



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

# 2023 PATHWAYS TO GRADUATION CAMPAIGN

## PenSPRA Gold Medallion Entry

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School District of Philadelphia  
440 N Broad St., Suite 301, Philadelphia, PA 19130  
Public School District | 197,000 students

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- Monique Braxton, Deputy Chief of Communications, SDP
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- Khalice Gaynor, Digital Content Producer, SDP
- Tom Gailey, Marketing Consultant, SDP
- Kristin Hummel, Tierney Agency
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# PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

The Pennsylvania Department of Education had introduced statewide Pathways to Graduation – *additional* high school graduation requirements that went into effect beginning with the graduating Class of 2023. All students graduating from a Pennsylvania high school now have to meet local graduation requirements *plus* one of five Act 158 Pathways to Graduation designed to illustrate their college, career and community readiness.

In spring 2023, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) partnered with The Neubauer Family Foundation (TNFF), The Fund for the School District of Philadelphia (The FUND), Tierney Agency, William Penn Foundation, City of Philadelphia and Brownstone PR to collaboratively launch a comprehensive marketing and community engagement campaign to:

- increase awareness of new statewide Act 158 graduation requirements;
- create a citywide call to action to *get informed so you can plan your path*;
- and help increase the number of seniors on track to graduate.

The School District, City of Philadelphia, TNFF, The FUND and the William Penn Foundation each contributed to the campaign's \$340K budget. The primary target audience was current SDP high school seniors and their families, but a secondary vital audience was students in grades five through 11 and their families who also needed to actively think about their own pathways to graduation.

Featuring real Class of 2023 students to highlight the new graduation pathways, the campaign reflects a best practice example of SDP and Philadelphia philanthropy and business organizations coming together to support students.

## RESULT

The District went from about 40% of seniors being on-track to graduate at the start of the campaign, to 86% of seniors graduating on time by June 2023.

40% → 86%

# CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania Department of Education had introduced statewide Pathways to Graduation – additional high school graduation requirements that went into effect beginning with the graduating Class of 2023. All students graduating from a Pennsylvania high school now had to meet local graduation requirements plus one of five Act 158 Pathways to Graduation designed to illustrate their college, career and community readiness. You can learn more about the new state-required graduation pathways [here](#).

An assessment of the graduation status of high school seniors based on this new expanded criteria revealed that only about 40% of seniors met both the local graduation requirements as well as the requirements for one of the five Act 158 Pathways to Graduation. This created a district-wide sense of urgency to significantly amplify awareness and understanding of the new Act 158 graduation requirements among our School District students and families, and help our seniors meet the expanded requirements to graduate on time.

## PLANNING

Understanding that helping as many seniors as possible meet the new requirements and graduate on time was not just a School District opportunity but a city-wide call to action, the School District reached out to and galvanized organizations across Philadelphia to support its efforts. With urgency, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) partnered with The Neubauer Family Foundation (TNFF), The Fund for the School District of Philadelphia (The FUND), Tierney Agency, William Penn Foundation, City of Philadelphia and Brownstone PR to launch a comprehensive marketing and community engagement campaign to:

- increase awareness of new statewide Act 158 graduation requirements;
- create a citywide call to action to get informed so you can plan your path;
- and help increase the number of seniors on track to graduate.

Roles and responsibilities of our collaborative campaign included:

- School District of Philadelphia Communications Team - overall campaign oversight; creative development oversight; implementation and funding support
- Tierney Agency - campaign creative/content development; implementation
- The Neubauer Family Foundation - funding partner
- The Fund for the School District of Philadelphia - funding partner
- William Penn Foundation - funding partner
- City of Philadelphia - funding partner
- Brownstone PR - designed and conducted all community activation sessions



After a robust solicitation and review process, we selected five amazing and diverse SDP Class of 2023 graduating seniors as graduation ambassadors and storytellers to highlight that, with ACT 158, high school students can leverage their specific strengths and interests to carve their own path to graduation. It emphasized how students don't have to fit the conventional mold – they can own their path and do what's right for their unique skills and plans for the future. Each student represented a different school and their specific Pathway to Graduation, in alignment with the new Act 158 requirements.

The campaign's primary target audience was current SDP high school seniors and their families, but a secondary vital audience was students in grades five through 11 and their families who also needed to actively think about their own pathways to graduation.

# ADVERTISING AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN

From March through early June 2023, the team blitzed the Philadelphia area with a comprehensive \$340K paid media campaign that used traditional and newer platforms to reach audiences across key areas of their daily experience. Our goal was to continuously reach students and families where they were throughout their day.

## Paid media tactics and impressions were as follows:

- 12 weeks of radio ads (iHeart and Audacy stations) delivered 6.8 million impressions  
Listen Here: [Radio PSA](#)
- 6 flights of print ads and advertorials (Philadelphia Tribune, Metro, and Al Dia) delivered 5.8 million impressions
- 10 weeks of digital content across several Philly Voice platforms delivered 6 million impressions
- 12 weeks of static and digital out-of-home bus shelter ads and Gas Station TV ads delivered 23.5 million impressions. Watch here: [Video PSA](#)
- 11 weeks of targeted digital display banner ads delivered 6.5 million impressions, reaching our target audience an average of 11 times
- 11 weeks of paid social including NextDoor, delivered 0.9 million impressions
- two direct mail brochures (90,000 mailers total) were directly delivered to SDP families of students in grades 5-12 in March 2023

## PRINT ADVERTISING

Carol, Class of 2023  
Jules E. Mastbaum  
High School

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**CAROL'S ON  
PATHWAY 3 TO  
HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION.  
WHAT'S YOUR PATH?**

Find updated graduation requirements and make your plan now at [philsad.org/graduate](http://philsad.org/graduate)

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

David, Class of 2023  
Frankford High School

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**DAVID'S ON  
PATHWAY 3 TO  
HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION.  
WHAT'S YOUR PATH?**

Find updated graduation requirements and make your plan now at [philsad.org/graduate](http://philsad.org/graduate)

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Kiara, Class of 2023  
Northeast High School

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**KIARA'S ON  
PATHWAY 2 TO  
HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION.  
WHAT'S YOUR PATH?**

Find updated graduation requirements and make your plan now at [philsad.org/graduate](http://philsad.org/graduate)

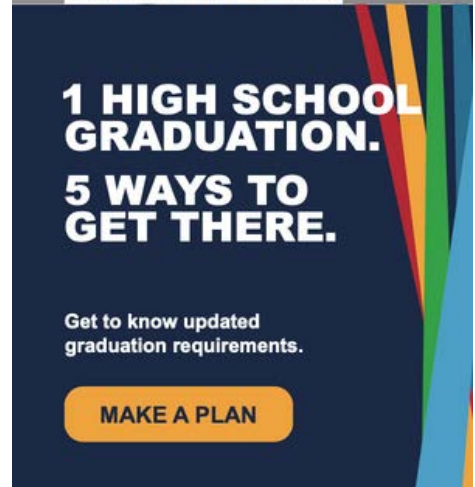
SCAN TO LEARN MORE



**BUS SHELTER AD**



**GAS STATION TV AD**



**DIGITAL DISPLAY BANNER ADS**

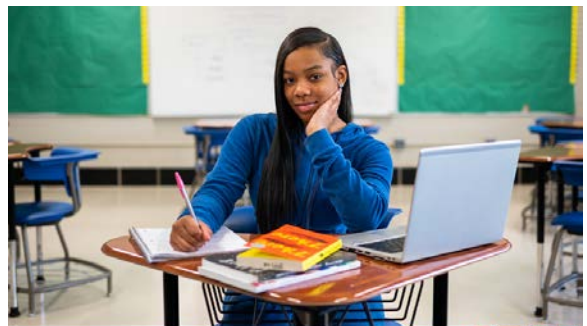
## SOCIAL MEDIA



**1 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.  
5 WAYS TO GET THERE.**



**1 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.  
5 WAYS TO GET THERE.**



**1 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.  
5 WAYS TO GET THERE.**



# DIRECT MAIL BROCHURES

**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA**

## Checklist

This checklist, which highlights the School District of Philadelphia's high school graduation requirements, can help you keep track of your child's progress toward graduation.

### 3 Core Graduation Requirements

- Earn 23.5 credits in key subject areas:**
  - 4 in English (one per year)
  - 3 in Mathematics
  - 3 in Science
  - 3 in Social Studies
  - 1 in African American History
  - 2 in World Language
  - 2 in Arts and Humanities
  - 1 in Physical Education
  - 0.5 in Health
  - 4 in Electives\*
- Complete a multi-disciplinary or service learning project**
  - A short-term project, under the guidance of school personnel, that addresses real-world community or school needs
- Meet the criteria for ONE of five Pathways to Graduation:**
  - Pathway 1: Keystone Proficiency
  - Pathway 2: Keystone Composite
  - Pathway 3: Career & Technical Education Concentrator
  - Pathway 4: Alternative Assessment
  - Pathway 5: Evidence-Based Pathways

### Additional Requirements

**For Students in a Dual Enrollment Program only:**

- Attend all dual enrollment classes
- Satisfactory completion of all dual enrollment courses

**For Students in a Career & Technical Education Program only:**

- Satisfactory completion of the program including the attainment of all required credits

### Dates to Know:

- Report Card Conferences March 29-31
- ACT Registration Deadlines:
  - March 10 (for April test)
  - May 5 (for June test)
  - June 16 (for July test)
- SAT Registration Deadlines:
  - April 7 (for May test)
  - May 4 (for June test)
- IB Exam: April 27 - May 19
- Advanced Placement Exams: May 1-12
- Interim Report Cards:
  - Feb 27 - March 1
  - May 8-10
- Keystone Exams: May 15-26

Visit [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate) for details, resources and contact information for general questions. For specific questions regarding your child, contact the Main Office at your child's school and request a conference.





## 7 Things You Can Do to Support Your Child's Pathway to Graduation

No matter your child's age, it is never too early to start supporting their path towards graduation. Here's what you can do:

- 1. Support Regular Attendance in School**  
Attending school every day, on time is one of the most important ways to help your child perform on grade level and graduate on time.  
Having challenges with your child's attendance? Reach out to your child's principal or teachers. They can help.
- 2. Know the Graduation Requirements**
  - earn 23.5 credits in key content areas,
  - complete a multidisciplinary or service learning project,
  - meet one of five Pathways to Graduation that give you the flexibility to find the right path for you.
  - students in a Dual Enrollment Program must also attend and successfully complete all dual enrollment courses.
  - students in a Career & Technical Education Program must also successfully complete the program, including the attainment of all required credits.
- 3. Create A Graduation Plan with Your Child**  
Find Questions to Consider When Creating a Graduation Plan and other helpful resources about service learning projects, Check and Reflect Reports for grades 6-12, dual enrollment programs, Keystone Exams and much more in the Resources section at [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate).  
In middle school? Use our High School Directory at [bit.ly/SDPHSDirectory](http://bit.ly/SDPHSDirectory) to start exploring schools that meet your interests and needs. And learn about our more than 40 Career and Technical Education programs at [philasd.org/cte](http://philasd.org/cte).
- 4. Explore Academic, Enrichment & Career Opportunities**  
Advanced placement courses, internships, extra-curricular programs, summer programs, tutoring and more are available to support your child's successful journey to and after graduation. Click on the Enrichment Opportunities section at [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate) to learn more.
- 5. Check Your Parent Portal Account Often**  
It's the best way to monitor your child's progress, grades, attendance and more.  
Don't have a Parent Portal Account? Need resources to better navigate the portal? Visit [philasd.org/ppportal](http://philasd.org/ppportal) to register and find helpful resources on how to use the portal, whether your child is in high school or in grades K-8.
- 6. Attend Report Card Conferences**  
These are opportunities to have deeper conversations with teachers and other staff about your child's progress. Upcoming conference dates: March 29-31, 2023.
- 7. Ask Questions**  
If you have questions about your child's progress, reach out to their school's main office directly and request a conference. Find other contact information at [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate).

**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** Visit [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate) for more information.



## Own Your Pathway to Graduation

No matter your child's age, it is never too early to know what your child needs to graduate high school, and to start creating a graduation plan. And with new graduation pathways that give you more options and flexibility, your pathway to graduation is exactly that – YOURS.



**Get started today!**  
Go to [philasd.org/graduate](http://philasd.org/graduate) to learn more & access resources to create your graduation plan now.





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Additionally, to empower our student ambassadors to inspire and share their graduation pathway stories directly with other high school students and their families, Brownstone PR hosted fifteen community activations across the city in partnership with Brown's ShopRite, The Fashion District, and DTLR LLC. In addition to one-on-one engagement opportunities with our student ambassadors and representatives from SDP's Office of Family and Community Engagement, each activation event featured an online tool that allowed students to explore each of the five new graduation pathways and discover how well they meet the criteria for each. These engagements occurred on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from mid April through May 2023.

Actively engaging our school leaders, Board of Education, local and state government officials, faith leaders and other community influencers was also a core part of the engagement strategy. Each received a campaign toolkit with talking points, presentation slides, and other helpful communication resources that made it easy for them to serve as ambassadors to drive awareness, and support and encourage the students in their communities and networks along their graduation pathways.

# RESULTS

In total, the campaign achieved:

- **51 million** total impressions
- **47,000 unique webpage visitors**  
[philasd.org/graduate](https://philasd.org/graduate)
- **1,100** live, one-on-one student ambassador interactions across 15 community outreach activations.

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All of this amplified awareness among our target audiences and contributed to moving the District from about **40%** of 12th graders on track to graduate on time to **86%** of SDP 12th graders on track to graduate on time (as of June 2023).

**40%** → **86%**