

ORIGINAL DRAFT
Recommendations to Ensure
RCSD Student Success
by
Rochester Coalition for Public Education,
Great Schools for All,
and
The South West Common Council Education Committee

The Rochester Coalition for Public Education, Great Schools for All organizations and the South West Common Council Education Committee support the following recommendations to help Rochester City School District students reach their potentials as scholars and citizens. We base our recommendations on volumes of research that stipulate that the major factor involved in inequitable academic and social-emotional growth and development of urban students is the historical impact of institutional racism that has led to separate and unequal school districts, poverty, family dysfunction and student trauma. Other research strongly concludes that state “take-overs” of public school districts do not lead to student progress improvement and that many of the keys to any urban education improvement coincide with those that we are recommending (see attached bibliography.)

1. We urge the Chancellor, Board of Regents and Commissioner, with RCSD BoE input, appoint for a period of two years, two “education facilitators,” (with preferred local education experience):

- An urban-experienced, educator, with skills in research-based curriculum development, pedagogy, assessment, group process and providing services to combat poverty and trauma and
- An educator/administrator with financial planning skills and experience.

These facilitators would also assist the RCSD Superintendent and RCSD BoE in achieving the following goals:

2. Creating and modeling with volunteer parents, parent advocates and concerned citizens, a new BoE policy that emphasizes the development of meaningful parent partnerships in all schools and with all BoE committees.

3. Requiring the Superintendent, in consultation with the New York State Education Commissioner, to convert all schools identified as “comprehensive support and improvement schools” to community schools, with funding from New York State; with a specific focus on providing services to those students and families experiencing trauma from poverty-related conditions. To that end, the 1.5 mile minimum busing requirement in New York State’s busing reimbursement formula will be waved to allow parents the ability to choose safe busing for their child to their neighborhood school. This encourages participation in their child’s school. This is vital for regular neighborhood schools and community schools alike. Given the level of poverty in Rochester and the poor state of public transportation many parents do not have the transportation means to go to their child’s school if it is over 1.5 miles to their child’s school.

4. Collaboratively creating, with the assistance of the Advisory Council (#9), RTA, ASAR, and BENTE, a policy and plan for eliminating all RCSD institutional and personal racism, sexism, homophobia and religious intolerance.

5. Creating a BoE Advisory Board, consisting of students, parents, teachers, administrators, university/college of education professors, and other human development and health experts who would meet monthly with the BoE to:

a) Present and encourage valid education “best practice” for use in the RCSD, (e.g. collaborating with local higher education representatives for agreement on changes needed to prepare teachers and administrators for employment in the RCSD, starting times for schools, intrinsic motivation, etc.), the Syracuse “Beard School” model, and “learner-centered” teaching methodologies.

b) Encourage community engagement for creating proposals for innovative schools and programs for more effectively meeting the needs of RCSD students, by providing new, “best-practice” learning opportunities to those parents and students seeking creative alternatives to the traditional education system.

c) The Advisory Board membership would consist of 2 students selected by student members of the Student Advisory Board, 2 parents democratically selected by the RCSD Parent Advisory Council, 2 teachers from RTA, 2 administrators from ASAR, a faculty member from each of the following local college and university education departments (Brockport, University of Rochester, St. John Fisher, Nazareth, Roberts Wesleyan, Rochester Institute of Technology SUNY Geneseo and MCC), 2 human development experts from the Children’s Agenda and 2 members of the Monroe County Social Services Dept, who focus on public and mental health, and 2 appointees by the Rochester Mayor.

d) Agenda priorities will be determined jointly, by this Advisory Board, the Superintendent and BoE members

6. Establish an Early Literacy Policy and Practice Council (ELPPC) PreK - Third Grade led by a nationally recognized early literacy expert. The ELPPC would include the Executive Director of Early Childhood, elementary principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers. The Council would be responsible for developing and implementing the research-based early literacy standards, curriculum, instructional practices, accountability measures, and teacher development necessary to construct clarity of purpose and a shared vision for early literacy education. The Early Literacy Policy and Practice Council would report directly to the Superintendent.

7. Assisting the superintendent in assembling suburban superintendents ready to work with RCSD to consider developing one or more pilot inter-district magnet schools aimed at easing the effects of concentrated poverty in city schools. These schools would offer unique programming that no individual district can offer and would be intentionally integrated (with an approximate 50-50 mix of low and middle-income students). The schools would be jointly administered by the

participating districts, and where possible would be housed in existing school spaces and staffed by teachers and administrators working for the participating districts. Participation would be voluntary—on the part of the districts and families—but there should be state incentives and assistance in developing these schools, which reflect the policy of State Ed and the Regents—to promote integration as a key strategy for improving educational outcomes that is consistent with years of extensive national research.

The planning and development of inter-district integrated schools should take place simultaneously with the enactment of other important reforms aimed at improving RCSD internal functions related to organizational and management structure, budgeting, curriculum, and internal culture.

8. Achieving NYS funding and variances to develop and implement alternatives to:

- The current student/teacher classroom ratio,
- High-stakes standardized testing, grades 9-12 Regents Exams, Next Generation and Common Core Exams and standards,
- Current K-12 curricula to one that is more relevant and intrinsically motivating for students to develop skills and knowledge needed to survive and function effectively and responsibly in our society, and
- The current “one-size-fits-all” Regents diploma track, to one that includes:
 - A high standards, real-world oriented Vocational Diploma,
 - A diploma modeled after the NYS Performance Standards Consortium diploma requirements,
 - A Special Needs Diploma that incorporates a major emphasis on real-world social/emotional skills, values and understandings, and
- The current inadequate requirements for “New English Language Learners” with the support systems they need to learn English through responsible, best-practice, research-based methods, and earn a diploma in any of the above diploma areas.

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