

**Pittsburgh Public Schools
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Feasibility Study: Career Exploration Middle School
Re-Launched: Wednesday, January 19, 2022
Due: Monday, March 7, 2022**

Project Overview

Pittsburgh Public Schools is seeking a qualified independent consulting firm to conduct a feasibility study for our organization. We are looking for a partner who is experienced with planning and executing a feasibility study and a familiarity with educational programming and systems. The plan should include a project budget, timeline, and action items.

Specifically, the study will address and detail the start-up and operating costs for the new school as well as provide a 3-5 year sustainability plan. The firm will assess and explore the cost of redesigning Pittsburgh Oliver High School to become the Career Exploration Middle School before exploring an alternative site within the region. The firm will engage with community stakeholders to gather input, interests, desires, and expectations for such a school. The firm will also consider the District's current feeder patterns and magnet school offerings.

Organization Background/Overview

Founded in 1911, the School District of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh Public Schools, PPS, the District) is the largest of 43 school districts in Allegheny County and second largest in Pennsylvania. The District serves approximately 23,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Programs the District provides, and support are:

Arts Education; Athletics; Career & Technical Education; Charter Schools; Community Schools; Comprehensive Guidance Plan; Early Childhood; English as a Second Language (ESL); English Language; Arts; Enrollment; Food Services; Gifted and Talented; Magnet Programs; Mindfulness; Naviance; Out-of-School Programs; On Track to Equity Plan; Parent Engagement; Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS); Restorative Practices; Social-Emotional Learning (SEL); Special Education; Student Assistance Programs (SAP); Transportation.

For decades, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) has had robust college and career programming at the high school level through its Career & Technical Education (CTE) Division. However, the District currently lacks comprehensive career exploration opportunities before high school. Washington Polytechnic Career Exploration Middle School was closed almost 15 years ago; the District also eliminated career exploration elective offerings for middle school students.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has mandated that students have an individualized career plan by the end of 8th grade. For students to develop this plan, they need earlier exposure to the career opportunities available to them after high school. Hands-on career exploration at the middle school level will allow them to make the kinds of informed decisions that will shape this career plan and enable them to begin working towards career success at an earlier age.

- In 2016, the District created Community Schools within eight schools.
- In 2017, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) named PPS a winner in its first-ever Great Districts for Great Teachers initiative.

- In 2017, PPS: 1) announced its participation in the Dynamic Learning Project driven by Google, which provides coaching and technology to teachers at 50 underserved middle schools across the country, three of which are in PPS; and 2) partnered with CMU and Microsoft to expand TEALS (Technology, Education & Literacy in Schools) access to Advanced Placement Computer Science at eight schools.
- PPS has won the Best Musical Budget Level I prize at the Kelly Awards for five consecutive years. In 2018, Pittsburgh CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts) won Best Musical Budget Level 2 prize for Les Misérables.
- In 2019, PPS partnered its Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program with its Early Childhood Program. Students earn two credentials: Child Development Associate Preschool and Child Development Associate Infant-Toddler. There are 16 CTE programs across PPS. A CCAC partnership enables students to earn college credits in Health Careers Technology, Culinary Arts, or RHVAC.
- 2020 marked the eleventh Summer Dreamers Academy—a premier PPS summer camp combating summer learning loss. It has served more than 20,000 students combined.

Mission and Vision

Mission:

The Pittsburgh Public Schools will be one of America's premier school districts, student-focused, well-managed, and innovative. We will hold ourselves accountable for preparing all children to achieve academic excellence and strength of character so that they can succeed in all aspects of life.

Vision:

All students will graduate high school, college, career, and life-ready prepared to complete a two-or four-year college degree or workforce certification.

District Beliefs

- All children can learn at high levels.
- Teachers have a profound impact on student development and should have ample training, support, and resources.
- Education begins with a safe and healthy learning environment.
- Families are an essential part of the educational process.
- A commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement.
- Improvement in education is guided by consistent and effective leadership.
- Central Office exists to serve students and schools.

Current Situation

A goal of the District's Strategic Plan is to modernize its footprint and ensure fiscal sustainability for its future. Part of this work includes exploration reconfiguring schools to create a new school. The Oliver High School building is located on the Northside of Pittsburgh and is currently being utilized to house District staff offices and a special education program.

The District's thinking on this has been informed by its: 1) discussions that occurred during its most recent, district-wide strategic planning process, which included discussions about how to expand Career and Technical Education career pathway options to middle students to make informed decisions in high school and 2) feedback received from

employers and other partners to the District on projected shifts in professions and the changing regional economy and 3) long-term financial forecasts.

These are big goals that require detailed planning. These three categories intertwine, thus creating parameters around eventual designs. Because of the intricacy of this work, the District seeks to acquire external expertise to aid us in examining the most feasible options without losing innovative thinking along the way. Big ideas are easy to create but not always easy to break down and build into structures, rituals, and routines that support real change at the intuitive level.

The proposed feasibility study will encompass more than just budgetary needs. The study will include but is not limited to architectural and education program design and curriculum design, partnership development, and teacher training and professional development to ensure students are supported within this new school design. Community engagement and parental input will be key to implementing the career middle school; the final design should include a plan and structure for this priority.

Study Objectives

The District has regularly convened a career exploration middle school strategic planning design team over the past two years. The membership of this team includes senior leaders within the District, Career and Technical Education staff, Board members, the President of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, employers, foundation leaders, and other external stakeholders. The Superintendent of Schools convened this group; Angela Mike, Executive Director of Career and Technical Education, is the facilitator. This working group will continue to meet during the feasibility study and serve as a resource.

Students from Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU) Heinz School provided research to inform this committee's work. (Please see the attached report.) That research focused on future workforce needs and examples of how public schools around the country are responding to those needs. CMU was not paid for this research, as it was conducted as part of a problem-based learning class at the university with the District's real-world need serving as the students' final.

The committee's work is also informed by the District's On Track to Equity Plan, its Comprehensive Guidance Plan, and PA Career Education and Work Standards with benchmarks at grades 3,5,8,11. (Please see a copy of each attached.) Angela Mike, Executive Director for Career and Technical Education, will serve as the primary contact.

- The Feasibility Study Consultant will be on-boarded in April 2022 by Angela Mike. The onboarding process will include initial meetings with the District's Interim Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Wayne Walters, and the Chief of Staff, Errika Fearbry Jones.
- The Feasibility Study Consultant will include a proposed Scope of Work in response to the RFP. The scope of work will serve as the basis of the contract. Once the selection process is completed, the Consultant may be asked to adjust the scope before a final agreement is signed and approved by the Board. The work will occur from April 1, 2022, through April 29, 2023.
- Regular debriefing sessions will be required. These debriefing sessions will occur at a minimum every other month with the Executive Director of Career and Technical Education and the Chief of Staff. Career Exploration Middle School Design Team may request additional debriefing sessions.

- The final draft of the feasibility study will be placed in the hands of the Superintendent, Cabinet, and design team no later than March 15, 2023. After the feedback from District Leadership, a final version of the feasibility study reflecting the additional changes is due no later than April 28, 2023.
- Note: While no public comment period is required, the District may post an outline of the draft study to elicit public comment. The District may also opt to hold a special public hearing to receive public comments in person. Should we opt to include this type of feedback, these processes will be completed by November 30, 2022. Final recommendations will then become part of tactical plans within the District to realize the career exploration middle school.

Proposal Requirements

Firm Information: Provide the firm's name, address, website URL, and telephone number. Include the name, title, and e-mail address of the individual who will serve as the firm's primary contact. Include a brief description and history of your firm.

Experience and References: Proposals should include a list of 3-5 references for similar projects that your firm has completed.

Project Approach: Please explain your project approach, style, and process.

Schedule and Timeline: Proposals should include the proposed work schedule, timeline, and deliverables resulting from the feasibility study. The contract will begin on April 1, 2022, and should be completed by April 29, 2023.

Cost: Proposals must include the estimated cost for all work related to tasks and deliverables outlined in the Schedule and Timeline.

Provide Biographies of Key Staff: Please include a summary of the experience of all key staff.

Submission Deadline: Please submit questions you may have regarding the project or RFP to superintendentsofficepghschools.org by Monday, March 7, 2022, NOON. ET

Schedule: The preliminary schedule is as follows:

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| • Issue Request for Proposal | Re-Launched: January 19, 2022 |
| • Proposal due | March 7, 2022 |
| • Evaluation process, Interviews conducted with finalists (if necessary) | March 8 – 11, 2022 |
| • PPS Announces decision | March 16, 2022 |
| • PPS Board Approves Contract | March 23, 2022 |
| • Consultant begins work | April 1, 2022 |
| • Final Draft | March 15, 2023 |
| • Final Version | April 29, 2023 |