

GREAT PHILLY SCHOOLS

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MAYOR NUTTER JOINS PARENTS, SCHOOL LEADERS TO LAUNCH GREATPHILLYSCHOOLS.ORG

New resource provides Philadelphia families with information and ratings to search and compare over 400 public and private K-12 schools

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter joined Philadelphia parents, the Philadelphia School Partnership (PSP), the Urban Affairs Coalition, and other community partners today to launch GreatPhillySchools.org, a new resource for Philadelphia families to learn about and compare over 400 K-12 schools in the city. GreatPhillySchools.org includes ratings and information about all types of schools, including District, charter, Catholic and private schools. It is now available for free online at www.greatphillyschools.org, and will include a print guide for families by early 2013.

“GreatPhillySchools is more than a website; it is a tool that allows parents and caregivers to play an active role in the education of their children,” said Mayor Nutter. “By making information available about the performance, academics, attendance and safety of different types of schools, GreatPhillySchools.org will ease the process of school selection.”

GreatPhillySchools.org was created through the collaboration of several nonprofit partners, including the Philadelphia School Partnership, the Philadelphia Public School Notebook and the Urban Affairs Coalition. School ratings featured on the site are powered by quantitative data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the National Student Clearinghouse, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s Office of Catholic Education and the School District of Philadelphia. In addition, each of more than 400 schools was invited to submit descriptive information and other data for their school profiles on the site.

“This is all about equipping families with the information to ask the right questions, make the best decisions, and demand the best schools for their children,” said Mark Gleason, Executive Director of the Philadelphia School Partnership. “We communicated with parents throughout the process so that we could create a site that best delivers the information and data that parents want

or need to know. GreatPhillySchools is an attempt to put all of the information families need in one, easy-to-use place.”

Prior to GreatPhillySchools.org, parents seeking information on schools had to search multiple websites and sift through complex spreadsheets to find data about academic results. There was no easy way to get information comparing private and Catholic schools to public schools or to obtain information about safety and attendance. Forty-two percent of parents of school-age children in Philadelphia said they found it “very hard” or “somewhat hard” to obtain enough information about the educational options for their children, according to a [2010 study by Pew Charitable Trusts’ Philadelphia Research Initiative](#). To meet this need, PSP began the GreatPhillySchools project in 2011, holding focus groups with parents, grandparents, and caregivers to learn what information about schools would be most helpful and how to present that information in an easy-to-use format. An advisory council comprised of parents, teachers, school leaders and civic leaders guided the development of GreatPhillySchools.org throughout the last six months.

“Special acknowledgment goes to the leaders of Philadelphia’s Catholic elementary and high schools,” Gleason said. “These schools educate about 12 percent of the city’s students, in many cases well, yet before now detailed information on these schools could be hard to find. Catholic school leaders have been committed and cooperative partners in this effort.”

GreatPhillySchools.org presents ratings and information to help parents, grandparents and students to search and compare over 400 public and private schools. Each school is assigned 1-to-10 ratings in up to five categories and in overall quality. A rating of 10 means a school ranks among the top-performing schools for that category in comparison to other schools in Philadelphia. These ratings are designed to help make finding, sorting and comparing schools easier and are not intended to be the sole factor in judging whether a school is the right fit for a student. The site will help parents, guardians and students ask the right questions during their school research, as they visit schools and as they work to improve their own schools.

There are ratings in five categories:

- Academics: reading and math performance, measured against grade-level standards using PSSA or TerraNova data;
- Safety: serious incidents;
- Student Attendance: average daily attendance;
- Achievement Gap: the difference in academic performance between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and not; and
- College Bound: the percentage of high-school graduates who enroll in 2- or 4-year college in the year after high school.

A school's overall rating is based on a combination of its ratings in academics, college enrollment (high schools only), attendance and safety. For each rating, raw scores were broken into ten ranges from which each school receives their 1 – 10 rating in each category. The ratings were compiled and analyzed by an expert data company, and the methodology was reviewed by the advisory council and an independent research scientist. Data on the site will be updated in real-time as more current information becomes available. For a more detailed explanation of the ratings, see our [methodology at GreatPhillySchools.org](#).

In addition to the ability to search by neighborhood, overall quality and school type or grade level, the site includes a series of brief articles developed to help parents and caregivers navigate the process of choosing a school. Over a dozen articles touch on differences among the private and public school systems, the enrollment process at different types of schools, a checklist for parents planning to visit a school, and more.

The site also includes descriptive information for each school, including mission, accreditations, admissions policy, and special programs, such as music, arts, sports and language offerings. This information was provided by the principal or school leader, and it is intended to help parents, caregivers, and students find the right fit for their individual needs. Each school profile page also includes a school photo when available, school location with a map, contact information, and school demographics. Principals are invited to submit frequent updates to be posted on their school's profile page.

PSP is working with its dozens of partners throughout the city to increase awareness of this new resource, including the Freedom Rings Partnership (KEYSPOTS), libraries, community and recreation centers, nonprofits and service agencies, faith-based organizations, early childhood centers and more. A Spanish language version of the site is in development. Radio and television advertisements encouraging parents to visit the site will begin running later this fall.

PSP is working to continuously improve the site and encourages users to submit feedback on their experience. GreatPhillySchools.org will be updated on an ongoing basis as feedback, additional content and newer data becomes available. GreatPhillySchools.org works on any device with internet access, including mobile phones.

About GreatPhillySchools.org

GreatPhillySchools.org is a citywide resource for Philadelphia families to learn about all the city's K-12 schools. Its mission is to empower parents, caregivers, and students with information to find, choose, and demand great schools. It is presented through the collaboration of several nonprofit partners, including the Philadelphia School Partnership, the Public School Notebook and the Urban Affairs Coalition. The website includes information and ratings on nearly every

K-12 school in Philadelphia, including District, charter, Catholic and private schools. It is designed for families to search and compare schools in neighborhoods across the City of Philadelphia.

About the Philadelphia School Partnership

PSP is a nonprofit organization founded in October 2010 that invests in the creation and expansion of great schools in Philadelphia. PSP is raising a \$100 million “Great Schools Fund” in support of education reform, and investing those funds as growth capital to support the transformation, expansion and startup of high-performing schools in the public and private sectors. It measures success by the number of students in Philadelphia who move out of failing schools to better-quality school options, and it judges school quality on the basis of student academic outcomes. PSP works closely with Mayor Michael Nutter, state Secretary of Education Ronald Tomalis, the School Reform Commission, charter school leadership, and the Archdiocese to implement the Great School Compact. The Compact represents a collective commitment to transform or replace the worst-performing schools in the city, representing nearly 50,000 students, by 2016-17.

Learn more at www.philaschoolpartnership.org

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