



Pittsburgh Public Schools and Wilkinsburg School District – An Educational Partnership

Frequently Asked Questions

Cross-District Partnership

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

The Wilkinsburg 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. Wilkinsburg 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 allows Wilkinsburg'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 Wilkinsburg, 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 combining of the two schools?**

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

- 4. How will the plan for the Westinghouse/Wilkinsburg 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/Wilkinsburg partnership will provide Wilkinsburg 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. On October 28, 2015, following months of discussion and opportunities for community feedback, the Board of Directors for the Pittsburgh Public Schools approved a Letter of Intent regarding the assignment of secondary students in the Wilkesburg School District to the Pittsburgh Public Schools for the start of the 2016-2017 school year. 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 Wilkesburg students.

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

The assignment of Wilkesburg 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 Wilkesburg High School, Pittsburgh Westinghouse has the capacity to accommodate Wilkesburg'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?

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

9. Can Wilkesburg 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 City of Pittsburgh.



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 Wilksburg School District an option that increases the opportunities and options to students at a tuition rate that meets Wilksburg's financial needs. Pittsburgh Westinghouse is the Pittsburgh Public Schools' feeder school that is closet to Wilksburg 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. Will Pittsburgh Public Schools be accountable for Wilkinsburg student outcomes?

Wilkinsburg students attending Pittsburgh Public Schools will receive preparation for and administered all mandated and optional standardized tests. 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.

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?

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 students who attend Pittsburgh Westinghouse. 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?

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. If I live in Pittsburgh and move to Wilkinsburg do I maintain my Magnet status?

No. If residency status changes from Pittsburgh to Wilkinsburg for the start of the 2016-17 school year, residency status would be considered Wilkinsburg and make the student subject to the terms outlined in the Letter of Agreement. 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 Pittsburgh Westinghouse and they may apply for admission to a magnet school programs for the 2017-18 school year.

4. 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.

5. 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 In-School.

6. 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>.



7. 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 have developed positive and productive relationships. Leveraging these partnerships will be a critical part of any transition planning.

We are taking a proactive approach to build relationships among students and teacher to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment. Student Support Services department at Pittsburgh Westinghouse will double to accommodate the transition of Wilkinsburg High School students to the school over the next three years.

2. How will transportation be provided to Wilkinsburg students?

As part the Letter of Agreement the Wilkinsburg School District will provide transportation for students to and from Westinghouse during regular school and activities. Wilkinsburg is addressing the logistics to support this commitment.

3. Who will be on the transition team?

Transition team leads include Pittsburgh Public Schools staff Executive Director of Internal and External Affairs Errika Fearbry Jones, Chief Operations Officer Ronald Joseph and Project Manager Brigette Patterson, as well as Wilkinsburg Consultant Dr. Dan Matsook



An internal cross functional team, comprised of staff from both school districts, has been 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.

Details of the plan have been shared with both school boards publically this past April. An additional update to the community is planned for June 1, 2016.

4. 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. Alumni assist in the planning of several events to celebrate the school's legacy. There will be opportunities for alumni to engage during the transition process.

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

Multiple transition activities have been scheduled to allow for student interaction during school hours.

6. Where will the transition funds come from?

On January 27, 2016, the Pittsburgh Public Schools received \$975,000 from the Wilkinsburg/Pittsburgh Transition Fund to support the smooth transition of Wilkinsburg and Pittsburgh Westinghouse students. The Board voted to accept the funds from the Wilkinsburg School District. The District will submit monthly reconciliation statements to Wilkinsburg to account for all expenditures related to the Partnership.