majority of AA students are actively engaged in learning the majority of the time.</td>
<td>In addition to the characteristics of &quot;proficient,&quot; All AA students are actively engaged in learning the majority of the time based on the task structure of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use the six guiding characteristics of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</td>
<td>Inconsistently uses the six guiding characteristics of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy including: Communicates High Expectations, Builds Relationships and Caring Communities, Communicating a Positive Perspective of Parents and Facilities, Creating Learner-centered Instruction with the Teacher as Facilitator, Structures Learning within the context of Culture, Enriches the Curriculum</td>
<td>The teacher has strong relationships with minority students.</td>
<td>Student-to-student talk engages all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher permits minority students to opt out of learning.</td>
<td>Teacher permits some minority students to opt out of learning.</td>
<td>The teacher does not permit minority students to opt out of learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student talk is not seen as essential for learning and for successful completion of task/engagement.</td>
<td>Some students are provided some struggle time.</td>
<td>The teacher provides opportunities for student-to-student talk that engages all students not just the same ones.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student struggle time is not provided.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student talk is seen as essential (part of the student’s narrative) for learning and for successful completion of the task/engagement.</td>
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Consistently uses the six guiding characteristics of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy including: Communicates High Expectations, Builds Relationships and Caring Communities, Communicating a Positive Perspective of Parents and Facilities, Creating Learner-centered Instruction with the Teacher as Facilitator, Structures Learning within the context of Culture, Enriches the Curriculum.
The Right Professionals in the Right Places

Thanks to multiple measures of teacher and principal effectiveness, we are on the verge of being able to explicitly track the percentage of African-American students, and low-income African-American students taught by an effective teacher. This will allow us to measure the impact of strategies designed to ensure that effective teachers are reaching the students who need them the most. Since we know that effective teachers have such a significant impact that a sequence of our most effective teachers could eliminate racial disparities altogether, we can't take any chances about who is teaching African-American students in the District.

Career opportunities is one strategy for distributing talent and targeting effective teachers towards important transitions in students’ careers (Promise Readiness Corps), and towards high needs schools (Turnaround Teachers). But as we learn more, we may need to enhance Career Opportunities with additional strategies and/or help principals be sure that effective teachers are equitably distributed within schools (not just between schools).

Teaching and Learning Environment

Prior to 2009, the District, like most school districts across the country, did not have the ability to adequately measure differences in the quality of teaching and learning environments (TLE) across the District – much less respond in differentiated ways that would help schools improve. Now under the leadership of Student Support Services, the District has more information than ever about the quality of teaching and learning environments. Schools are using this information to set goals, and the department has developed tools in partnership with teachers and is beginning to plan differentiated supports to move a specific group of schools to a high level learning environment each year.

Sharing the Work of the Teaching Institutes

In the fall of 2011, The Teaching Institute was instituted at Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh King PreK-8. At the institute effective teachers will strive to enhance each student’s learning experience, and support the growth and professional development of pre-tenured teachers, teacher leaders and administrators. With the goal of benefiting all Pittsburgh Public Schools students, teachers and school leaders, The Teaching Institute will be a key lever in ensuring that Pittsburgh Public Schools achieves its vision of Excellence for All.

The Teaching Institute, began a transformation model, through which space was created for the principals and School Equity Leadership Teams (E-Teams) to capitalize on their desire to see greater equity achievement in their schools. These sites will establish markers to help the District understand – in a tangible way – how to create racially equitable schools.

By design, these schools will allow the District to access principals and E-Teams that are unquestionable in their commitment to and leadership of school-wide equity transformation, and to provide the utmost recognition and support to these leaders who are taking steps to accelerate equity work in their schools. Through intensive, targeted training and on-site coaching, the Teaching Institutes are supported in fully integrating the three essential elements of the Equity Framework: leadership, learning and teaching, and family/community empowerment.
• **School Equity Teams (E-Teams)**
  Central to achieving educational equity is the development of and strong support for school leaders who serve as the guiding coalition to ensure successful systemic equity transformation in their schools. The School Equity Leadership Team (E-Team), consisting of 10-15 equity/anti-racist leaders (principal, teachers, and other school staff), participates in significant professional learning focused on deepening their understanding of race and equity, and how to develop and then guide the implementation of the school’s Equity Transformation Plan. During the 2011-12 school year, the E-Teams at Pittsburgh King and Pittsburgh Brashear participated in 6 full-day seminars. This learning will continue in the 2012-13 school year through a series of on-site coaching sessions focused on transferring learning to the broader school community.

In addition, E-Teams are charged to examine their school’s policies, practices, programs, structures, climate and culture to identify barriers to equity and excellence, and lead systemic change efforts that result in high levels of achievement for all students. E-Teams are responsible for aligning their school’s Equity Transformation Plan with existing school and District strategic priorities, ensuring all efforts are streamlined for optimal and equitable student achievement results.

• **Collaborative Action Research for Equity Teams (CARE Teams)**
  The CARE (Collaborative Action Research for Equity) Team will launch at both schools in the 2012-13 school year. The CARE Team generally consists of 4-6 equity/anti-racist teacher leaders who participate in collaborative classroom research to discover, develop, document, deliver, and disseminate culturally relevant learning and teaching practices. The CARE Team accelerates responsiveness to the learning needs of students who are historically in the lowest performing student groups (African American, Latino, American Indian, and Southeast Asian students). CARE teachers, working in collaboration with the principal and CARE coach, and supported by the E-Team, improve learning for underachieving students of color as a means to increase school-wide achievement.

  Led by the school principal, the CARE Team designs and delivers equity/anti-racist pedagogical practices to teachers that are explicitly and intentionally planned to improve engagement and achievement for underserved students of color.

As noted above, Teaching Institutes Schools aim to establish models to help the District understand how to create racially equitable schools. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, Principals, E-Teams and the District’s Equity Leadership Team will document and share successes, challenges and lessons learned at the Teaching Institutes. This documentation and sharing will occur in a number of ways, including:

- Vertical and horizontal collaboration amongst District principals and central administration leadership;
- Model school and classrooms that enable other District teachers and leaders to observe best practices; and
- Contributions to the District’s professional growth system from CARE Teachers and E-Team Members (e.g., video-taped and annotated demonstration lessons and online professional development courses related to establishing culturally responsive pedagogy).
Enhancing Curriculum Relevance and Fidelity

“It’s not just an add-on or an afterthought. Curriculums infused with multicultural education boost academic success and prepare students for roles as productive citizens.”

~Geneva Gay
The District is in the process of aligning the Literacy, Math, History, Science and Career and Technical Education curricula to the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in June 2012, in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

At the national level, the Common Core State Standards will ensure that:

- Students, regardless of circumstance, achieve at high levels.
- Students will become career and college ready.
- Students will be able to move from school to school across the nation and have continuity of curriculum.
- Curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades.
- Students read increasingly complex texts with increasing independence.
- Students focus on math practices to learn and apply rigorous content.

The District’s goal is to eliminate racial disparity and accelerate student achievement. Although the national Common Core State Standard’s Initiative does not explicitly address racial equity, the District looks at the shifts to the Common Core State Standards through this lens. Exposing students to rigorous content and providing students with multiple entry points and high expectations will help to build independence and create self-management of learning. The Common Core State Standards encourages students to enter the curriculum through focusing on what kids can do versus a deficit model in which weaknesses are remediated. Shifting to the Common Core State Standards opens opportunities for the development of culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching that naturally aligns to RISE. The District is being purposeful, incorporating texts, materials and activities that allow students to have a positive reflection of themselves, especially in regard to Promise-Readiness.

We are eager to be a part of the state’s efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the District has been working to align our curriculum to the CCSS to ensure that the transition is seamless for teachers, students and families so that all students are college and career ready. Beginning this school year, the 11th grade PSSA will be replaced by the Keystone Exams in Algebra, Biology and literature. These assessments are currently aligned to the Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards. Within the next few years, the grade 3-8 PSSAs will be aligned to Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards.

As part of the District’s efforts to increase African-American student achievement, the District introduced several culturally relevant courses and programs to enhance its already diverse curriculum catalogue. The District has two capstone courses; African-American History and African-American Literature course. These are not stand-alone courses as the content ideas and cultural framework can be threaded back to the literature and history courses in the elementary grades. The history and literature of African-Americans is woven throughout the District’s curriculum from grade six and on. Emphasis on how characters of color are portrayed, especially African American males is actively considered in the selection of all texts and novels. Texts we select at all levels are to reflect cultural sensitivity that allows students to connect to and see themselves in the course.
Talent Development Model
The District has changed the requirements for access to the Centers for Advanced Studies (CAS) courses from the admission of identified Gifted students only, to a Gifted and Talented Model. Talented students that demonstrate high achievement can access these rigorous courses through an application process. This model allows students who may not have qualified under the gifted assessment, but who exhibit high performance on other measures, an opportunity to participate in the gifted classes. This will also result in a wider range of CAS courses offered at more of our high schools.

Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)
The District’s goal is to ensure that a complement of Advanced Placement courses are available at each of our high schools, while also offering wrap-around support to help students be successful in these rigorous courses. The District is doing this specifically through vertical alignment of the curriculum, the AP Summer Academy to prepare students that are entering an AP course, AP Review Sessions to prepare students who will be taking an AP Exam, and intensive AP teacher training, so that every student is in a classroom with a knowledgeable and skilled AP teacher.

The District is also creating greater supports for students participating in the International Baccalaureate program, through an IB Summer Academy specifically designed for 11th and 12th grade IB students, as well as an IB Review Session program to prepare students taking an IB exam.

African-American History Course
This upper level college preparatory course of study enables students to examine people of African descent in America as active agents in history. Through multiple interpretations, conflicting accounts, and a variety of primary sources, students analyze, interpret, and compose their own insightful ways of explaining, comprehending, and producing African American History. The course develops students’ historical thinking skills and historical understanding of African-American history. Imbedded in the 2nd semester of the course are five major eras between 1865 to the present, six principle themes, and five frameworks. Students will use these tools to examine sources of evidence and secondary sources used to interpret, create and write African American history.

In addition to the stand-alone 12th grade African-American History course, the history and geography of Africa, of the African diaspora, and of African Americans is a major focus in several units of study in each year of Social Studies, grades 3-11.

For example, students in Grade 11 learn about the Great Migration as they read the book *The Great Migration – An American Story* by Jacob Lawrence. In 5th Grade, as part of the History of Social Justice in the United States, students learn about the different groups of people who participated in the Americana Revolution. As part of this section students also learn about The Civil Rights Movement as they read *If You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King* and *Freedom’s Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Stories* both by E. Levine.

African-American Literature Course
African-American Literature, a one-credit 12th Grade course, is available to District students as an alternative to English 4. While works by African Americans are part of the English curriculum throughout high school, this 12th Grade course is unique. The core literary works chosen for the course align with the major eras and frameworks students learn about in the District’s African-American History course.
In addition to the stand-alone African-American Literature Course, literature written by or that display positive character portrayals of African Americans can be found throughout the District’s curriculum through grades 5-12.

For example, in 5th Grade, as part of the District’s English Language Art curriculum students learn about the Civil Rights Movement as the read the novel *Just Like Martin* by Ossie Davis. Students also study poems, such as “Brother” by the poet Maya Angelo. In 10th Grade students learn about growing up in the South as they read the novels *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright.

**Culturally Responsive Arts Education (CRAE)**

Introduced in 2009-10 CRAE (Culturally Responsive Arts Education) Program is at four District schools: Pittsburgh Lincoln, Pittsburgh Montessori, Pittsburgh Sunnyside, and Pittsburgh Westinghouse.

CRAE uses the best practices of arts instruction and arts integration to work toward the creation of a culturally responsive and healthy school environment. This project engages the arts of the African Diaspora and incorporates the culture of the students to stimulate student interest, develop ownership of learning, and inspire achievement. CRAE enlists teaching artists and arts specialists to bring to life its central principles—viewing race and culture as an asset, educating about the impacts of racism and models to overcome it, and the role that artists can play in building relationships between children, schools, and communities. The best instructional practices in the Music/Arts curriculum will be informed by the implementation of the CRAE program at these schools. CRAE is supported by a grant from The Heinz Endowments.
Effective Support and Equitable Educational Delivery Model
Implementation of a managed curriculum was a big step forward in leveling the playing field for students across the District and setting high expectations for learning in all schools. Changes made to the Educational Delivery Model for the start of the 2012-13 school year have made sure that all students now have access to the same course offerings. Notably, access to Advanced Placement and other more rigorous course offerings are more equitably distributed. The chart below details changes made to the District’s Educational Delivery Model to ensure all students have access to the same course offerings.

Educational Delivery Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools with:</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 full time counselor or social worker</td>
<td>49/59</td>
<td>53/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>49/59</td>
<td>53/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art offerings</td>
<td>54/59</td>
<td>53/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music offerings</td>
<td>56/59</td>
<td>53/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more AP or IB classes (9-12)</td>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>9/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated resources for parent, family and community engagement</td>
<td>9/59</td>
<td>53/53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracking Curriculum Implementation
In 2012-13 our on-site support for schools will include tracking the level of implementation of rigorous, culturally-diverse curriculum and culturally responsive teaching (pedagogy) as part of RISE 3g. Schools and classrooms which are rated low will be provided support.
Addressing the Culture

“Let America be America, where equality is in the air we breathe.”

~Langston Hughes
Creating a Culture of Support and Improvement

“Each of us has a deep longing to see things right in the world.” John Bell

While it is undeniable that we must improve the effectiveness of instruction in order to improve educational outcomes for the children in the District, and close long-standing and seemingly intractable racial disparities, the responsibility for educational improvement does not rest solely on the shoulders of our teachers or even our principals and teachers. Those who work at the District level are charged with developing the context, building the capacity of principals and teachers, as well as engaging the community to support the work of the school and provide for the out of school resources to meet the needs of our children and young people.

There is often a culture of disconnect between the school board and central administration, between academics and operations at central administration, between principals and central administration, as well as principals and teachers at some schools.

Our democratically elected Board of Directors represents citizens from all areas of our community. Working together effectively presents a challenge for any group. Our Board, as the most important leadership team of the District, has an opportunity to lead in the improvement of our organizational culture. Their modeling of the culture we strive to create; one of accountability, respect, and support, sends a message to all employees in the organization. Our culture must be one of continuous improvement and commitment to success. The impact of their ability to support this cannot be understated.

Furthermore, the Board is unique in that they connect with the community in ways we cannot, so they also can bring the perspectives of our community to the important conversations we must have. Sometimes these perspectives are hard to hear, nevertheless we must be willing to listen and consider them. Listening to tough messages is also part of having a culture which supports our effort to provide the education our young people deserve. The Board's work with the District leadership team and other staff, as well as with our community is where our journey of cultural improvement begins.

The role of Central Administration is to address this disconnect in a way that builds relationships, respect and capacity. While many would agree these relationships need to improve, these underdeveloped relationships have not previously been identified as one of the important reasons we as a District have not made the progress we feel we should be making in closing our achievement disparities. In order to solve our most stubborn problem, and our racial achievement disparity is surely it, a culture of compliance with directives from central administration will not put us on the road to success.

Research on school improvement has consistently found that transforming school cultures is essential to sustained change (Fullan 2006; Wagner 2002). The research also shows that this is difficult to do. That is because cultures cannot be imposed externally upon a school. Rather, the values, norms, rituals and practices that are at the heart of school culture and that are essential to supporting teaching and learning must develop organically. This occurs through: strong, distributed leadership; a clear vision; buy-in around that vision from staff, students and parents; a willingness to use data to monitor progress and ensure internal accountability; and a deliberative, collective process to support planning, as well as the implementation of timely interventions and reflection.
In diverse schools, and schools where poverty is concentrated, there is an even greater need to insure that the culture within a school reinforces the importance of high expectations for all – students, teachers, administrators and staff. In too many Pittsburgh schools, achievement patterns have become predictable, and the race and class backgrounds of children seem to determine academic outcomes. When patterns such as these become entrenched, it is even more important that the culture be shaken up so that failure for certain groups of students does not become normalized. When this occurs, racial stereotypes influence the way teachers see their students and the way students see themselves. Elevating achievement in such a setting becomes almost impossible.

Recognizing the importance of school culture to sustained improvement, the Pittsburgh Public Schools will utilize all of its resources to assist schools in carrying out change efforts. Our goal is to insure that all District schools have positive school cultures where hard work and good teaching are recognized and rewarded, where frank and honest discussions about our work are the norm, where discipline is used to build character and change behavior and not merely to punish, and where students think it’s “cool” to be smart. To get there, the District will support the following initiatives:

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**
Institutionalized racism, and biased attitudes among a staff can contribute to the maintenance of racial disparities in our schools. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has been identified by several researchers (Gay 1998; Howard 2009; Ladson-Billings 1995) as an effective means to address conscious and unconscious biases that may be held by some teachers. CRT also provides teachers with strategies for building relationships with students across racial, cultural, socio-economic and linguistic differences. This fall, CRT will be made available to teachers at Pittsburgh Perry High School and Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12 through our partnership with expert consultants. Our plan is to expand this work to other schools in the near future.

**Equity Training**
Our equity training is designed to help teachers, students, parents, and administrators understand the impact of race on student learning and investigate the role that racism plays in institutionalizing academic achievement disparities. Participants engage in a thoughtful, compassionate exploration of race and racism and grapple with how each influences the culture and climate of our schools. Attendees practice using strategies for identifying and addressing policies, programs, and practices that negatively impact students of color achievement and serve as barriers for ALL students receiving a world-class education.

Without a foundational understanding of the impact of race on students of color and a common language, specific to race, it would be more difficult to eliminate achievement disparities. To ensure that ALL staff have the opportunity to go through the foundational seminar, the District has initiated an affiliate program. The Affiliate Certification Process will ensure widespread implementation of the training to assist teachers, administrators and the District internalize the protocol and deepen engagement around creating racially equitable classrooms, schools, and communities.

**Creating a Culture of Support and Improvement**

*“Each of us has a deep longing to see things right in the world.”* John Bell
Those who work at the District level will be charged with working closely with site leaders and principals in developing school cultures. This collaborative work is described in greater detail in the following section. The goal is to create an educational setting where children are excited about learning and teachers feel prepared, respected and supported in carrying out their important work.
**Using Data to Monitor Progress**

In order to determine whether our efforts to transform school cultures are taking hold, the District will regularly collect data on school discipline, attendance and student academic progress at each of our schools. The goal is to identify patterns of racial disparity early so that interventions can be implemented. Recognizing that new cultures will take time to develop, the District will use data monitoring to determine whether or not our schools are moving in a direction that suggests progress is clearly being made. Open discussion about student level data within schools encourages a culture of accountability for all stakeholders and is an essential part of transforming the culture of schools and the District as a whole.

**Indicators of Success**

In addition to data showing a clear and sustained reduction in racial disparities in achievement, discipline and attendance, the success of our efforts to transform school culture will also be evident by the development of these conditions within our schools:

- **Reciprocity** - Supportive relationships between teachers and students, greater sense of ownership and responsibility for real evidence of learning.

- **Collaboration** - Willingness among teachers to share ideas, curricula, materials, and discuss areas where help is needed within an atmosphere of “shared vulnerability and shared accountability.”

- **Deliberations** - Opportunity for staff to meet and to discuss goals and work on a regular basis. This includes all instructional staff as well as support staff to insure that every member of the school team shares the vision and understands the direction the school is heading in.

- **Social Closure** – Constructive partnership between school personnel and parents are present at each school. Each party has a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities and a shared commitment to supporting the education and development of the children served.

- **Rituals and Practices** – Each school will develop its own rituals and practices to reinforce its mission and core values. The key is consistency and a shared sense that the practices adopted are meaningful and relevant.

**Building Cultures for Learning at Schools**

At the request of school leadership and staff at three District schools that require high level support, the Board authorized a contract to assist with the creation of positive teaching and learning environments at Pittsburgh Faison K-5, Pittsburgh King PreK-8, and Pittsburgh Milliones 6-12. Consultants will assist school staff with shaping the school culture. The behavior management model is based on creating positive peer culture that celebrates and promotes student empowerment. The staff will be trained through a variety of professional development opportunities as it relates to positive school culture, student diversity, behavioral and classroom management, cultural relevancy, discipline management, conflict resolution, and parental and community involvement.
Improving our Support to Schools

“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”

~Bill Gates
Role of District Leadership in Accelerating Student Achievement

The work of the leadership team at the District level must improve. The team will self-evaluate internal functionality at the beginning of the year and the end to evaluate the level of team functionality. While we have made progress in providing differentiated support to schools in response to real needs, the team itself is restructuring the work for the coming year to include three important changes: agreement on our important indicators (see chart below), consistent review of these indicators as a team, and regular conversations in regard to improving the conditions and relationships, specifically our effectiveness as a team and our ability to achieve more equitable outcomes.

Key Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>College and Career Readiness</th>
<th>Student Engagement</th>
<th>Special Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TerraNova Reading &amp; Mathematics Performance, K-2</td>
<td>High School Graduation Rate</td>
<td>Attendance Rates</td>
<td>Enrollment in Special Education Services for Emotional Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSA Reading &amp; Mathematics Performance, Gr. 3-8</td>
<td>Promise-Readiness</td>
<td>1-3 day suspensions</td>
<td>Enrollment in Gifted Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone Algebra 1, Biology and Literature Exam Performance, Gr. 9-12</td>
<td>PSAT Participation and Performance</td>
<td>Advanced Placement (AP) Enrollment, Test Participation and Performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAT Participation and Performance</td>
<td>International Baccalaureate (IB) Test Participation and Performance</td>
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As part of these changes the Superintendent’s Cabinet will implement the following processes:

- Review process on key indicators at last Cabinet meeting of the month;
- Design and designate district-level action plan based on indicator report at last Cabinet meeting of the month;
- Participate in at least one on-site school support team visit within the first quarter of the school year;
- Engage Lead Principals as advisory group and source of 360° feedback;
- Hold a meeting with the Superintendent, Academic Team, and school leadership at high risk schools who are not showing progress on indicators.
In addition to implementing new process, each department declared specific commitments as it relates to Equity in the Pittsburgh Public Schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Commitments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chief Academic Office</strong> (Curriculum and Professional Development)</td>
<td>Commits to aligning the curriculum to the Common Core State Standards; providing culturally responsive text selections and framework that emphasizes culturally responsive pedagogical practices; providing gifted on-site services in grades K-8 and the implementation of a Talent Management Model in grades 9-12 to increase the number of students of color in higher level courses; the implementation of the new Arts Education Policy that ensures that every student receives Music and Art every year K-8 and professional development for Curriculum Writers that focuses on culturally responsive curriculum K-12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Information Technology</strong></td>
<td>Commits to working with the academic team to improve the collection and presentation of data for decision making in support of improving student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Teacher Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Commits to increasing the number of effective teachers; the exposure of high needs students to effective teachers; and ensuring all teachers work in learning environments that support their ability to be effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office Budget, Finance and Operations</strong> (Academics and Operations Integration, Finance (Accounting, Accounts Payable, Payroll, Workers' Compensation and Purchasing), Budget Development and Management, Facilities / Plant Operations, Food Service, Pupil Transportation and School Safety)</td>
<td>Commits to contribute to having all students Promise Ready by managing the transition of schools to prepare for the opening of the 2012/13 school year; providing timely and accurate financial information to schools; promptly ordering and delivering supplies; providing efficient student transportation services and providing a clean, safe and healthful learning environment along with nutritious and appealing breakfasts and lunches for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of the Chief of Staff</strong></td>
<td>Commits to enhancing the reputation of the District and creating and building awareness, understanding and positive attitudes around the District’s priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of School Performance</strong></td>
<td>Commits to eliminating variations in school performance so all PPS schools are educating our children to the highest levels possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Human Resources</strong> (Performance Management &amp; Talent Management)</td>
<td>Commits to understanding as much as we can about the employees within PPS, and making data informed decisions related to human capital; Obtaining, organizing, and managing valid and consistent data in order to support the effective management of the workforce; staff high needs schools with divers and effective talent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Student Services</strong></td>
<td>Commits to providing the support necessary to ensure that all students are Promise Ready and all schools are places where teachers can teach and all children can learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superintendent</strong></td>
<td>Commits to support these commitments and hold Self and Senior Officers accountable for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual evaluations for 2012-2013 will be 25% based on team contributions, not just individual contributions. Each department will develop metrics for improvement which will include a measure related to support to schools; this too will be included as a part of evaluations. This spirit of transparency about results and data is a driver for accountability.

We will improve our communication to the Board in regards to important educational or operational changes, considered or proposed, especially in regard to our goals related to equity in order to provide time for board engagement and ideas. Board members will be asked to provide feedback on this process once each quarter of the school year.

We must improve our modeling of the behaviors we want to see. There are two main opportunities to do this. The first and most powerful is our on-site support. Rather than a “visit” which implies that we do not belong at schools and have come in to check on them, our on-site support must be just that, support. Providing quality support for schools means assisting in problem solving in a collegial environment, Dr. Pedro Noguera described this as “support not inspection.” While we all must be evaluated, the ongoing work of the leadership team during the year is helping schools address critical instructional issues through on-site support.

The entire leadership team will engage in on-site support in 2012-2013, and this support will be logged and included as a part of the work of the team. The principals and teachers will complete an evaluation of their on-site support experiences to gauge the level of support they perceived from the experience, as well as how the support may be improved, including the support provided to address high educational outcomes for all students in the school.

This support will include focus on the important conversations that question what District, school and classroom factors are creating the results we see in learning and the levels of student engagement or disengagement by race. The formative student data, also disaggregated by race, will be crossed referenced with the on-site support evaluation to evaluate the effectiveness of the on-site support provided by the District leadership team.

The second opportunity to assist our schools is off-site support, mainly through regular communication to school leaders and through Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy is a very high level use of resources and must be very effective as a principal support mechanism to make it worth the time of principals. Principals will be provided more choice as well as high quality learning opportunities, with a portion of the time focused on leading for equity. These experiences too will be evaluated by principals and other participants. Both of the evaluations of support will be included in performance evaluations for the leadership team.

Looking at the District as an entity does not tell the whole story; like most complex problems, there is more. We know we have great variation in performance across our schools. Many schools, our “bright spots”, are preparing children for success beyond high school. These schools work in regards to providing effective educational programs for African-
American students and have little to no racial disparity in student achievement.

However, these schools have been the exceptions, not the norm. Often the important question of how some schools succeed and others fail in very similar contexts gets ignored in the rush to assign blame or arrive at formulaic and generic solutions. Our new School Support & Accountability Model is designed to help eliminate variation in school performance, so that families and students can be assured that all of our schools are high performing. We will learn from our “bright spots” that are working well and provide additional supports and resources to our schools that are not yet working. The School Support & Accountability Model is centered on four key beliefs:

- Teachers matter most in getting students to Promise-Readiness;
- Principals are our key levers for ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom every day;
- Central Office functions to leverage resources and support the schools that need it most and replicate the best practices of schools that are working;
- Families and Communities are essential partners in our work to ensure all students success at high levels.

We are improving our support to schools by providing a team approach and differentiated supports, based on critical indicators reflecting each school’s unique needs. A triad of functions within Central Administration – School Performance; Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development; and Performance Management – has come together as one team to provide direct, deliberate and data-based supports for principals to drive their schools to success. The graph below details the School Instructional Support and & Accountability Model.
Additionally a new vision for **peer-to-peer supports and cluster groupings** will be put into place for the start of the 2012-13 school year to ensure that schools are grouped in a way that best ensures students graduate Promise-Ready. Cluster groupings will allow school leadership to work together to deepen best-practice sharing around teacher effectiveness in order to accelerate achievement and eliminate racial disparities. Within these clusters, principals will work together to:

- Assess the culture of teaching and learning in their own schools and collaboratively problem-solve with peers;
- Identify and prioritize next steps to address areas that will have the greatest impact on teacher effectiveness;
- Accurately assess teaching practice; and
- Enhance school culture and teaching practice.

The **Vertical K-12 teams** will focus on the culture of teaching and learning and provide seamless K-12 educational opportunities for all students. Schools in these clusters are grouped geographically to support continuity for students K-12. Principals in these clusters support one another in school climate improvements. **Horizontal Grade-Specific teams** have been developed to align principal practices, pedagogy and curriculum implementation.

Our disparities are not universal to all schools, some show high achievement for students of all races. We know that these schools must become the rule, not the exceptions. **Equity: Getting to All** forces us to take the time to both analyze these “bright spots” and commend those who work so diligently to create them. Upon visitation to these “bright spots” we learned that the following replicable themes exist in these schools:

- There is commitment and collaboration among the principal and teachers to analyze formative data and student work on a regular basis to inform instruction;
- Teachers as the facilitators of learning; and
- Students who feel cared for and are held to high standards.

While we can learn from success in our schools, we must also recognize that each school, like each child in a family, has its own personality that is formed by the context. This includes the neighborhoods our children and young people live in, the effectiveness profile of the teachers, the school leader's skills and talents and the culture of the school he or she creates.
Engaging Families and Communities

“From neighborhood walks that bring educators into the community to car washes that bring community members to the school campus, there are myriad ways for school leaders and teachers to meet families, introduce themselves and their philosophies, and ask parents what they need from the schools to increase engagement.”

~Dr. Pedro Noguera
Families and Community Play Valuable Role in Eliminating Racial Disparities

While we know the elimination of racial disparities is one of our top priorities, we know we can’t do it alone. We also know that there are many who want to roll up their sleeves and help us achieve this goal, not only for our students, but for the viability of our city. That is why in 2007 the District launched the Pittsburgh Pledge as a means for ensuring a common shared commitment to clear expectations and high standards on the part of everyone involved.

Pittsburgh Pledge

We know that education is the key to our future.
All of us – students, teachers, administrators, families, community, board members and other civic leaders – will take an active role in helping all students.

We pledge to:
• Have high expectations,
• Work hard,
• Achieve academic excellence,
• Keep our schools safe,
• Set a positive example,
• Be respectful and considerate of one another,
• Listen and be open to new ideas.

Together, we will hold ourselves accountable for achieving “Excellence for All.”

As part of our efforts to eliminate racial disparities we will work to deepen our efforts to ensure that “All of us - students, teachers, administrators, families, community, board members and other civic leaders – will take an active role in helping all students.

We know that all us play a key role in ensuring the students of Pittsburgh graduate Promise-Ready and complete college or attain a workforce certification. Like the steps our students climb throughout the City of Pittsburgh, we are each a constructive step as students climb toward Promise Readiness. Our CitySteps visual, which follows, captures the role we all play on our children’s journey to college completion/ workforce certification.
At the top of those stairs are families and community. One key step in ensuring we are meeting the needs of all students and families and creating educational opportunities is through increased parent involvement, with a focus on student achievement. In order to educate all children well so that they can be Promise-Ready, schools alone cannot provide all of the services and support necessary to meet the varying needs of students. It is important that we have collaborative partnerships with community partners and families to ensure a responsive school environment and a supportive home environment which nurture the development of each child.
It is important that all of our families do the following Five CitySteps to Success:
1. Make sure that your child is in school on time and attends every day.
2. Make sure that they get to bed on time so that they are well rested for school.
3. Make sure that your child completes all of his/her homework.
4. Make time to share a math problem and read with your child.
5. Maintain strong communication with your child and talk about what is happening in school.

Research has indicated that parents play a vital role in the education of their child's schooling. Sociologist James Coleman (1988) has shown that when there is reinforcement at home for the learning that occurs in school, student outcomes improve.

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University has developed a framework for six different types of parent involvement. This framework assists educators in thinking about the type of school and family partnership programs that may be needed to create genuine partnerships. “There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships,” she writes. "The main reason to create such partnership is to help youngsters succeed in school and in later life."

Our work for 2012-13 will be based upon the following information, which is excerpted from Epstein's work, describing her framework of six types of involvement and sample practices that have been gleaned from extensive research:

**PARENTING**
Help all families’ create home environments that support children as students.

- Each school in the District receiving Title I funds jointly develop with the parents of students served in the program a School-Parent Compact outlining the manner in which parents, school staff and students share responsibility for improved student achievement in meeting academic standards.
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.
- Early Childhood Department conducts home visits for 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in the program.

**COMMUNICATION**
Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children's progress.

- Language translators to assist families as needed.
- A Parent Advisory Committee will be established to ensure that marketing and communication materials are parent-friendly, useful, and easy to understand.
VOLUNTEERING
Recruit and organize parent help and support.

- Each school recruits parent volunteers to serve in the school and classroom.
- Parents and families in schools may organize and participate in activities of a locally organized Parent Teacher Organization/Associations (PTO/PTA) for greater involvement in the schools. Local membership is open to those willing to make a difference in the lives of children and youth.

LEARNING AT HOME
Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

DECISION MAKING
Include parents in school decision, developing parent’s leaders and representatives.

- All schools shall have an established Parent School Community Council (PSCC) and will convene monthly meetings to discuss educational issues through each school’s Improvement plan. School Improvement plans will include strategies for parents and families’ engagement.

- A parent working committee has been established to work with the Solicitor’s office and central administration to revise the Family and Parent Policy. In addition, this group will also be developing a Family and Parent Involvement Plan that will be shared with families through PSCC meetings, public meetings and other parent networks.

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY
Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs or services.

- Please see PSCC description above.

We will continue our work with the *Excellence for All* (EFA) Parent Committee in a manner that embraces Joyce Epstein’s framework. This steering committee is comprised of one – four parent representatives from each school. The Superintendent meets with the EFA Committee on a bi-monthly basis to encourage dialogue around the District’s major initiatives. The committee itself meets each month. Principals are accountable to ensuring parent representatives from their schools are appointed to and regularly attend these monthly meetings.

The purpose of the group is to inform the District of key parent concerns and also act as ambassadors in their school communities, communicating key District messages and helping parents, especially our hardest to reach parents, understand how the school systems works and how they can support their child in achieving to high standards. This group will also serve as advisors for District level decision-making.
The administrator in each school will have strategies for family engagement, included in his or her School Improvement Plan, on ways they plan to actively engage parents in their child's schooling. In addition, these plans will include strategies for ensuring families feel welcomed in the school building.

**Increasing Our Efforts to Engage Parents and Families**

In an effort to increase Parent and Family engagement in each of our schools, this school year we moved to a model where we will have a staff member in every school supporting our parent engagement initiatives. Whereas in previous year(s) we had only eight schools who had an identified person to work specifically with parents.

It is important that parents feel empowered to advocate on behalf of their children. During the 2012-2013 school year we will build short and long-term strategic planning frameworks for strengthening parental engagement and empowerment within the District, particularly within the African-American community. The District is presently analyzing data from our parent survey to better understand what we can do to be responsive to the needs of our parents. We will establish greater community-based supports and work closely with advocacy individuals and groups, including activist parents, parent organizations and community groups that serve and work with low income and African-American families. Our goal is to communicate early and often to avoid problems. If problems arrive, we will address them in a timely manner.

We will seek financial support to plan a major family leadership/involvement conference in 2013-2014. This advocacy-based conference is envisioned as a starting point for enlisting the support of parents in meeting the needs of their children and the schools they attend. We also want to build community-based networks and supports for increasing parental/family involvement in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. We will seek national experts along with local parental advocates, parents and activists as our core presenters. The Equity Advisory Panel Members will be asked to be involved in this endeavor.

In addition, as the population of our students of color grows, our English as a Second Language Liaisons will be used in greater capacity for parent outreach throughout the District. We want to insure that translation services are available whenever they are needed to ensure that parent voices are heard, services are understood and we are working together for the success of all of our students.

We will additionally seek to build relationships with those organizations who demonstrated success in reaching those parent populations we have been unsuccessful at reaching and increase our efforts to get their advice and support for *Equity: Getting to All*. 
In conclusion, District leaders have a responsibility to address both the goals of personal improvement as well as improving their departmental team performance in order to provide the leadership support needed for schools. This team development can serve as a model for schools as we support the work of leadership teams at schools. District leaders must also create a healthy organizational culture to support the growth of cultures that support teaching and learning district-wide. A healthy culture does not mean that there is no accountability, on the contrary, it means both high levels of support, trust and fairness as well as accountability. It is a culture that engages the heart as well as the head in the challenging and possible goals that we must reach to claim the future our children deserve.

We would be remiss if we did not express our sincere appreciation to the Heinz Endowments, especially, Bobby Vagt and Stan Thompson, not just for extraordinary financial support, but also for their willingness to support us with their ideas, and advice.
Appendix
The Equity: Getting to All plan acknowledges our progress to date is insufficient and sets specific goals over five years (2017) for eliminating racial disparities within seven years. These goals are divided among three categories: Achievement, College and Career Readiness, and Student Engagement & Special Programs. Goals include:

**Achievement**
- African-American students in grades K-2 will have an average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) score of 60 on TerraNova Reading and Mathematics tests.
- 85% African-American students in grades 3-5 will score proficient in Mathematics and 75% in English Language Arts on the PSSA exams.
- 85% African-American students in grades 6-8 will score proficient in Mathematics and 75% in English Language Arts on the PSSA exams.
- Goals for African-American students in grades 9-12 in Algebra 1, Literature and Biology will be determined following the first administration of the PA Keystone Exam in the Spring of 2013

**College and Career Readiness Goals**
- The graduation rate for African-American students will improve to 80% (currently 63%)
- 40% of African-American students in grades K-2 will demonstrate Promise Readiness by scoring advanced on the TerraNova Mathematics test.
- 50% of African-American students in grades 3-8 will demonstrate Promise Readiness by scoring advanced on the PSSA Mathematics.
- 75% of African-American students in Grades 9-12 will demonstrate Promise Readiness by achieving a 2.5 GPA or higher and a 90% attendance rate (currently 32%)
- 40% of African-American students in Grades 10-12 will demonstrate college readiness by scoring at least 48 in Grade 10 or 50 in Grade 11 on PSAT Reading or Mathematics or at least 500 on SAT Mathematics, Reading and Writing (currently 10%)
- 55% of African-American students in Grade 12 will have taken the SAT at least once during high school (currently 42%)

**Student Engagement & Special Program Goals**
- Attendance rate for African-American students will grow to 95% (currently 92.3%)
- Reduce the suspension rate of African-American students from 33% to 15%
- Reduce the percent of African-American students enrolled in Special Education Emotional Support Services from 3% to 1%
- The percent of African-American students identified for Gifted Services will increase from 4% to 7%
- The number of African-American students taking one or more Advanced Placement (AP) courses will increase by 50% (Currently 231. Goal is 347)
- The number of African-American students taking one or more AP exams will increase by 50% (Currently 130. Goal is 195)
- The number of African American students scoring 3 or higher on one or more AP exams will double (Currently 24. Goal is 48)
- A goal for African-American students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate Program will be determined when the 2012 IB exam data are available.