

QUARTERLY REPORT

DECEMBER, 2017

LAWRENCE WRIGHT, DEPUTY
SUPERINTENDENT OF
ADMINISTRATION

QUARTERLY REPORT

PATH FORWARD

PHASE I: DATA GATHERING

(Demographics team) In July 2017, a Demographics Work Team of RCSD staff was formed to examine a range of demographic and enrollment data. This resulting Demographic Report is intended for internal review with the aim of strategically informing the Path Forward Plan's comprehensive efforts. The Report examines key factors that may affect District enrollment. Some of these factors include the population/age/race structure of Rochester's overall population, the number of District students classified as Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English Language Learner (ELL), the number of Pre-K seats needed, and the effect of charter school growth. Important data sets used in this Report include census information, District enrollment, neighborhood boundaries, and student placement zones/geocodes.

THE REPORT DETAILS SEVERAL FINDINGS THAT AFFECT CURRENT AND FUTURE USE OF DISTRICT FACILITIES:

- Charter schools draw significant numbers of school-age children away from District schools.
- Despite the expansion of Pre-K seats, overall enrollment has declined mainly due to significant drops in middle- and high-school enrollment, likely reflecting a pattern of families exiting the city or leaving District schools once children complete elementary grades.
- Reduced birth rates, shrinking city population, and changing age structures are slowing the natural growth of student enrollment.
- Student residence shows visible racial segregation between Black and Latino students and White students.
- The demand for ELL programs and services has increased due to the growth in Hispanic population and new immigrant students.
- The number of SWD students has increased proportionally and in absolute terms, which has necessitated an increase in classroom space needed and impacted school seat availability.
- School placement boundaries (geocodes and zones) are not well aligned with corresponding school building locations and seat capacity.
- The number of schools available in each of the four city quadrants does not seem to align well with the concentration of student population in respective areas, especially in the northwest quadrant.
- Public libraries and city recreation centers are not well positioned to serve the areas where RCSD students are most heavily concentrated, particularly in the city's northeast and southeast quadrants.
- There is a marked difference between the demographic makeup of the City of Rochester and that of the District's school-age children.
- Rochester's population continues to decline, including within the age groups that impact Pre-K-12 enrollment.

This Report provides reliable projections of student enrollment, including specified sub-groups, out to a ten-year horizon. **The Report predicts that the overall student population of the District will decrease**

steadily over the next ten years. The rate of decrease varies by grade level. SWD and ELL enrollments are projected to increase in absolute terms and as a percentage of total enrollment.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

EMMA/Beechwood
Neighborhood Association

TRANSPORTATION/SCHOOL CHOICE

Neighborhood schools, Shorter bus rides, Transportation for less than 1.5 miles, Hybrid model: Neighborhood & Choice, Equall schools & programs, Less transportation changes, Explore less expensive alternatives, Feeder between School 33 & East to Build Community Culture



ACADEMICS/SCHOOL CHOICE

Offer career pathways, Are all student needs being met?, Expand TLI program to other schools, Create atmosphere of self-advocacy, Parent choice



RACIAL EQUITY/SCHOOLCULTURE

Need teachers of color, Create friendly and welcoming environment, Cultural disconnect between parents and teachers, School lunches not culturally sensitive or healthy, Need anti-racism Professional Learning, Lack of diversity curriculum not supportive of pan-African culture, Student-centered learning, Morning welcome to start the day, Make reading fun, Build culture of learning.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

21st-century learning, Hands-on learning, Expanded learning, Skill-based job prep, Community Partnerships apprenticeship, Retrofit school for digital technology, Professional speakers, Summer jobs, Local business partnerships, Community help with bullying, Vocational exploration, co-op programs, More reading teachers, Jobs in the school.



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PATH FORWARD TOWN HALL

On October 5, we held a town hall of Central Office staff to ask questions about our schools and District.

WHAT WE LEARNED...

64%

Of the Central Office staff surveyed agreed that all students should have a school within walking distance of their home.



SCHOOL CLIMATE

77%

Of the Central Office staff surveyed agrees that there is a positive climate in our schools.



100% AGREED

Flexible spaces, good lighting, comfortable seating, technology and classrooms equipped with strong technology should be a priority for the District.



100
LIKES

69%

WELCOME

Of the Central Office staff surveyed said they believe parents and community members felt welcome in our schools and offices.

WE NEED YOU!

Join the conversation!
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PHASE II: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



As part of Path Forward, our ambassadors have conducted 46 engagements (through December 1, 2017). Some were large group engagements, and others were small school/community conversations. While we continue to analyze the information from these scheduled engagements, certain themes have clearly emerged in our feedback.

(Luticha Doucette, Analysis of quadrant engagements, City of Rochester) Overall, the discussions at each quadrant meeting was engaging, full of candor, and straightforward. Attendance was low due to lack of proper timely advertising for the events as well as the constraints of working families, especially in the NW quadrant. Parental attendance was low, which will be addressed in the next phase of Path Forward. Essential themes arose out of the community engagements—these themes and how the city can address some of these areas of opportunity are discussed below.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questions for the conversations were based around several topic areas as defined by the Path Forward team. These topic areas were pulled from past climate surveys and the 100-day listening tour to address ERICA. Furthermore, this was refined by matching the topic areas to the strategic visioning process done by each quadrant as described above. The exact same questions were given at each session to provide consistency of data. All data was gathered on flip charts. Unfortunately, demographic data was not obtained but could be extracted for the Student Summit and Phyllis Wheatley sessions. Frequency was done manually as well as with the software Envivo, and results were consistent with each other.

RACIAL EQUITY/SCHOOL CULTURE

Of all topics, racial equity showed up in many other topic areas. Overall, community members felt that there was a disconnect with the predominantly White teacher and staff body to the predominantly Black student/parental body. Indeed, 77% of the CO staff surveyed felt that there is a positive climate in the schools while community members nearly unanimously stated that they felt unwelcome and that there was intense racial bias. To achieve racial parity, the community wanted to employ more teachers of color, either homegrown, nationally, or pulling from the recent crisis in Puerto Rico, or have a requirement that teachers live/do community work in the community where they teach. Students felt that racial inequity led to poorer outcomes for students.

These anecdotes are supported by national and local studies, such as the recent report on Black boys being more likely to be labeled as disabled and the inequities within Special Education in Rochester. Another local study on suspension rates also reflected a racial bias. Nationally, several studies show that racial inequity leads to poorer outcomes for minority students. Furthermore, nationally there is a split in perception on racism, with whites not thinking it is an issue and minorities saying it is an issue. Community members also felt that current curriculum is not culturally relevant and wanted more racial equity professional development. Cultural relevance and cultural competency tied into a positive school culture.

Just like any community, they want schools to be warm, positive environments. To achieve this end, community members wanted a stronger focus on restorative justice practices and cultural competency, as well as having parent rooms that provide supports for parents and not just students.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This category was a bit ambiguous for community members. The main consensus showed that this is extremely school dependent and principal dependent. A great principal is able to create opportunities for community involvement both inside and outside of the school. High turnover of principals, however, means relationships within the community are unstable, which, in turn, leads to the dissolution of programs perceived as beneficial.

Overall, there was a sense of creating more access to jobs and high-level coursework (college courses, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, etc.) and schools being flexible to students who have jobs, reducing barriers to transportation and training opportunities.

ACADEMICS

Academics was another strong topic. There was a universal call for “old school” instruction, teaching not just the basics but how to learn/think critically. There was a universal call for vocational training

and statements such as “make Edison what it was again” as well as expanding East. Another notable mention was how the turnover of teachers within the District waters down quality of instruction, especially in specialized schools such as Montessori. Those new teachers are not trained in the Montessori method or training is delayed, so quality of instruction goes down as well as the reputation/good word of the District.

Across the board, adult learning and expanded learning in the summer and afterschool were wanted. This also went hand-in-hand with the community involvement portion, as community members want a mixture of District and community opportunities.

SCHOOL CHOICE

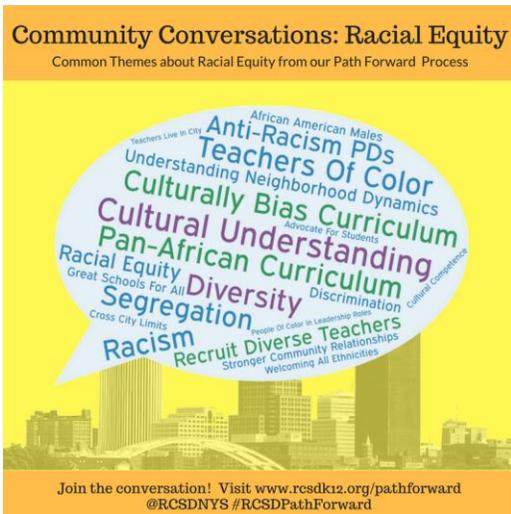
“Everyone wants a neighborhood school until it’s the neighborhood you don’t want” is the best summation of this topic. While there was a strong call for community schools, there was more talk about the issues with the managed-choice system. All found it to be confusing, or as one person put it “a disaster” and questioned if the system was doing what it was designed to do. Many felt there are a lack of ways to navigate the system properly, and they were not making informed choices.



Many stated that the transportation system was used as a form of babysitting, especially when a school started later than the time a parent needed to be at work. That gap of before school care and after school care programs.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement events highlighted some glaring issues within our organization, but more poignantly, it highlighted a community that is eager for actual change that will support quality educational opportunities for our children. In order for Path Forward to succeed, it must not only deliver on instructional portion, but also on the “invisible” aspects of education—reducing turnover, becoming more culturally proactive, retaining talent that is there to help mold and guide students, and providing clear communication throughout.



RACIAL EQUITY

Our District has created a Racial Equity Advocacy and Leadership (REAL) team that has committed to delivering a racial equity action plan before the end of the school year (in draft form). The team is comprised of school officials, clergy, and other community members. We have been meeting on a monthly basis.

To date, the team has agreed on meeting norms and is working to finalize a process and focus for completing the racial equity plan. We will be working the New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA), who is supporting racial equity work nationally, on this endeavor. We have agreed to pilot their research-based racial equity tool(s) and receive free consultant support from Harvard-

trained consultants. The NYCLA District-Level Equity Diagnostic has been designed to support strategic planning with a focus on equity. After looking at data in multiple areas, we will prioritize areas for greater research and determine the action steps that will have the greatest leverage in both the short and long term.

The charge of our team is as follows:

- Identify opportunities for partnerships with organizations in Rochester to co-sponsor Professional Learning
- Review existing policies, programs, and professional learning to ensure an understanding and use of racial equity analysis tools
- Review equity policies, goals, strategies, and measures to help inform and eliminate racial predictability and disproportionality in student achievement (e.g., disproportionate over-application of discipline to students of color, over-representation in special education, and under-representation in advanced learning programs)
- Actively work to ensure that Human Resource policies, goals, and strategies promote a workforce that reflects the diversity of our student body
- Promote leadership opportunities for students to develop agency (the capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative)

The REAL Team will meet every fourth Tuesday of the month; the dates are as follows:

10/24/2017

11/28/2017

01/23/2018

02/27/2018

03/27/208

04/24/2018

05/22/2018

06/26/2018

COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT PLANS

(Communications team) As a part of the 100-day listening and learning process, Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams coached project teams in five focus areas, provided research expertise, and supported development of their plans. The Communications and Engagement project team report provided recommendations in six areas to help strengthen communication, engagement, and customer service. Below are the updates on each of these recommendations.

THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE

Student Summit on the Path Forward and the future of education in Rochester

Discussions about
EQUITY



STUDENTS WANT

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL
MORE RESOURCES TEACHERS WHO GREW UP
LIKE THEM SAFE PLACES TO TALK ABOUT THEIR
FEELINGS THEIR HISTORY BEING IMPLEMENTED
IN THEIR STUDIES TO NOT BE STEREOTYPED
EQUAL DRESS CODES FOR ALL THEIR CULTURE
REPRESENTED IN THEIR SCHOOL TEACHERS
FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS LESS SELF
SEGREGATION AMONG STUDENTS MORE
DISCUSSION ABOUT RACE AND CULTURE TO
NOT HAVE THEIR INTELLIGENCE OR BEAUTY
JUDGED BY THEIR RACE BETTER SUPPORTS FOR
ELEMENTARY YOUTH TO END GAPS AND
DISPARITIES MORE EVENTS TO DISCUSS RACIAL
EQUITY MORE DIVERSITY ON WHOM IS CHOSEN
TO LEAD IN CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS LESS
DIVISION BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE
STUDENTS MORE DIVERSITY IN AP AND
ADVANCED COURSES TO FEEL ACCEPTED FOR
BEING SMART OR DIFFERENT TO NOT BE TOLD
THEY WILL NEVER ATTEND COLLEGE MORE
SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ STUDENT COMMUNITY TO
BE CALLED OUT FOR DOING WELL AND NOT FOR
BEING BAD TO BE TREATED THE SAME TO
UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
EQUITY AND EQUALITY

THEIR VOICES TO BE HEARD.

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Expand utilization of existing tools by improving processes and practices.

- Engaged and communicated with families using initiatives that align with the six National PTA Standards:
 - Hired new Executive Director and Director in the Office of Parent Engagement
 - Using different communication methods (i.e. Constant Contact) to reach out to parents
 - Path Forward Student Summit
 - Path Forward Engagements with parents, students, and community members
 - Path Forward Engagements with Bilingual Education Council and the Parent Advisory Council
- Improved electronic communication with parents, students, staff, and community members (including email, social media, and smartphone apps):
 - RCSLink app is in full use with parents—over 400 were signed up at the Start Strong event
 - Communications has been establishing schools with their own social media presence, which allows them to connect with parents in other avenues (Facebook, Twitter)
 - District Briefs to communicate significant news internally
 - Communications is in the process of upgrading all school and Central Office department websites
- Equalized two-way communication to maximize engagement by implementing formal channels for feedback and suggestions:
 - At Your Service phone line and newly launched Let's Talk app allow parents, students, and community members to engage with the District to address their concerns
 - Active presence on Facebook (at the District and school levels) has allowed parents and/or concerned parties to reach out with questions
- Established a regular practice of collecting parental email addresses at all District and school events to build a comprehensive database that allows targeted communication by grade level and school:
 - The Office of Parent Engagement will be collecting parent emails and using their Constant Contact system in order to send out direct messages to parents
- Expanded use of text messaging through Blackboard Connect automated calling:
 - Text messaging in Blackboard Connect will be operational in December 2018 with the new i5connect system

- Employed technology to encourage online engagement opportunities, such as we chat “office hours,” Twitter town halls, Facebook live chat, and telephone town halls:
 - Utilize Facebook chat to address issues with parents and members of the community
 - Newly implemented Let’s Talk app
 - Telephone town halls are still in the planning stages and have not been implemented yet

Develop strategies and toolkits to address the mixed satisfaction ratings between schools and Central Office.

- Identify and celebrate bright spots of excellence in school communication and customer service:
 - Shared in monthly Board of Education meeting presentations
 - Showcased on websites in the RCSD Headlines section
 - Ongoing media advisories
 - Good News Digest (internal audience)
- Development of toolkits to make excellent customer service routine in interactions with internal and external constituents:
 - Further training surrounding excellent customer service is yet to be realized and is highly recommended with first-line supervisory focus

Engage students, parents, and staff to develop comprehensive and inclusive policies and regulations on social media and student cell-phone use.

- Social media policy, which includes student cell-phone use, is in review with IM&T.
- IM&T is working to determine guidelines that will allow and promote student cell-phone use with instruction in order to access District services.

Provide coordinated support to partners.

- The District is continuing to look at ways to cultivate new partnerships that align with District priorities and communicate consistently with partners through a single point of contact.

Improve communication and engagement on controversial or complex issues by adapting the multi-faceted approach employed by the City of Rochester, which includes facilitated forums, “telephone town halls,” and online surveys.

- Current efforts on the Path Forward Plan include a multi-faceted approach to solicit feedback from internal and external stakeholders.
- The Path Forward Plan will be a dynamic and strategic framework to ensure coherence between educational programs in the schools, grade-level configurations, grade-level enrollments, 21st century school facilities, and long-range planning.
- The District has been engaging the community in a multi-faceted approach—community forums, tabletop talks, and online surveys—and hope to use telephone town halls in the near future.

Initiate an ongoing process to review communication and customer-service satisfaction levels among stakeholders so that we can assess progress and areas for improvement.

- Changes in leadership continue to be an organizational concern related to effective communication and customer service.
- It is suggested that a comprehensive communications strategy be created and implemented.
- In conjunction with the Office of Parent Engagement and IM&T, a comprehensive assessment process needs to be created and implemented Districtwide.