

# WEARINESS

# AND HOPE

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or many school districts across the country, the 2022–23 school year began with news accounts reflecting both weariness and hope. Weariness as some remnants of the COVID-19 pandemic remained, even while schools relaxed mask mandates and resumed classes and school activities as normally as possible. Weariness as once again too many students returned to the classroom traumatized by violence in their communities or the residual effects of school violence earlier in the year. Weariness as some teachers left the profession burned out by past demands of the pandemic and present demands of school officials and community members seeking changes that many claim have upended previous approaches to educational inclusion.

But there also were stories of hope. Hope that often comes with each new school year when everyone — from students to teachers to administrators — can have a fresh start and focus more on the future rather than dwelling on the past. Hope that the page had turned on the pandemic even as debates lingered as to whether the health crisis was actually over. And hope that somehow, despite all the challenges, there would be children who would learn, grow and thrive, not just survive, through 2023 and beyond.

That weariness and hope is reflected in the Pittsburgh region where school officials and community leaders geared up to get the school year on track after two long years of living with restrictions and loss. In the pages that follow are examples of initiatives aimed at supporting students who are trying to readjust to their schools and neighborhoods as the pandemic wanes and violence persists. The full impact of these efforts remains to be seen, but the commitment of those involved provide that important ingredient — hope.