



On October 15, 2015, Pittsburgh Public Schools and Wilkesburg School District held a community meeting at Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12. Below are responses to questions not answered during the meeting.

Cross-District Partnership

1. Other small districts are able to provide a quality education to their students, why have the Wilkesburg School Directors decided to send students away?

The Wilkesburg School District has announced, that due to low enrollment, it cannot provide the academic, extra-curricular and technology opportunities required to provide its students, in grades seven through twelve, the quality education they need. Wilkesburg Board of Education (School Directors) has explored options that will provide its students with educational experiences similar to what their peers receive throughout Allegheny County. The partnership with Pittsburgh Public Schools will allow Wilkesburg's secondary students to attend a larger educational system and a quality education in a fiscally responsible way.

2. Wouldn't it be best to sustain both schools as we have so little schools presently, considering recent community development efforts?

While there are efforts around community development in both the City of Pittsburgh and the Borough of Wilkesburg, birth rates are declining in the region and educational options are increasing through charter, parochial and private schools. It is not anticipated that enrollment at either school alone would reach capacity.

3. Pittsburgh Westinghouse's name, color and mascot are a part of tradition and pride of the school and community. Will these remain intact with the merger of the two schools?

Yes! Pittsburgh Westinghouse will keep its name, colors and mascot.

4. How will the plan for the Westinghouse/Wilkesburg merger be different than the single gender academies?

The single gender academies was a new school approach in an effort to improve the significant disparities in student achievement at Pittsburgh Westinghouse by providing students with a college in a single gender setting. The plan additionally addressed the school's population decline with the addition of grades 6-8.

The Westinghouse/Wilkesburg partnership will provide Wilkesburg students access to a full range of academic programming including career and technical opportunities and extracurricular activities, to which the students do not currently have access. The cross-



district partnership does include the creation of a new school.

5. Will there be a comprehensive, transparent plan?

The Pittsburgh Public Schools is committed to a transparent process. To date, two drafts of the proposed Letter of Intent have been discussed publically by the Board of Education for the Pittsburgh Public Schools, with both drafts made available to the public. Should it be approved, we intend to provide regular progress reports to both school boards and the public. For a copy of presentations and documents to date please visit www.pps.k12.pa.us/newsroom.

6. Why did Woodland Hills and Penn Hills turn down the merger for the past decade?

Woodland Hills and Penn Hills School District would need to provide rationale for their decision not to serve Wilkinsburg students.

7. Why can't Wilkinsburg students attend Colfax, Allderdice and other PPS schools that have better PSSA and Keystone Results?

The proposed assignment of Wilkinsburg 7-12 students to Pittsburgh Westinghouse is viewed as an opportunity for both districts. The combination of the two student populations has the potential to increase academic offerings, resources and services for all students. As the closest 6-12 school to Wilkinsburg High School, Pittsburgh Westinghouse has the capacity to accommodate Wilkinsburg's 7th-12th grade students, and is making progress. We want to meet the needs of both student groups.

8. Why not open a new school that is a draw for students?

Wilkinsburg School District has determined an immediate option was needed to provide students educational experiences similar to what their peers receive throughout Allegheny County, that was met the district's fiscal needs.

9. Can Wilkinsburg residents now apply for PPS positions that are only open to Pittsburgh residents?

The Board requires that all employees who are not certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and assigned to a position requiring certification reside within the District.



10. What changes are in place at Pittsburgh Westinghouse to improve student achievement?

The addition of a strong leader at the start of the 2014-15 school year, familiar with the Homewood community, has shown positive results. While there is much work to do in order to raise student achievement, Pittsburgh Westinghouse students achieved gains on all three 2015 Keystone Exams – Algebra up to 18.3 percent from 2.6 in 2014, Literature up to 33.9 percent from 7.9 in 2014 and Biology up 1.7 percent from 0.0 in 2014.

Pittsburgh Westinghouse additionally sought and was awarded a 2015 School Improvement Grant (SIG), of \$1.2 million. Planning began in August at Westinghouse to offer a full range of services for students, families, and the overall community as part of a Community Schools Model. More information to be shared throughout the year. The District additionally received a grant from the American Federation of Teachers to support the creation of a new Career and Technical Education Public Safety Program to launch at Pittsburgh Westinghouse at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

11. Can we take a year to plan for a better option?

The Pittsburgh Public Schools offers the Wilkesburg School District an option that increases the opportunities and options to students at a tuition rate that meets Wilkesburg's financial needs. Pittsburgh Westinghouse is the Pittsburgh Public Schools' feeder school that is closest to Wilkesburg High School.

Academics

1. Who will provide the professional development needed to address the current lack of proficiency in reading and math in both districts?

A robust, rigorous curriculum that supports effective teachers and strong school leaders is key to the District reaching its vision of all students graduating Promise-Ready and walking across, not one, but two stages. On June 2, 2015, Dr. Denise Collier, contracted by the District to review its curriculum, shared her review process, commendations, findings and recommendations for improvement at the PPS Board of Directors Education Committee meeting. Among her recommendation included the need to for professional development systems to meet the needs of teachers and principals relative to expectations of the PA Core Standards and new assessments. To learn more about Dr. Collier's recommendations please visit

<http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=153&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=9877&PageID=1>



2. What will the diplomas of the Wilkinsburg students say?

George Westinghouse Academy 6-12

3. Why isn't Pittsburgh Public Schools accountable for Wilkinsburg student outcomes?

As of 10/21/2015, the proposed Letter of Intent, being considered by both districts' school boards, suggest that Wilkinsburg students attending Pittsburgh Public Schools receive preparation for and are administered all mandated and optional standardized tests. Subject to the approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and applicable laws and regulations, scores of Wilkinsburg School District resident students on PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) assessments, Keystone Exams and any other standardized assessment mandated by state or federal authorities will be attributed to the School District of Pittsburgh. Scores of Wilkinsburg School District resident students on these tests will be provided to Wilkinsburg School District. To view the most recent proposed Letter of Intent please visit www.pps.k12.pa.us/boarddocs .

4. How many of the Wilkinsburg students receive special education services?

According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center 28.3% of all Wilkinsburg students receive special education services.

5. Will PPS provide adequate Special Education support and teachers?

Yes. Students with disabilities, within Pittsburgh Public Schools, will receive an equitable education that addresses individual needs so that students can achieve their fullest potential academically, socially, emotionally and vocationally. For educational placements outside of Pittsburgh, Wilkinsburg School District shall directly pay the approved private school or other entity at which Wilkinsburg School District resident students are placed.

6. Are there Advanced Placement courses at Pittsburgh Westinghouse?

Yes. Currently Pittsburgh Westinghouse offers four Advanced Placement options: Biology, English 3, English 4 and Writing.

7. Will there be an assurance that academic achievement will take center stage?

Yes. The educational programs at Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12 are designed to meet the needs of all students. To meet this responsibility, a comprehensive program of studies is offered. In the educational program, provisions are made for a student to advance according to their abilities, talents, interest, endeavors, and needs.



Westinghouse has embraced a student centered educational philosophy. The African symbol of **Sankofa** is used to demonstrate the spiritual mindset and cultural awakening to **“The wisdom of reaching back to fetch the learning from the past in order to build for the future.”** A Student Centered Education focus prepares students to live and serve the community. Students are prepared to give back in knowledge, skills and values, while developing positive attitudes for the betterment of humanity.

Programs and Services

1. Will Wilkinsburg students have the same access to programs and services as Pittsburgh students?

As of 10/21/2015, the proposed Letter of Intent, being considered by both districts' school boards, states that Wilkinsburg students will be fully eligible for all curriculum, instruction, career and technical education programs, alternative education services, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (including participation on interscholastic athletics teams) available to resident students of Pittsburgh Public Schools. To view the most recent Letter of Intent please visit www.pps.k12.pa.us/boarddocs.

2. How will the magnet program be available to Wilkinsburg youth?

As of 10/21/2015, the proposed Letter of Intent, being considered by both districts' school boards, states students in grades seven through twelve from the Wilkinsburg School District shall be afforded the opportunity to enroll in the various Magnet School offerings in the same manner and subject to the same requirements as is afforded resident students of the Pittsburgh Public Schools commencing the 2017-18 school year. During the first year of the agreement in the 2016-17 school year in which Wilkinsburg School District students are assigned to Pittsburgh Public Schools, such students shall be enrolled in Westinghouse and they may apply for admission to a magnet school programs for the 2017-18 school year. To view the most recent Letter of Intent please visit www.pps.k12.pa.us/boarddocs.

3. How will tardiness be handled for Wilkinsburg students?

Pittsburgh Wilkinsburg students will be held to the same tardiness standards as all Pittsburgh students. To prevent failure of a class due to excessive tardiness or absences, it is imperative that students report to school and class on time.

- All students are expected to arrive at school by 7:15 AM. Classes begin promptly at 7:36 AM. Students arriving after 7:36 AM will get a late note from the adult staff member at the door they enter through.
- All students coming to school after 8:00am will come through the front door, and directed to the office for a late note.
- **No student will be permitted to enter the building after 8:00 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.** Exceptions will be made for students with



a note from a physician or another legal agency (**not from home**) covering an appointment.

4. Will there be a dress code?

Yes. Please see below Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy's Dress Code

- **Uniform Bottoms:** solid khaki or navy slacks/ pants/ walking shorts/ culottes/ skirts/ jumpers
- **Uniform tops:** Blue, White, Yellow solid color polo shirts or oxford button down shirts with a collar.
- **Official Westinghouse Gear**
- **No jeans.**
- **NO SHOWER OR FLIP FLOP SHOES**

The following items may not be worn inside of the building:

- Coats, hats, bandanas, scarves or hoods
- Any clothing or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures, or any combination that promotes sexual activity, violence, the use of alcohol or drugs, that may demean or degrade others because of race, sex, religious persuasion, national origin, handicap or disability.
- Leggings, biker shorts, spandex shorts, mini shorts or shorts with slits or holes of any kind or gym shorts.
- No short skirts or dresses that are above the thighs
- See through shirts, bare midriff shirts, strapless or spaghetti strap tops, and/or cut off clothing.
- Clothing designed to be worn as undergarments
- Any clothing or ornaments that would cause a safety hazard
- Any tight fitting clothing that emphasizes your under garments.

Dress code shall be in effect during regular school hours and at any school sponsored event whether on or off school premises. Students will be sent home to change clothes or confined to the In-School

5. Will the Wilksburg students qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise?

No. The Pittsburgh Promise bylaws maintain that to be eligible for the Promise a student must live with the City of Pittsburgh, continuously, for at least the four years of high school. Students must also meet other eligibility requirements. Please visit <http://www.pittsburghpromise.org>.

6. What is the parent engagement protocol?

Parent School Community Council (PSCC) is an organized support group to bring parents, staff and community for each individual school to the table to focus on individual school



issues and concerns. Pittsburgh Westinghouse's Parent School Community Council has created a climate where participation of all stakeholders resulted in increased commitment, responsibility and satisfaction for the total Westinghouse School community. The PSCC has become a unified legitimate voice that has helped to advise the decision making process.

Please read the Pittsburgh Public Schools Parent and Family Involvement Policy for more information.

http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/cms/lib07/PA01000449/Centricity/Domain/274/PARENT%20SINGLES_web%20use.pdf

Transition Planning

1. What will be put in place to ensure not only safety, but also build camaraderie and friendship?

At the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all students, staff and visitors is a top priority. Each school has a safety team and all staff are provided information that outlines emergency procedures. Throughout the year, schools perform various safety drills including fire, bus evacuation, severe weather, building evacuation and lockdown. We know that students feel safe while in our schools. The Department of School Safety and District personnel work closely and collaboratively with school leaders, local emergency responders, and community agencies as well as out of school time partners to ensure student safety. Additionally Pittsburgh Westinghouse and Pittsburgh Police has developed positive and productive relationships. Leveraging these partnerships will be a critical part of any transition planning.

Planning for student transition will require that the School Boards for both district agree to enter into an agreement to serve Wilksburg students in grades 7-12 at Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12. Transition planning will additionally require additional financial and staff support. If both districts enter into an agreement a comprehensive transition plan will be developed to support student transition. The plan will include multiple opportunities for both school communities to engage with each other.

2. Who will be on the transition team?

If both school boards enter into an agreement, the next nine months will be used to develop and execute a transition plan. An internal cross functional team, comprised of staff from both school districts, will be formed to address operational needs. Additionally each school will form a school-based transition team as well as student ambassadors to support school-to-school transition planning. Additional external subcommittees, comprised of parents, community partners and public safety officials, from both school communities, will be appointed to support transition. Actual team member names will soon be provided should there be a positive vote.



Details of the plan will be shared with both school boards publically in the spring – well before the start of school.

3. How can the Westinghouse Alumni Association be a part of the transition plan?

The Westinghouse Alumni Association has been a valued partner of the Pittsburgh Westinghouse school community. In fact, one week ago, Westinghouse alumni teamed up with the school to celebrate its Homecoming. Alumni, from the school's Wall of Fame, spoke to current students during homeroom. Alumni also planned several events to celebrate the school's legacy. There will be opportunities for alumni to engage during the transition process.

4. Will there be opportunities for students from both schools to have interactions during school hours?

If approved, multiple transition activities will be scheduled to allow for student interaction during school hours.

5. Where will the transition funds come from?

If funding cannot be secured from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to support transition cost, the tuition rate paid by Wilkesburg School District will increase. Please see the proposed Letter of Intent 10/21/15 at <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/boarddocs>