



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

The Dynamic Duo: How Superpowered Superintendents and Communication Leads Can Build Trust, Tackle Misinformation, and Increase Positive Media Coverage

October 23, 2025

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Superintendent

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Chief of Communications and Customer Service



OVERVIEW

- **Welcome & Introductions**
- **District Overview**
- **District Outcomes**
 - NAEP
 - State Assessments
- **The Dynamic Duo & Communications Strategies**
- **Thank you and Questions**

District Overview



168 Languages
Spoken by Students
and Families



5301 Students
Enrolled in Advanced
Placement



**43 Career and
Technical Education
Programs**



**36 Advanced Placement
Courses Available
Across Our Schools**



**10 International
Baccalaureate
Programs**



Graduation Rates

84% District Schools

78% District & Alternative Schools

*Rates based on 2023-2024 data



198,299

Total Student Enrollment

- **117,956** District & Alternative
- **63,964** Charter Enrolled
- **14,252** Cyber Charters
- **2,127** Other



\$4.5 Billion

Total Budget (FY 2024)

- **Local \$2B**
- **State \$2.4B**
- **Federal \$33.6M**
- **Federal Grant Relief \$148.1M**



331 Total Schools

- **250** District & Alternative
 - **218** District Schools
 - **32** Alternative Education
- **81** Charter



Student Diversity

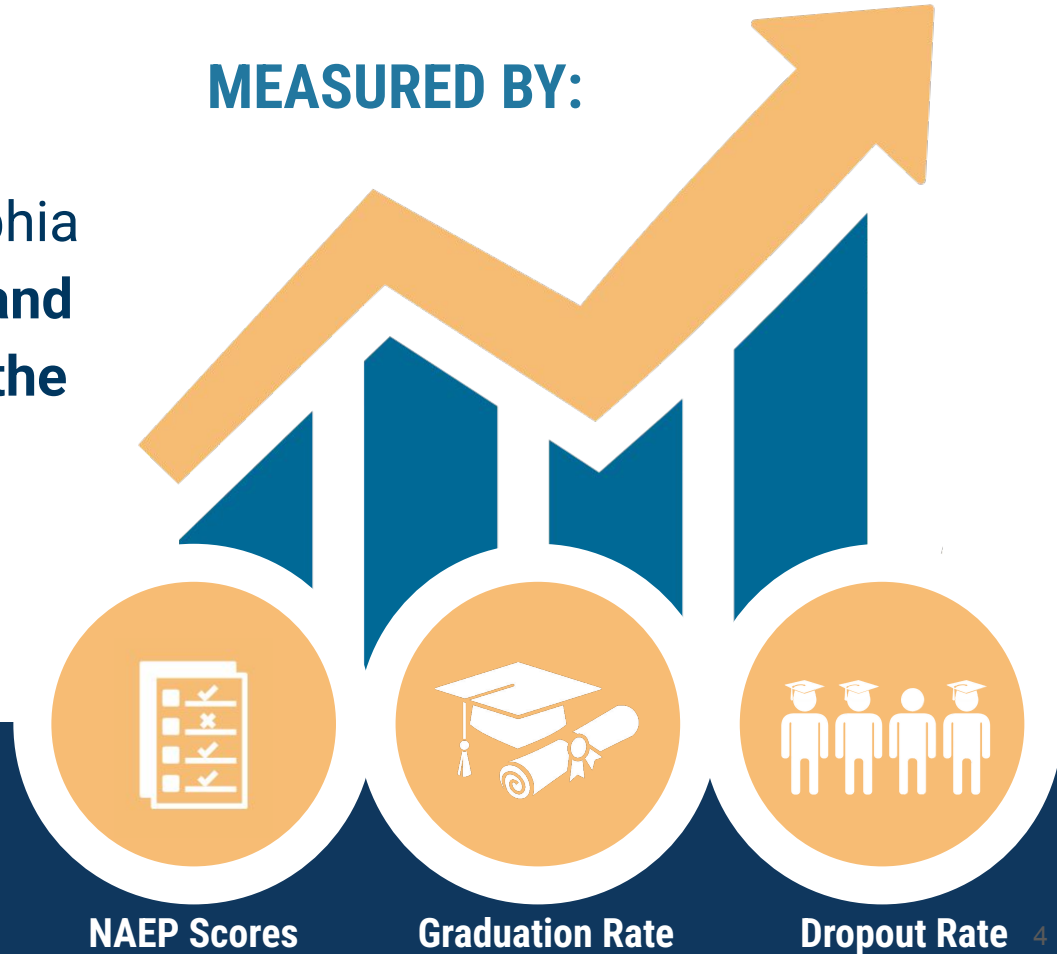
*District & Alternative Schools only

- **49%** Black/ African-American
- **25%** Hispanic/ Latino
- **14%** White
- **8%** Asian
- **5%** Multiracial/ Other
- **20%** Students with IEP
- **21%** English Learners (EL)

Superintendent Charge:

The School District of Philadelphia will **achieve the Board's Goals and Guardrails**, as well as **become the fastest improving large, urban school district in the country.**

MEASURED BY:



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

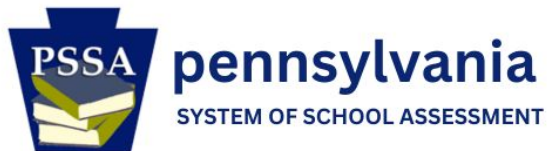
2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Results

The Nation's Report Card

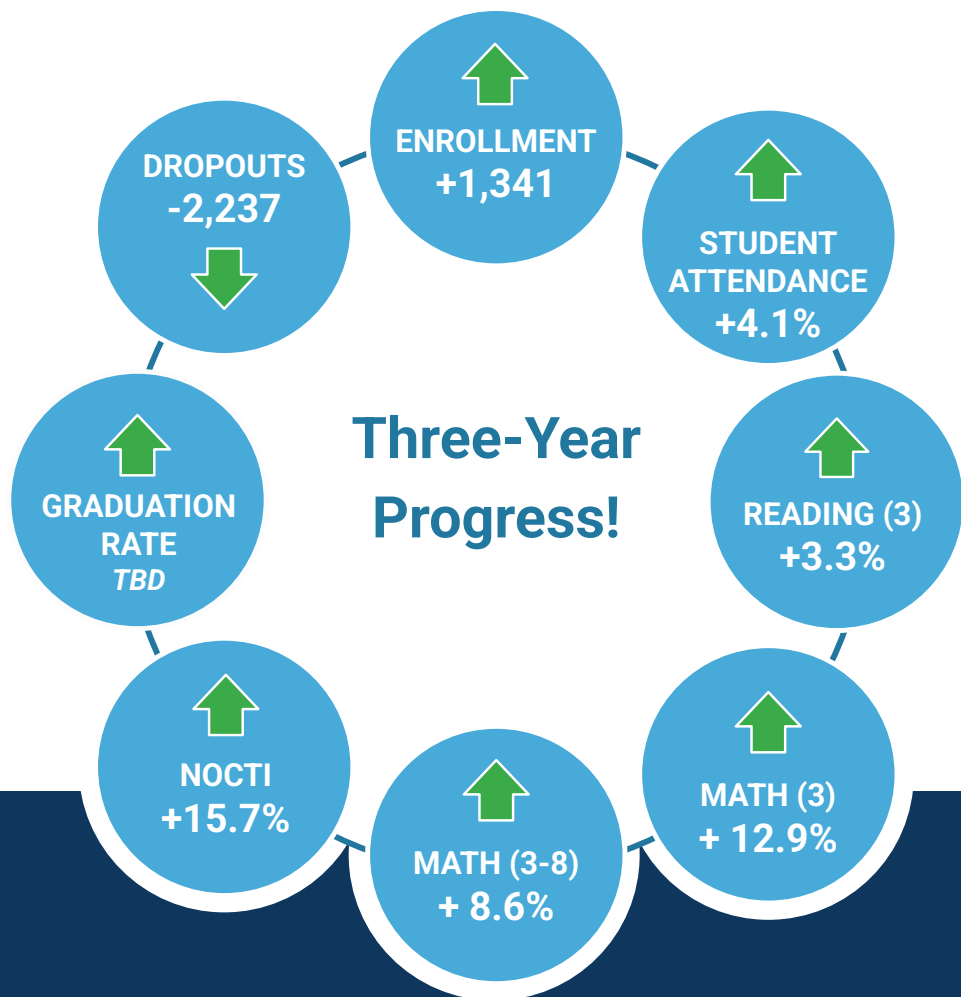
2010-2019 vs 2020-2024 OUTPACED NATIONAL AND STATE IMPROVEMENT

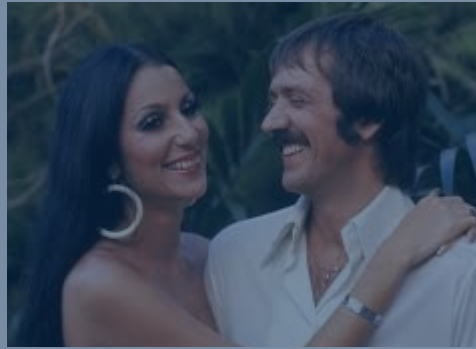
- ↑ 4th Grade Math
 - ↑ 8th Grade Math
 - ↑ 8th Grade Reading
- (held steady in 4th Grade Reading)*

2022- 2025 State Assessments



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA





The Dynamic Duo & Communications Strategies



4 Keys to Communications Success

1

Use **consistent messaging** across all communications.

2

Standardize engagement with internal and external **stakeholder groups**.

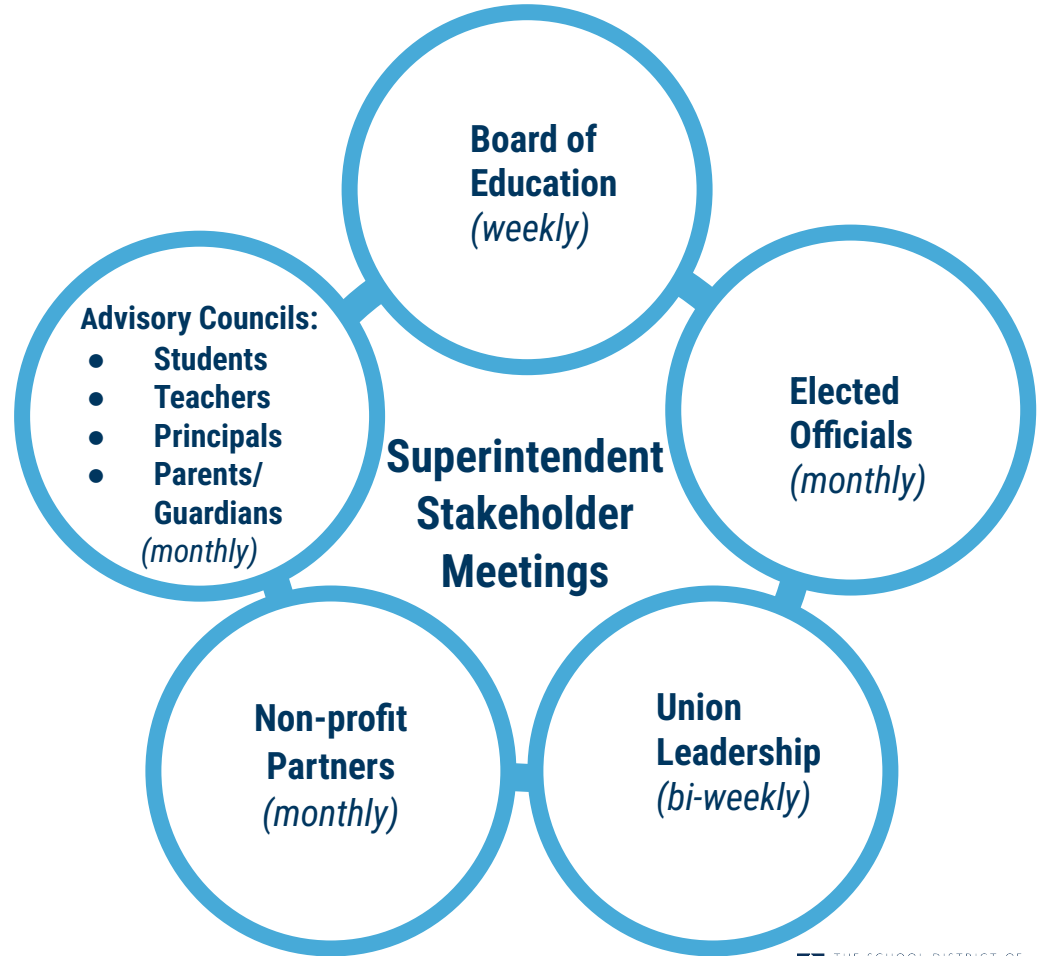
3

Report communications progress to key stakeholders to influence **public perception**.

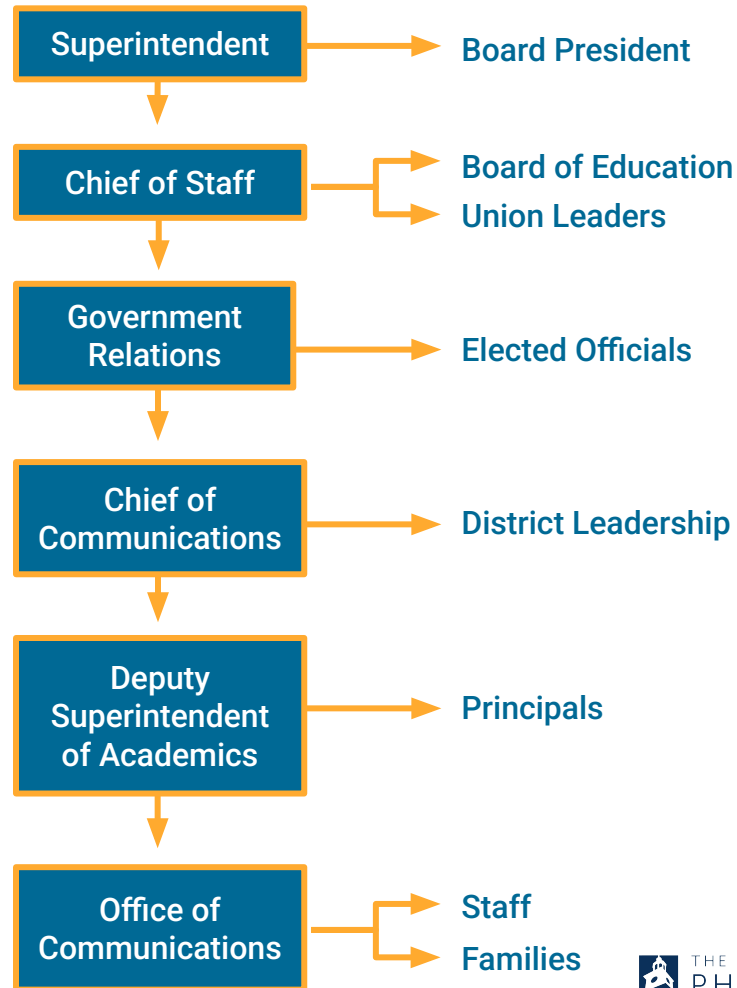
4

Deliver a **proactive and well-prepared approach** that prioritizes honesty, transparency, and empathy in **crisis communications**.

Key Stakeholder Engagement Approach



Communications Cascade



Tackling Misinformation



*Consistent
messaging is crucial
for building brand
trust, recognition,
and loyalty.*

Strategies to Drive, Measure & Report Positive Media Coverage



- **Use a media monitoring tool to measure:**
 - Sentiment (positive, negative, and neutral)
 - Total Audience
 - Ad Equivalence

- **Create opportunities for superintendent to serve as a thought leader.**
 - Op-eds
 - Regular Media & Editorial Interviews

- **Pitch recurring partnership opportunities with media outlets**

- **Report media coverage metrics in a weekly superintendent report to Board of Education and Key Stakeholders.**

The Philadelphia Inquirer

NEWS SPORTS BETTING BUSINESS OPINION POLITICS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE FOOD HEALTH REAL ESTATE OBITUARIES

Philly schools tops in big-city U.S. districts in academic recovery: takeaways from the school board meeting

Measured against other large, poor urban districts, Philadelphia approached its pre-pandemic math achievement faster than any other city's schools.



GMA

Video

Shop

Culture

Family

Wellness

Food

Living

Style

...

Q

Newsletter

LIVING — May 24, 2024

Celebrating young entrepreneurs in Philadelphia

A group of fourth and fifth graders from the Entrepreneurship Club at the Kennedy C. Crossan School and their counselors discuss their program and receive surprises.

f x p e



TONY WATLINGTON, PhD

SUPERINTENDENT & COUNSELOR, SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA / ENTREPRENEURSHIP CLUB LEADER

GMA



CHALKBEAT PHILADELPHIA

COMMUNITIES

JOBS BOARD

SCHOOL FUNDING LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT BUDGET & FINANCE

Philadelphia school district, union leaders say students need state education funding boost

By Rebecca Redelmeier | June 25, 2025, 5:39pm EDT

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Brand Perception Study

- In 2023, the District **contracted Susquehanna Polling & Research** to conduct a brand perception study.
- **The target audience included:**
 - parents/guardians of currently enrolled SDP students
 - parents/guardians of PreK-12 eligible students who attend non-SDP schools in Philadelphia
 - parents/guardians of children who are not yet age-eligible for PreK-12
 - Philadelphia community members with no PreK-12 eligible students
- **Key Outcomes Identified through Study:**
 - The district's ability to prepare students for both college and career after graduation, are drivers of parent satisfaction.
 - Parents want increased diversity in district teachers.
- Led to the creation of the district's **new "I AM SDP" brand campaign.**

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The Philadelphia Tribune

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New poll shows parents hold improved perception of Philly school district

Stephen Williams, WHYY Jul 1, 2025 0



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serving neighbors,
friends, and family.

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run deep.**

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MAY 15, 2025

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Controversy over Philadelphia teacher, pro-Palestinian messages in class

Muslim teacher alleges in lawsuit that Philly school district punished her for pro-Palestinian views

10 PHILADELPHIA WEATHER LOCAL SPORTS NBC10 RESPONDS ENTERTAINMENT INVESTIGATORS VID... 83° Watch 24/7

TRENDING Submit a News Tip Philly Workers Strike Your Daily NBC10 Forecast Celebrate Your Town Phillies Eagles Find It on 10... 43 WEATHER ALERTS

PHILADELPHIA

Protesters interrupt Philly school meeting over pro-Palestinian teacher's removal

CHALKBEAT PHILADELPHIA

COMMUNITIES JOBS BOARD EV

The Philadelphia Inquirer

comm

EDUCATION

A Philadelphia Jewish group has filed a complaint against a Philadelphia School District teacher, who says she's been targeted

PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TONY WATLINGTON

Philadelphia students, educators, parents demand protection for students and educators who express pro-Palestinian views

By Carly Sitrin and Emily Rizzo | May 30, 2024, 9:20pm EDT

District Communications Response to Middle East Conflict

- Hosted Student Forums & Workshops
- Hosted School and Community Advocate Circle
- Published an op-ed in National Education Publication



Thank You & Contact Us!



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