



CHANGEMAKERS: WAYNE WALTERS

NOMINATED BY MELISSA PEARLMAN

Wayne Walters is superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools in Pennsylvania. In her nomination, colleague Melissa Pearlman notes Walters' efforts to elevate professional learning, focus on continuous improvement, and create a culture of inclusiveness and equity.

Superintendent Wayne Walters is celebrated by his colleague Melissa Pearlman for his “leadership, emphasis on ongoing and job-embedded learning, promotion of collaborative learning communities, and integration of data-driven practices, ultimately resulting in improved learning outcomes for students.” Walters’ dedication to Pittsburgh students and their families is reflected in the many roles he has held over 30 years in the district, including serving as the assistant superintendent of professional development. Pearlman, the district’s assistant superintendent of school performance, cited Walters’ commitment to support “significant initiatives to shape a forward-thinking landscape.” Here are highlights from her nomination.

ON ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND ALIGNING INITIATIVES:

“Dr. Walters led the effort to transform the district’s professional learning programs by aligning the professional development programs with the (district’s) broader educational goals. This work was designed to ensure that teachers’ learning experiences directly contributed to student achievement, a fundamental principle of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning.

“He worked to establish routines and practices that elevate the importance of professional learning throughout the district so that teachers, administrators, and other staff can access tailored learning experiences suited to their specific needs and responsibilities. He has instituted teacher feedback mechanisms so that teachers are empowered to participate in the design of professional learning programs tailored to their needs and the needs of their students.”

ON PRIORITIZING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:

“Dr. Walters has led the district’s efforts to assure a districtwide commitment to continuous improvement. He has instilled a culture of ongoing growth and learning among educators and school leaders, emphasizing the importance of staying updated with the latest teaching methodologies, educational trends, and technological advancements. His efforts are foundational to the district’s efforts to create a thriving learning community where all constituents, students, teachers, families, and community are working together to respond to the evolving needs of our learners.

“By using data to inform decision-making, he supports teachers to make evidence-based adjustments to their instructional methods and assess the impact of their teaching strategies on student learning outcomes. This continuous improvement elevates improved teaching practices and student achievement.

“He also recognizes the value of collaborative learning, a crucial element of Learning Forward’s standards. Through his efforts, teachers have opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions, share best practices, and collaborate on innovative projects. By fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, he creates a supportive environment where school leaders learn from one another, exchange ideas, and collectively enhance their teaching methods. This enriches educators’ professional growth and enhances the overall quality of education in the district.”

ON CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY:

“Creating safe and welcoming schools has been a singular focus under Dr. Walters’ leadership. His commitment to racial equity is well-documented at every phase of his career. That commitment is grounded not only in his belief that racial justice is a moral imperative but an essential strategy to ensure the success of the district, the community, and the nation. His many academic and culture-change initiatives emphasize the importance of creating a positive and inclusive environment for all students and staff. By fostering open dialogue and providing safe spaces for difficult conversations, he cultivates an environment where diverse perspectives are not only respected but also integral to the growth and development of the district.

“In addition to many other equity initiatives, he prioritizes professional learning on cultural competency and inclusive teaching practices, empowering educators to understand and meet the diverse needs of their students. This extends to school leaders and central office staff, fostering a shared understanding and commitment to promoting a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.”

To nominate a changemaker, visit learningforward.org/changemakers. ■