We Will Treat Every Child Like One of Our Own

The State of Our Schools

Rochester City School District
Bolgen Vargas, Superintendent of Schools
August 7, 2014
To provide a quality education that ensures our students graduate with the skills to be successful in the global economy.

We know that every child has the desire and potential to succeed. We cannot provide all of our students a stable home or supportive neighborhood. But we can provide schools where they are surrounded by caring adults who give them the time, love, and support they need. We will treat every child like one of our own.
All Children Can Succeed If We Give Them The Time and Support They Need

A Focused Theory of Action for Student Success

- Close opportunity gap
  - Quality early education
  - More instructional time
  - Social-emotional supports in multiple places
  - Better technology in classroom
  - Additional services through community partners

- Provide middle-class opportunities
  - Rigorous curriculum
  - Access to textbooks
  - Excellent instruction
  - CTE programs
  - Positive engagement: Arts, music, sports, extracurricular activities, AP courses

- Reduce interventions
  - Misbehavior
  - Special education
  - Truancy
  - Retention
  - Dropout

- Improve outcomes
  - Achievement scores
  - Graduation rates
  - College and career readiness

- Stabilize finances
  - Stem enrollment loss
  - Reduce charter expansion
  - Attract new families (e.g., RCSD staff)

We must use our resources to mitigate the impacts of poverty and provide our students the opportunities that middle-class families take for granted.
Many Efforts To Improve Since the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Rochester Reform Agenda</td>
<td>• Lack of stability for students, families, staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Middle schools, thematic schools, small schools, K-8 and 7-12 models</td>
<td>• 22% enrollment decline in 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 6 ELA curricula in 12 years</td>
<td>• 13% of K-12 students attend charter schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lowest achievement scores and graduation rates in New York State</td>
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# Portfolio of Schools Overview: 2011-12

## New Schools & Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School / Program</th>
<th>Area Of Focus</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Leadership Academy for Young Men</td>
<td>All-Male School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4115 Lake Ave. Co-location with Charlotte High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester International Academy</td>
<td>English Language Learners, Refugee/Newcomers</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>1 Edgerton Park Co-location with Jefferson High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Walter Cooper Academy School #10</td>
<td>Expeditionary Learning</td>
<td>K-4</td>
<td>353 Congress Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Arts and Technology High School</td>
<td>Expeditionary Learning</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>950 Norton St. Co-located at Franklin Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard Collegiate High School</td>
<td>College Board</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>655 Colfax St. Co-located at Edison Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester STEM High School</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>200 Genesee St. Co-located at Wilson Foundation Acad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Brown High School of Construction and Design</td>
<td>Construction and Design with UNICON</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester Early College International High School</td>
<td>Early College Model with Asia Society, MCC and SSFC</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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## Redesign Schools: By Program / Configuration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School / Program</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World of Inquiry School #58</td>
<td>K-9</td>
<td>200 University Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School #19</td>
<td>Pre K-8</td>
<td>465 Seward St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast College Preparatory High School</td>
<td>College Board</td>
<td>940 Fernwood Park at Douglass Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest College Preparatory High School</td>
<td>College Board</td>
<td>940 Fernwood Park at Douglass Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Freddie Thomas High School</td>
<td>Montessori, redesigning to grades PreK-8</td>
<td>1801 E. Main St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte High School</td>
<td>National Academy Foundation, redesigning to grades 9-12</td>
<td>4115 Lake Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East High School</td>
<td>Small Learning Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Redesign Schools: K-8 Grow Outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School / Program</th>
<th>PreK-7 Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roberto Clemente School #8</td>
<td>1180 St. Paul St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrico Fermi School #17</td>
<td>158 Orchard St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Williams School #5</td>
<td>555 Plymouth Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary McLeod Bathune School #45</td>
<td>1445 Clifford Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adlai E. Stevenson School #19</td>
<td>88 Kirkland Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mather Forbes School #4</td>
<td>198 Dr. Samuel McCree Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Watton Spencer School #16</td>
<td>321 Post Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Park School #44</td>
<td>810 Chili Ave.</td>
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</table>

## Schools Phasing Out

- Thomas Jefferson High School 1 Edgerton Park
- Chester Dewey School #14 353 Congress Ave. - Closed
- Bioscience and Health Careers High School at Franklin 950 Norton St.
- Global Media Arts High School at Franklin 950 Norton St.
- International Finance Career High School at Franklin 950 Norton St.
- School of Engineering and Manufacturing at Edison 655 Colfax St.
- School of Applied Technology at Edison 655 Colfax St.
- School of Imaging and Information Technology at Edison 655 Colfax St.
- School of Business, Finance, and Entrepreneurship at Edison 655 Colfax St.

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35 Schools in Transition in 2011
Why Didn’t Past Efforts Succeed?

- Fundamental record-keeping functions were inaccurate
  - Attendance, student schedules, other student and staff records
- Budget process was undisciplined, with resources inefficiently allocated
  - New structures and programs added to structural gaps
- Instructional time did not expand to support new approaches
- Lack of focus on fundamentals—attendance, literacy, numeracy
- The District attempted to drive student achievement alone
  - Parents weren’t required to help
  - Outside vendors were not well managed; volunteers were not welcomed
- Inflexible bureaucracy
- Revolving door leadership – 7 Superintendents in 25 years

Changing school structure did not improve organization culture
Where We Stood in May 2011

• **Student Achievement:** Painfully and unacceptably low

• **Instructional Time:** Our children had the least of any students in Monroe County, among the lowest nationwide

• **Record Keeping:** More than 500 children who had moved away or dropped out were listed as active students
  - 457 ineligible people were receiving health benefits, at a cost of 1.4 million each year

• **Budget:** A gap of $76 million, 804 layoffs announced, deficits projected to grow annually

• **Tenure:** Recommendations were sent to the Superintendent and Board with multiple missing evaluations

• **Support for Schools:** Title I fund allocations were not available to Principals until November
Where We Stood in May 2011

• **Compensation**: The Superintendent’s Employee Group had unlimited vacation cash-out, $0 contribution to health plan

• **Textbooks**: Tens of thousands sat unused in school basements, while students routinely lacked needed texts each fall

• **Support for Families**: I had the best parking spot at Central Office, while parents paid to park on the street
  – Many schools opened each fall without parent orientations
  – Student Placement was in an unwelcoming, hard to find location and a number-one source of parent complaints

• **Union Relationships**: Protests and disagreements with the Superintendent distracted many from their work
We Are Changing Our District’s Trajectory With Clear and Consistent Priorities

Success requires us to have focus, discipline, and accountability.

- Student Achievement and Growth
- Effective, Efficient Allocation of Resources
- Communications and Customer Service
- Parent, Family, and Community Involvement
- Management Systems
Changing Trajectory – We Have Accomplished Much

• Students no longer receive the least instructional time
  – No early dismissal Wednesdays, 10 expanded-learning schools, 15 others offer students extra time and support

• Closed $136 million in budget gaps while increasing stability
  – $46 million in budget efficiencies
  – Minimal layoffs, eliminated phase-in phase-out schools

• Provided more support to students

- 18% Music teachers
- 43% Art teachers
- 16% Reading teachers (from 0)
- 26% Sports programs
- 9% Social workers
- 23% Librarians
Changing Trajectory – We Have Accomplished Much

- Addressed the fundamentals with three academic priorities
  - Reading on grade level by 3rd grade
  - More and better learning time
  - Instructional excellence
- Schools, family, and community engaged in attendance and literacy
- Modernization of 11 buildings complete or underway, with $435 million approved for up to 25 new projects and a District technology upgrade
- Implemented APPR and increased rigor of tenure reviews
- Tutoring services are more efficient and effective
  - Serving more than twice as many students while saving $1.3 million per year and assessing results
- Parent parking and school orientation events at every school
  - Establishing a norm to provide student schedules before the first day of school
- Placement moved to Central Office, satisfaction > 90%
- Title I funds are allocated to schools in August
We Have Closed the Opportunity Gap For the Youngest Children in Our Schools

- No district in Monroe County offers children more opportunities for Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and summer learning
- We are on a path to provide art, music, sports, AP courses, and extra-curricular activities at levels that rival other districts
We Cannot Do It Alone
Thank You for Supporting Our Students

And our many community-based organizations and volunteers
There is an Elephant in the Room!

ASAR: 'No confidence' in Bolgen Vargas

Nearly 90 percent of principals and administrators in the Rochester School District have expressed no confidence in the leadership of Superintendent Bolgen Vargas, their union president announced Monday.
Resistance to Change Threatens Our Trajectory and the Stability of Our District

- Contracts I inherited do not allow me to adjust school schedules by even a few minutes
- Administrative contracts require extra pay for working on snow or cold-weather days, proctoring tests, and additional school time
- Assignments to summer-school programs are resisted by 12-month employees
- Through protests and union grievances, the Superintendent is pressured
  - Not to assign Principals to programs such as All City High, Rochester International Academy, and Young Mothers Academy
  - Not to replace Principals at schools showing no progress or worsening outcomes
- 86% tenure approval rating is viewed as radical and confrontational
- Proposals to reduce vacation cash-out policies that cost millions are refused
For the sake of our children and the future of this District, we need to move past the current environment of conflict and mistrust. I appreciate the challenges we all face, especially in a time of increased federal and state regulation with historically low student achievement. I will continue to work with all of our bargaining units to address legitimate issues and concerns. But I cannot compromise the interests of our students and families to serve the sole interests of the administrators’ union.
Our District is at a Critical Moment
Our District is at a Critical Moment

Continued disagreements among adults

More disruption in the lives of our children

Another lost generation

Focus and finish on the District’s priorities

Close the opportunity gap

Raise our children up
Let Us Move Past Our Disagreements to Help Our Children Succeed

- Lowest achievement in New York State
- >30% enrollment in Charter Schools
- Large number of schools closed
- Annual staff cuts > 5%

- 95% attendance
- 60% proficiency in third grade reading, math and ELA
- 70% graduation rate
- Stable enrollment
- Neighborhood schools that families want to choose

2017-18
Why Did Past Efforts Not Succeed?

Outside Help Will Speed Our Progress

SUNY

BOCES

Other EPOs

U of R

Teacher-led Schools
Our District is Ready to Rise

- Pre-K registration is at record levels, with 90% full-day seats
- Every student had reading opportunities this summer
  - Pre-K to 3 students received more than 70,000 books
- Exceptional new leaders have joined our team
- New attendance campaign will raise awareness and community support
- Pupil Personnel Services will boost social and emotional support for students
- New Chief will strengthen career learning and technical education
- We are improving special education services
- More than 20 schools offer additional learning time

We are closing the opportunity gap
Our District is Ready to Rise

• East High School is on track to be managed by the University of Rochester

• We are continuing to expand art, music, sports, and extra-curricular activities
  – Citywide marching band and chorus this year
  – Expanded football and lacrosse
  – Support for mentoring opportunities

• All City High provides an alternative path to graduation for students who need extra flexibility and support

• New student achievement data will be released later this month
This week, two District schools have qualified for removal from state Priority status.

This proves that we are able to change our trajectory.

George Mather Forbes School No. 4

Joseph C. Wilson High School
If We Work Together, Our District Will Rise

**Central Office**
- Treat every child like one of your own
- Be open to change – more flexible and responsive to children, families, teachers, and principals

**Principals, Teachers and School Staff**
- Treat every child like one of your own
- Accept that we must change if we expect to improve

**Students**
- Attend school, behave properly, complete your classwork

**Parents**
- Insist on these ABC’s

**Community**
- Volunteer, mentor one child, or support our schools in other ways
Together, We Will Rise Again

Reversing 25-plus years of decline takes time. But we are on the right path with proven, common-sense educational priorities that address the fundamental needs of our children, families and staff.

Let us work together to improve our District. If we treat every child like one of our own, success for our students is inevitable.
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