

CHARTER LEADERS OF COLOR **MATTER.**

Chase Patterson

CEO

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I grew up in a mostly white, blue color community outside of downtown Pittsburgh, but I always felt accepted. I wish I could describe the pain and shock I felt when my grandfather recounted the early morning of August 22, 1975, when he discovered a partially burned cross in the rear yard of, he and my grandmother's home. As the first Black family in their neighborhood, my grandparents and their children, were subjected to racial slurs and death threats. But, in spite of that, they didn't run or hide, instead, like so many Black families then and now, they made sure that my mother and uncles understood what was happening around them and why, but also that they attended and graduated from the best schools. This is my family's story, and although I've seen this city change over the years, the one thing that remains constant is the distinct divide between Black and White children.

My life's trajectory has taken me through the business world and brought back to what I consider as a major part of my foundation – education. As a Black man and now, father, I want our children in Pittsburgh to have access to a high-quality educational system that responds to their current needs, and not those from 20 years ago.

Recently, Pittsburgh was voted the worst city for Black families to live. The worst city. Imagine how it feels as a Black family to live in a city that is clearly not set up for you to thrive. Now imagine a school system that is designed to do the same. What you are imagining right now is the reality for many Black families across this country who are in schools and education systems that were not created for them.

THE UA WAY

Urban Academy is the oldest public charter school in Pittsburgh. We are very proud of that. We have a waiting list for every grade because we're at full capacity. That has never been the case for us. We serve students from very poor populations in this city; however, when they walk into our school and down our hallways they are reminded of their greatness. They hear mantras that affirm their Blackness, such as "if it's about white privilege out there, it's going to be about Black empowerment in here." For us, that means providing six years of exclusive experiences for our children to be around Black people, Black leaders, and Black culture as we create an environment for them that is culturally-relevant and built intentionally with their growth in mind. They see Black art on the walls, in their classrooms, and in my office. We have a wall display dedicated to the Divine 9 Black fraternities and sororities because we want them to know what's possible.

I want an educational system in Pittsburgh that is fair. I want to help build a system that starts provides support early for those who are least advantaged and may not have access to high-quality educational options. Every student deserves a chance to learn with teachers and school staff who believe in each child's growth. It's what we do at Urban Prep. That's our formula for success.

We created a robust STREAM (Science, Technology, Robotics, Engineering, Arts, Math) program where mostly everything is project-based. We have a science lab and virtual-reality goggles, 3D printers, where students are mimicking the art of Romare Bearden, and other local artists. We create our curriculum and instruction modules in a way that every teacher is required to infuse STREAM into their daily lessons. We do all of this because I believe at the end of it all, when our students are facing challenges – be it on a standardized test or in life – we would have equipped them with strategies that allow them relevant to them and who they are. And our third and fifth graders are consistently outperforming their peers across Pittsburgh in both ELA and Math.

WHY OUR VOICES MATTER

For me, I want to help change the place in the public education system where charter leaders of color are placed. We are leading the change we seek in our communities. We could do more if only given the chance. Just as I believe children should be given an equal playing field, I also believe charter leaders of color should be as well.

Urban Academy of Greater Pittsburgh

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| Location | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Year Opened | 1998 |
| Student enrollment | 322 |
| Grades served | K-5 |
| Website | www.urbanacademypgh.org |



Student Demographics

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|---------------------------------|-------|
| Black/African-American | 96% |
| Native American/ Alaskan Native | 1% |
| Two or More Races | 3% |
| Homeless Youth | 12% |
| At Risk Students | 61% |
| Students with Exceptionalities | 10.9% |