

READY

for Quality Schools

**A THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC APPROACH TO IMPROVE
PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ROCHESTER (2023 – 2025)**

FROM THE FELLOW

We know it intuitively, and research backs it up: education is the gateway to better life outcomes and a major driver of a strong economy.¹

The Rochester Education Fellowship was established with the core belief that all children need and deserve access to a great school.

The two-year fellowship, which began September 2021, has provided me the opportunity to engage hundreds of Rochesterians to understand the strengths and challenges of our public school system. Over the past year as the Rochester Education Fellow, I have heard Rochesterians cry out for more and better educational options. Our families want to know about the current state of our schools, our children want teachers and leaders who value them and their lived experiences, our educators want to have greater impact and appreciation for their dedication to our children, and we all want to see our values and concerns echoed in policy and legislative reforms aimed at increasing the achievement and outcomes of our students.

OUR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN VISION: EVERY STUDENT IN ROCHESTER HAS ACCESS TO A GREAT SCHOOL – A SCHOOL IN WHICH EVERY EDUCATOR HAS HIGH ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS FOR EVERY STUDENT, THE POWER OF PARENTS IS ACTIVATED, AND EVERY STUDENT FEELS SUPPORTED TO MEET THEIR COLLEGE OR CAREER GOALS.

It is estimated that only 10% of our city's K-12 students attend a quality school in Rochester, which is less than 3,000 children. In other words, the overwhelming majority of Rochester's children are attending a school that consistently performs below statewide averages across multiple measures including student proficiency in English and math, performance on Regents exams, graduation rates, student absenteeism, and teacher certification.

We have an uphill battle. The city of Rochester ranks third poorest among the country's 75 largest metropolitan areas with the third-highest concentration of impoverished residents at 31% and a devastating child poverty rate of 48%.² The prevalence of poverty contributes to a high crime rate, alarming high school dropout rate, and tragic infant mortality rate. Our reality makes the stakes so much higher to provide our city's children with the educational opportunities to break generational trends, forge futures of financial security, and reinvest in Rochester.

School district leaders, legislators, and local nonprofit organizations have made attempts for decades to address poverty as an impediment to education. While all of this work is critical to

¹ Sudderth, Anna. "How Important is Education for Economic Growth?" XQ. April 7, 2022.

² ACT Rochester. U.S. Census Data Show Rochester Poverty Rate, Child Poverty Rate Decreases. December 11, 2020.

supporting families and children, it has been focused on individual pieces of the puzzle without a cohesive vision and plan to address *systemic* inequities in the K-12 education system in Rochester.

The energy and drive for change is here in Rochester. Families are demanding educational options, as evidenced by the growth of the local charter school sector. Community initiatives that value the voice of parents³ are engaging families as advocates for changes in local policy. The state of our public education system and our city's viability are intertwined and require local government officials, business leaders, and religious leaders to pay attention to the outcomes of Rochester's schools.

Rochester is READY for a sustained, coordinated, and focused effort to ensure that our shared vision becomes a reality.

As a parent myself, a graduate of the Rochester City School District, and having worked in the district and local schools for years, I care deeply about the future of our city. In this report, I lay out a plan, grounded in the community conversations I have had over the last year, that will build the capacity and knowledge base of parents to fight for quality schools, support and reward excellent educators, incentivize the best and brightest to enter the classroom, and make sure we are pursuing every possible pathway to improve and start new quality schools.

Listening to our students, families, and educators, I see the need for a new organization – neutral, non-governmental, and non-profit – to advance our community-driven public education strategy. To be effective, this organization would learn from and pay homage to the past, leverage current reform efforts, and execute a new plan to grow and support great schools in our city.

This entity, **READY** (Rochester Education And Development for Youth), will work alongside a broad base of stakeholders and be laser-focused on ensuring all children in the city of Rochester have access to great schools. In the short term, we will invest in a comprehensive, citywide strategy to launch and sustain great schools. In the long-term, we will provide stability through leadership and governance transitions, making sustainable, systemic change in our community possible.

Shanai Lee, MBA, EdD
Rochester Education Fellow



³ When the term 'parent' is used in this report, it is done so in a fully inclusive sense to indicate those with a parental role in relation to the child(ren), embracing kinship, foster, and other caretakers.

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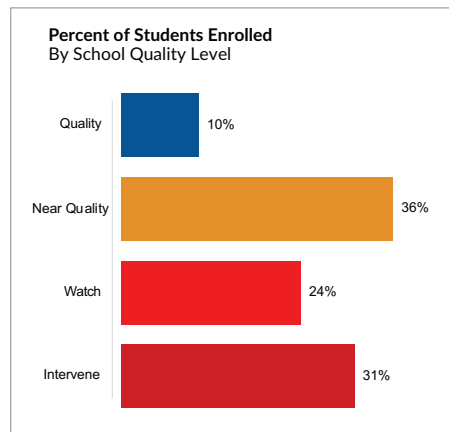
OUR CHALLENGE

Parents need more accurate information on school quality.

Total Public School Enrollment	Public School Outcomes (2019) ⁴
27,973 students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students with Disabilities (SWD): 18.7% ■ English Language Learners (ELL): 13.2% ■ Economically Disadvantaged: 89% 	Math 3–8 Proficiency: 17.4% ELA 3–8 Proficiency: 16.8% Students chronically absent: 46.3% Regents Diploma Attainment: 68% Regents with Advanced Designation Attainment: 9%

Source: New York State Education Department, *New York State School Report Cards (2019)*.

The New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) school accountability system identifies schools in need of significant support. According to NYSED, 67% of Rochester schools are in “good standing,” yet fewer than 1 in 5 students in grades 3–8 were proficient in math or reading in 2019.⁵ To get us closer to a school rating system that aligns “quality” to what parents want for their children, READY developed a more rigorous school quality measure that compares each school in Rochester to schools across the state. This new measure uses the same publicly available data as the NYSED accountability system, but sets a higher bar for quality (see Appendix for further detail on the School Performance Framework and quality definitions).



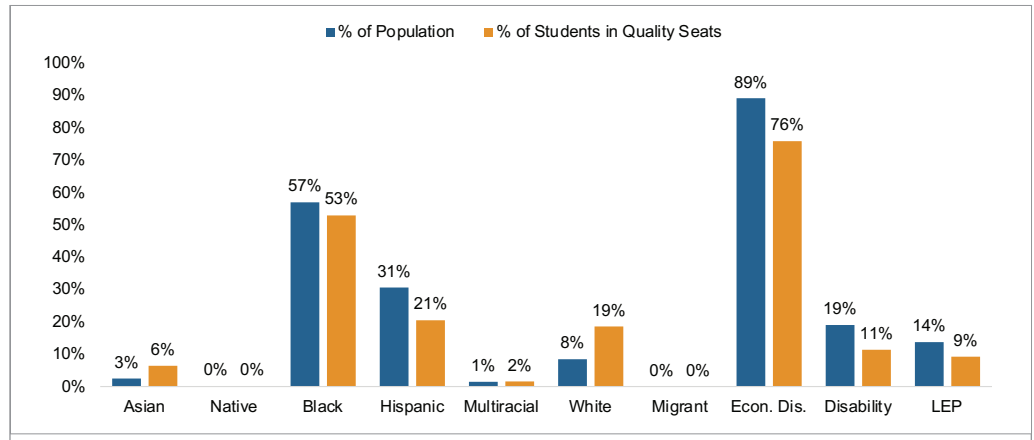
The READY school performance framework uses an “index” method to combine multiple measures of school performance into a single, categorical quality designation.

Using our more rigorous school quality measure, currently just 1 in 10 Rochester students is enrolled in a quality school, or one that consistently performs above the statewide average across multiple measures.

Only five schools in Rochester serving 2,855 children meet the quality bar. More than ninety percent of Rochester’s children attend schools that fail to prepare them for college, career, and life.

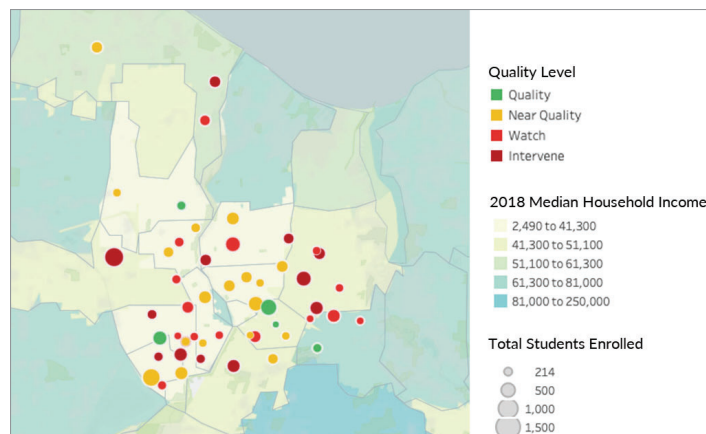
⁴ Combined for all public schools, including RCSD and charter schools serving students residing within the city of Rochester.

⁵ New York State Education Department. Report Card Database (data.nysed.gov/downloads.php). Retrieved July 26, 2022.



Black and Hispanic students as well as low-income students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency are all disproportionately under-enrolled in quality schools citywide.

Historically underserved students have disproportionately lower access to quality schools. As shown in the graph above, while only 8% of the student population is white, white students represent 19% of enrollment at quality schools. In contrast, Black students make up 57% of the student population but only represent 53% of students attending a quality school. Similarly, Hispanic students make up 31% of the student population, but only represent 21% of students attending a quality school.



Three of five quality schools are located in the East Avenue area and in zip codes with relatively higher median income than most schools citywide.

WE MUST TAKE A TARGETED APPROACH TO INCREASING THE NUMBER OF HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

Even with a more rigorous quality measure, we recognize that this alternative rating is not sufficient to fully capture other elements of great schools, such as school culture and climate, including the diversity or cultural competency of educators. Despite the data's limitations there is no disputing the fact that the vast majority of Rochester schools are not preparing our most vulnerable children to be successful in college, career, and life.

WE WILL SUSTAINABLY TRANSFORM
PUBLIC EDUCATION BY
ACTIVATING FAMILIES, EDUCATORS,
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND
IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE
STRATEGY TO ENSURE ALL
STUDENTS THRIVE IN ROCHESTER.

READY'S THEORY OF CHANGE

At READY, we will work to **triple the percentage of students enrolled in quality schools over the next ten years**, increasing enrollment from 2,855 to more than 7,500 students in Rochester's quality schools. But a narrow focus on creating and improving schools alone will not be enough to sustain success. We must build a robust ecosystem of support around schools with informed and engaged families, diverse and effective talent, and a supportive policy landscape.

READY will strategically phase in these bodies of work alongside direct school investments, starting immediately with efforts to activate and mobilize families and build sustainable educator pipelines that are responsive to the needs of our school systems. The following plan articulates our strategic goals, prioritized initiatives, measures of success, and three-year targets.



OUR SOLUTIONS

READY will focus on four strategic goals in its first three years. All goals and objectives are aligned with the community-driven priorities and focus areas articulated in *Our Schools, Our Vision*.

- 1. Parent Power:** Engage and inform families to accelerate and sustain Rochester's educational improvement efforts
- 2. Talent Pipelines:** Develop a sustainable pipeline of educators to serve students in Rochester, with an emphasis on educators of color and educators with local ties
- 3. Supportive Policy:** Champion policies that promote equity and support the growth and sustainability of great schools
- 4. Great Schools:** Invest in the growth of quality schools that reflect what parents want for their children

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: PARENT POWER

Engage and inform families to accelerate and sustain Rochester's educational improvement efforts

As referenced above, parents do not have clear information about the state of public education in Rochester: data that is presented from the state and district is hard to access and difficult to understand how it relates to their child. READY believes that with the right information and tools, parents can and should be partners in decision making at both the school and education system levels. Parents should also be partners in defining what school quality means- including what a positive school environment looks and feels like, and how schools prepare their children to excel in subject matter, think critically, and achieve bright futures. READY will fill a much needed gap in educating parents on data, informing them of quality school models across the state and country, getting their input on the future of education in Rochester, and training them in organizing and advocacy to make our vision a reality.

"As currently configured, education reform's roots may be shallow...leaving parents and community members with the feeling...that education reform has been done not with, but to them...no such movement can succeed without the support and engagement of its intended beneficiaries."

Dr. Michael L. Lomax, President & CEO, UNCF. Excerpt from: Bridges, B.K., Awokoya, J.T., & Messano, F. (2012). *Done to Us, Not With Us: African American Parent Perceptions of K-12 Education*. Washington, DC: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, UNCF.

Launch Year	Initiative	Outcome Measures	Achievements by 2025
2023	1.1) Develop a "School Finder" which will provide centralized, easy-to-understand data about all of Rochester's public schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on school guide Web traffic for online School Finder Participation in school selection processes Reported understanding of school options and how to exercise school choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch pilot "school guide" version of School Finder Increase availability and depth of information on the quality of schools in Rochester Launch beta online School Finder
2023	1.2) Launch pilot READY Parent "Fellowship" to educate and inform parents on school quality and build leaders for education organizing and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> READY Fellowship participation Reported satisfaction in Fellowship program Reported impact of Fellowship (e.g. ability to understand/assess school quality data, navigate the school systems in Rochester, and participate in civic change) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-10 READY Fellowship participants per year Build a base of 20-30 informed and trained parent organizers and advocates
2023	1.3) Create and maintain consistent engagement with a Parent Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> READY's strategic decisions informed by parents with diverse lived experiences from across the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of 12 parents for READY Parent Advisory Council Regular meetings with Advisory Council from across Rochester who have children in all school sectors
2024	1.4) Support existing initiatives that empower and engage parents of children enrolled in all school types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of engagement touchpoints, leadership development and advocacy opportunities for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing family engagement and advocacy opportunities that build the skills and leadership capacity of parents and families in the education space

Initiative Detail

1.1) Develop a "School Finder" which will provide centralized, easy-to-understand data about all of Rochester's public schools

In a city with a broad portfolio of public education options, a coordinated and simple tool to get information about schools and school selection is essential for ease and access. By providing families with an accessible, easy-to-understand knowledge base about public school options, Rochester's school selection and enrollment processes will be more equitable.

Over the next three years, READY will develop a "School Finder" tool to support parents in exploring school options and selecting schools that are the best fit for their children. READY will begin by engaging families in the design of a transparent, parent-driven school rating system to anchor the development of the School Finder.

1.2) Launch pilot “READY Parent Fellowship” to build leaders for education organizing and advocacy

READY will develop a program that builds the knowledge base and skills of parents with students in Rochester’s public schools to organize on education issues. The program will build a growing community of parents who are informed about the state of public education in Rochester, the data on local school options, and the process of navigating the enrollment systems. Program participants will build advocacy and organizing skills to fight for the changes that parents in Rochester want to see in their children’s schools and across the district. Whereas existing programs in Rochester build parent knowledge of broad civic engagement, the READY Parent Fellowship will focus specifically on the education system.

1.3) Create and maintain consistent engagement with a READY Parent Advisory Council

All of READY’s strategic decisions will be rooted in the vision of Rochester parents. Just as our community-driven vision and this strategic plan are informed by a year’s worth of parent engagement, our work will evolve over time based on the ongoing input of our Parent Advisory Council to keep us connected to what parents want and need for their children’s education.

1.4) Support existing initiatives that empower and engage parents of children enrolled in all school types

Supporting parents in all aspects of their child’s education journey is critical to the improvement of the education system as a whole. A robust ecosystem of organizations serving parents along different parts of that journey is necessary in order to reach families all across Rochester. READY believes that partnership and collaboration among organizations and initiatives supporting parents in Rochester will ensure that diverse parent voices and needs are amplified to drive Rochester’s educational improvement efforts.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: TALENT PIPELINES

Develop a sustainable pipeline of educators to serve students in Rochester, with an emphasis on educators of color and educators with local ties

“It’s really important that students have people who reflect back to them their language, their culture, their ethnicity, their religion. It doesn’t mean all the people in their lives have to do that mirroring, but they should have some.”

Sarah Leibel, Lecturer on Education and Master Teacher in Residence, Harvard Teacher Fellows Program

Research is clear that the quality of a teacher is the single most important school-based determinant in student learning. Parents want to see more educators that reflect the racial identity and lived experiences of their children – educators that recognize, understand, and value their whole child.

While talent initiatives have been tried over the years, there has never been a citywide effort, leveraging existing partnerships, to attract, develop, support, and retain aspiring and talented educators to schools of all sectors.

To meet our 10-year goal of tripling the number of students with access to quality schools, READY estimates that Rochester schools will need as many as 580 highly-effective teachers and 40 highly-effective school leaders.⁶ Given the opportunity gaps for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL), as evidenced by academic performance data, we must also concentrate efforts on sourcing special education (SPED) and ELL teachers.

We have an opportunity to connect the need for great educators to a post-secondary, workforce development focus for young adults in Rochester. With a wealth of colleges and universities in our backyard, and talented students seeking stable career pathways, we must not only recruit talent from outside Rochester, but invest in a homegrown strategy, lifting up and strengthening our community in the process.

During our engagement process, we heard from current educators that bright spots are often overlooked due to the bleak overall picture of education in Rochester. We must do better to publicly recognize, appreciate, and reward the great work of educators in our city who are supporting our children to achieve academically.

"If we're talking about getting connected and want more teachers of color, we have to make students and college students believe they can teach effectively... I don't know if anyone says 'You would be a good teacher.' I don't know if there is any encouragement or outreach for these students that outline the steps to take...There are a lot of students that don't know what they want."

Rochester Teacher Candidate

⁶ Based on the assumption that 20 schools will be created or transformed, requiring a minimum of approximately 40 highly effective school leaders and 580 teachers. This assumes two administrators per building, a 20:1 student-teacher ratio and an 85% annual retention rate for both teachers and leaders, consistent with data reported by NYSED.

Launch Year	Initiative	Outcome Measures	Achievements by 2025
2024	2.1) Create a pilot program to provide high school students with opportunities to explore careers in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of high school students served Number of high school students who report plans to enter a teacher certification program or teaching/ school-based position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 25 high school students placed in summer learning/working opportunities
2024	2.2) Recognize and reward exceptional educators in the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of teachers recognized for exceptional performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly recognize and reward up to eight excellent educators
2025	2.3) Engage partner organizations to create educator pipelines, with a focus on increasing the number and effectiveness of special education and bilingual teachers, as well as supporting and developing existing educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of organization(s) or leaders to develop talent pipeline and support existing educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and invest in partnerships to develop a talent pipeline Identify and invest in partnerships to support and develop existing educators

Initiative Detail

2.1) Develop a citywide initiative to provide high school students with opportunities to explore careers in teaching

READY will take an innovative approach to developing a sustainable pipeline for effective educators by launching an initiative to recruit and incentivize Black and Latinx high schoolers in grades 11 and 12 to pursue careers in teaching. READY will partner with local schools, colleges and universities, and youth development programs to pilot a program for career coaching, mentorship, and hands-on teaching experience, as well as support with scholarships for teacher certification programs.

2.2) Recognize and reward extraordinary teachers

In order to attract and retain excellent educators, we must recognize and reward extraordinary teaching. Over the next three years, READY will partner with district and charter schools to identify and celebrate the city's most effective educators. On an annual cycle, READY and its partners will identify four teachers, representing all public school sectors, as recipients of a citywide performance-based award.

2.3) Engage partner organizations to create new pipelines of educators, with a focus on increasing the number and effectiveness of special education and bilingual teachers, as well as supporting and developing existing educators

READY will engage organizations that recruit and train diverse, talented educators for hard-to-staff positions, such as those serving students with disabilities and bilingual learners, for district and charter schools. Additional support is also needed to offer high-quality professional development to existing teachers and leaders. READY will partner with schools to coordinate services that meet their needs for educator development.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: SUPPORTIVE POLICY

Champion policies that promote equity and support the growth and sustainability of great schools

“Who governs? Do administrator actions coincide with citizen preferences? Who has access to modify the governance, under what conditions, and “how”? If those are the critical questions, it seems likely that once the public knows, it can redefine the needs that they want the school system to meet.”

Kirst, M. and Wirt, F., (2009) The Political Dynamics of American Education (fourth edition). Richmond, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

There must be a level playing field for all schools to launch and thrive; policy is a key lever to ensure equitable funding and accountability across the public school sector. While READY’s immediate priorities are to engage and organize families and develop talent pipelines, the organization will lay the foundation to execute a policy agenda in Year 3 and beyond. During the initial three years, READY will conduct a comprehensive analysis of New York’s legislative landscape. At the same time, READY will be building partnerships with parents and advocacy groups to understand key issues and concerns. Alongside parents and informed by the policy landscape analysis, READY will draft a strategic policy platform.

Launch Year	Initiative	Outcome Measures	Achievements by 2025
2023	3.1) Commission a detailed study on policy barriers and current bills under consideration in the legislature, including a landscape analysis of local and state advocacy partners working on key priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of the policy context in Rochester and New York state to inform policy agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete comprehensive analysis of past and current legislative issues impacting public schools in New York Draft READY policy priorities
2024	3.2) Partner with statewide education organizations to advocate for policy conditions in the best interest of children and families in Rochester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific policy, procedural, and legislative wins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join at least two local/ regional/state coalitions to achieve specific community-centered policy wins

Initiative Detail

3.1) Commission a detailed study on policy barriers and current bills under consideration in the legislature, including a landscape analysis of local and state advocacy partners working on key priorities

Policies impacting Rochester's schools are dictated by local, state, and federal agencies. While policymakers at all levels are increasingly recognizing the linkage between education and other social issues (e.g. crime, health, workforce development etc.), legislative barriers limit Rochester's ability to address failing schools. READY will commission a comprehensive policy scan to understand the full context of local and state policies related to education, including any upcoming political windows of opportunity for key bills. We will also gain an understanding of the organizations and coalitions that are collaborating on education policy issues, how they are engaging parents, and whether there are any gaps that READY can and should fill. With this information, READY and our parent partners will design a policy platform to guide our advocacy work in the years to come.

3.2) Partner with statewide education organizations to advocate for policy conditions in the best interest of children and families in Rochester

In addition to building and engaging a local coalition of support, READY will partner with statewide education organizations to advocate for policy conditions in the best interests of Rochester students. Areas of focus could include the state's academic standards, the long-term financial structure of public education, policy changes to promote equity and access for students with disabilities and bilingual learners, alternative education programs, teacher credentialing, and charter regulations.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: GREAT SCHOOLS

Invest in the growth of quality schools that reflect what parents want for their children

"As parents we want what's best for our children and having the choice of where our children can grow and learn is most important. Whether it's an environment that provides exploratory learning, or offers culturally relevant instruction, or simply fosters strong character building. All of these represent a snapshot of the possibilities that should be provided in a high performing public school system."

Rochester Parent

No matter how you cut the data, the vast majority of schools in Rochester are struggling to prepare students for college, career, and life. Rochester cannot afford to lose another generation of children in subpar schools. Through the

constant leadership shifts at the district and ever-changing strategic priorities, READY will provide a steady and consistent voice for quality schools and execute a plan to grow and sustain them. All school pathways will be needed to achieve our 10-year goal of tripling the number of students with access to a quality school. Over the next three years, READY anticipates the addition of approximately 250 quality school seats across the city based on approved growth plans and development of new quality schools. Given that the other strategic priority areas will lay the foundation for school investments to be successful, new seats will ramp up more quickly after Year 3.

We will learn from what works locally and across the country and pursue every possible pathway desired by Rochester parents to increase the number of quality school seats accessible to our children. In the near-term, READY will support existing quality schools to grow, maximize their enrollment, and invest in near quality schools that demonstrate high potential for improvement. In the longer term, READY will invest in partnerships to recruit and incubate new school leaders and operators.

In addition to increasing the number of quality K-12 public schools overall, our engagement process revealed a great need to maximize the impact of Rochester’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. There are over 50 early childhood programs at schools and community-based organizations designed to prepare children for kindergarten in Rochester, but we lack a common vision and definition of what kindergarten readiness means.

Launch Year	Initiative	Outcome Measures	Achievements by 2025
2023	4.1) Support existing quality schools in advancing growth plans and maximizing enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new quality seats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60+ additional quality seats
2024	4.2) Promote the development of new quality school seats through all available pathways guided by community centered design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new quality seats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 190+ new quality seats
2024	4.3) Catalyze a citywide effort to improve pre-kindergarten outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common vision and standards for kindergarten readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of an advisory council to develop a common vision for kindergarten readiness

Initiative Detail

4.1) Support existing quality schools in advancing growth plans and maximizing enrollment

READY's north star is advancing the growth of quality schools. During the next three years READY will partner with quality schools to identify gaps and invest resources to maximize student enrollment. Some of the growth will be realized in high-performing charter schools that are not yet at scale and have plans to add grades and/or launch new campuses. Pending the district's grade reconfiguration strategy, additional seats may be added at quality district schools as well. In addition, there may be room to increase enrollment at quality schools depending on building capacity. Potential investments could include support on recruitment strategy and funding courtesy bus routes.

4.2) Promote the development of new quality seats through all available pathways guided by community-centered design

To achieve our goal of tripling the number of students in quality seats by 2033, we will explore every possible pathway. In all of our work to grow and launch great schools, we will be guided by community-centered school design to make sure that new school decisions reflect what parents want for their children. In addition to maximizing growth and enrollment at existing quality schools, pathways may include:

- Innovation and improvement of near quality schools
- Recruiting new school operators
- Incubating proven or high-potential leaders to start new schools

According to our analysis, the largest share of seats in Rochester (36%) currently fall into the "near quality" tier, including seats from both the district and charter sectors. Acknowledging the difficulty of school improvement, READY will take a strategic approach to supporting these schools, starting with those that have the greatest potential. READY will reference historical data trends, existing school practices, and leadership at each school to build a full picture of performance and potential for improvement at these schools.

We hope to partner with the district to pursue innovative pathways to school improvement to unite in our shared goals for a high-quality education for all children in Rochester. READY will also recruit nonprofit organizations to start new schools that reflect the types of schools that parents want for their children in Rochester. Lastly, READY will identify and partner with a school incubator which will support educators, from any sector, to work with the community to envision new school options.

A critical part of Rochester's education reforms to date has been a focus on the availability of quality *neighborhood* seats, grounded in the belief that a quality neighborhood option should be among the choices a parent can consider when selecting the school that is the best fit for their child. This is especially important in Rochester, where safety and transportation are significant challenges for families. We will keep that focus at the center when collaborating with parents on our schools strategy.

4.3) Catalyze a citywide effort to improve pre-kindergarten outcomes

Learning during a child's earliest years provides persistent boosts in social-emotional skills and increased cognitive readiness for kindergarten. In Rochester, we have a variety of early childhood education (ECE) options and operators, including the traditional school district, community-based organizations, and private providers, with approximately 2,800 seats. The city's pre-kindergarten enrollment rate is healthy and state funding for the programs is strong, creating an opportunity to ensure that our youngest learners develop foundational skills before entering kindergarten. Unfortunately, the ECE space in Rochester has not coalesced around a common vision or standards for kindergarten readiness, missing an opportunity to maximize the impact of pre-K in Rochester. In the next three years, READY will support the ECE sector to articulate a common, citywide vision for kindergarten readiness and identify supports that would help the sector achieve its full potential for preparing our youngest learners.

WE ARE READY

In September 2021, the Rochester Education Fellowship emerged with the ambitious goal of developing a common vision for transforming public education in our community. What surfaced was a community-driven vision to strengthen and support Rochester's public education landscape. In partnership with informed families and community stakeholders, READY will align resources, manage execution of this plan, and monitor progress toward meeting our shared goals. We will build an effective organization that is viable for the long term with a strong team and governing board that reflects our diverse community, and efficient organizational systems and processes. In the spirit of transparency, we will share regular updates with the community on our progress, challenges, and ways to get involved.


Rochester, together we can create a public education system that we are proud of and that our children deserve. **We have no time to waste. We are READY!**

Are you READY? Join the movement!

TIMELINE

Below is a high level timeline of the actions that will be taken over the next three years to achieve the strategic priorities and goals of READY.

STRATEGY	INITIATIVE	2023				2024				2025			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Parent Power	1.1) Develop a "School Finder" which will provide centralized, easy-to-understand data about all of Rochester's public schools	■	■										
	1.2) Launch pilot READY Parent "Fellowship" to educate and inform parents on school quality and build leaders for education organizing and advocacy			■				■				■	
	1.3) Create and maintain consistent engagement with a Parent Advisory Council			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	1.4) Support existing initiatives that empower and engage parents of all school types					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Talent Pipelines	2.1) Create a pilot program to provide high school students with opportunities to explore careers in teaching							■					
	2.2) Recognize and reward exceptional educators in the city							■				■	
	2.3) Engage partner organizations to create educator pipelines, with a focus on increasing the number and effectiveness of special education and bilingual teachers, as well as supporting and developing existing educators									■	■	■	■
Supportive Policy	3.1) Commission a detailed study on policy barriers and current bills under consideration in the legislature, including a landscape analysis of local and state advocacy partners working on key priorities	■	■										
	3.2) Partner with statewide education organizations to advocate for policy conditions in the best interest of children and families in Rochester					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Great Schools	4.1) Support existing quality schools in advancing growth plans and maximizing enrollment			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	4.2) Promote the development of new quality school seats through all available pathways guided by community-centered design							■	■	■	■	■	■
	4.3) Catalyze a citywide effort to improve pre-kindergarten outcomes							■	■				



ANCHORED IN COMMUNITY
VOICES, READY WILL CLOSE THE
GAP EXISTING BETWEEN QUALITY
SCHOOLS AND THE CHILDREN
WHO NEED THEM.

APPENDIX

READY SCHOOL QUALITY MEASURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

Parents and families in Rochester want schools that provide opportunities for students to succeed in college, career, and life. But how do we know what schools in Rochester meet that bar?

The New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) school accountability system identifies schools in need of significant support. NYSED issues a “Good Standing” designation as a default accountability designation for any school that does not show high performance/progress and that is not identified as low performing (CSI, TSI, or Receivership). According to NYSED, 67% of Rochester schools are in “good standing,” **yet fewer than 1 in 5 students in grades 3-8 were proficient in math or reading in 2019**. The current accountability system applies a rating of “good standing” to schools across a wide spectrum of performance and quality. This confusing and conflicting information does a disservice to parents and families in Rochester who want and deserve a more robust understanding of the quality of education their child is receiving.

To get us closer to a school rating system that aligns “quality” to what parents and families want for their children, we need rigorous school quality measures that compare each school to schools across the state. READY’s new measure uses the same publicly available data as the NYSED accountability system, but sets a higher bar for quality.

School Performance Framework: Measures used in revised school quality rating and percent of overall score, by school type

Metric	Elementary + middle schools	High schools	K-12 schools (combined)
% of students proficient in ELA, grades 3-8	20%		5%
% of students proficient in math, grades 3-8	20%		5%
% of students proficient on Regents assessments		40%	20%
Median growth percentile, ELA and math combined	40%		10%
% of students graduating in 4 years		25%	25%
% of students graduating in 5 years		5%	5%
% of graduates with Regents advanced diploma		10%	10%
% of students not chronically absent	10%	10%	10%
% of teachers certified	10%	10%	10%

This school performance framework uses an "index" method to combine multiple measures of school performance into a single, categorical quality designation. All data are sourced from NYSED's downloadable Report Card database.



Assigning schools to a “framework”

Each unique school entity receives one quality designation, so long as it has enough data available to achieve 50 possible points. Each entity is assigned to either an ES (elementary school)/MS (middle school) framework or a HS (high school) framework based on NYSED’s designations which are based on its grade configuration. However, NYSED issues separate accountability ratings to schools that have both ES/MS and HS grades; this quality rating places those schools into the HS framework for evaluation. The two frameworks, ES/MS and HS, have different measures and weights, as well as different floors and targets based on statewide performance for schools within that grade configuration.

Setting cut scores

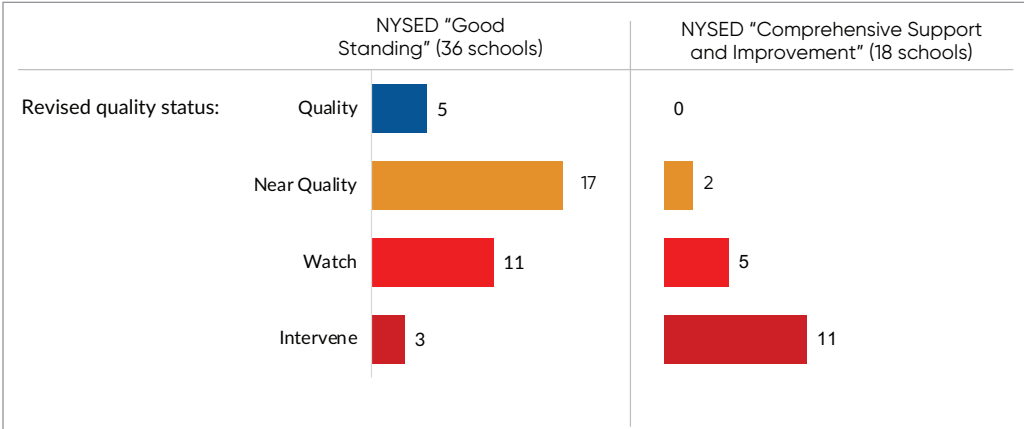
The “quality” cut score is set at 50% of points earned. Because the floors and targets are defaulted to the statewide 25th and 75th percentiles, this means that if a school is scoring at or above the statewide average for a measure, it is considered quality. A school scoring beneath the 25th percentile is automatically in the lowest category, as it will earn 0% of possible points because all floors are currently set at the statewide 25th percentile.

Setting weights for disadvantaged subgroups

The current system gives 70% of a school’s overall rating to its “all students” group (i.e., all students in the school). The remaining 30% is based on how historically disadvantaged subgroups (Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, and English Language Learners) student populations perform relative to the statewide all students average.

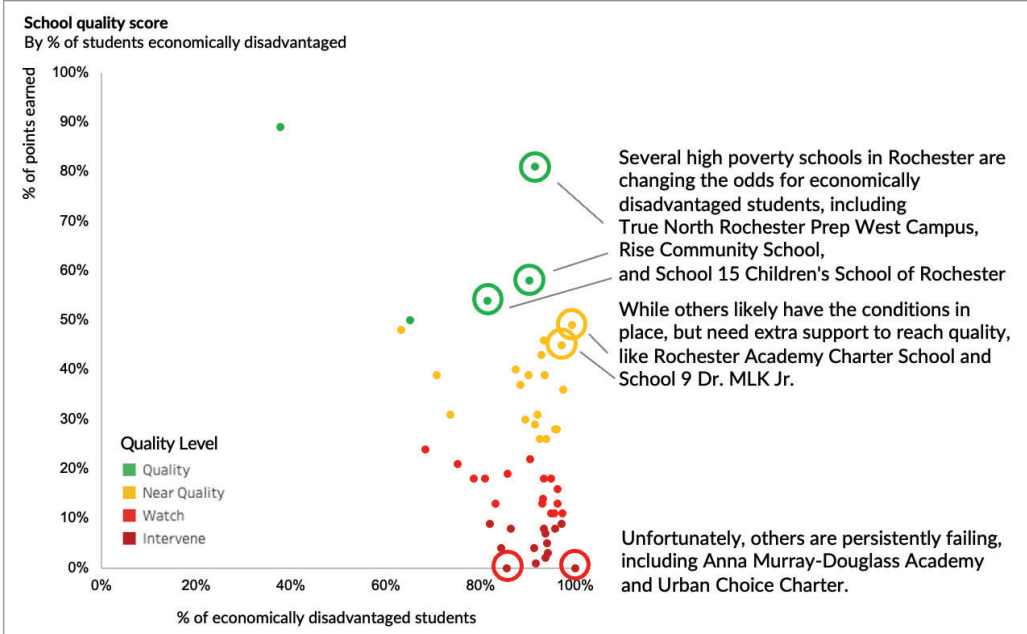
In our quality rating, a **Quality School** is one that earns - on average - 50% of the available points, which corresponds to the statewide average for most measures. The performance of all students in a school accounts for 80% of the overall score, with another 20% focused specifically on the performance of historically disadvantaged student groups: students who are Black, Hispanic, with disabilities, or are English Language Learners. A **Near Quality School** is one that earns 25% or more of the available points, but less than 50%. A **Watch School** is one that earns 10% or more of the available points, but less than 25%, and an **Intervene School** is one that earns less than 10% of the available points.

Comparison of revised quality ratings to NYSED accountability status



Source: New York State Education Department. Report Card Database (data.nysed.gov/downloads.php). Retrieved July 26, 2022. Analysis: 2019 Accountability Status, "All Students" subgroup.

Only 1 in 10 Rochester students is enrolled in a quality school, or one that consistently performs above the statewide average across multiple measures. Yet, there are examples – both traditional and charter – of schools that are changing the odds for economically disadvantaged students.



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