

Community Update

FALL 2023 EDITION



ROCHESTER
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

PRIDE IN EXCELLENCE

Student achievement data and assessments inform instruction

Meeting the needs of the whole child, academically, socially and emotionally



The Rochester Community School District's mission is to provide a quality education in a caring atmosphere for students to obtain the necessary skills and knowledge to become lifelong learners and contribute to a diverse, interdependent and changing world.

To ensure success, RCS uses the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP), which the Michigan Department of Education describes as "a pathway for districts to improve student outcomes by assessing whole-child needs to develop plans and coordinate funding."

MICIP begins with identifying an area in need of improvement, such as an achievement gap or the need for social-emotional support, and then proceeds with developing a challenge statement to focus on the concern.

A team of highly qualified district professionals responds to the challenge statement by creating a plan that consists of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely goals to solve the issue; strategies that include evidence-based instructional approaches and/or interventions; and activities, such as professional learning, resource allocation

and monitoring tools.

MICIP guides districts in the use of data to inform instruction. There are four types of data outlined in this process: achievement, perception, demographic, and process data.

Achievement data focuses on measuring student learning and assessment and can include standardized test scores, nationally normed assessments, classroom-based rubrics and college-ready assessments.

Perception data centers around attitudes and

See **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA** on page 2



2023-24 POINTS OF PRIDE

Rochester Community Schools provides world-class, student-centered education for bright futures



97%

graduation rate - the highest in Oakland County for public schools



39

National Merit Scholarship Commended Scholars

24

Semifinalists representing the **top 1%** of our nation's high school graduating seniors



7 out of **10** students in 11th and 12th grade have at least one AP course on their schedule

180+

students scored in the

90th

percentile or higher on the SAT



All RCS high schools ranked in the **95th** percentile or above for SAT performance in the state of Michigan



RCS ranks among the **top 5** school districts in Oakland County for English language arts and math on the M-STEP

All elementary schools identified as having high growth and high achievement for **math and reading** using the i-Ready assessment

92%

Third graders met Michigan's grade 3 reading requirement, outpacing county and state averages

RCS students outperformed the state average by **25%** and the county average by **16%** in both English language arts and math on the M-STEP



Out of 25,000 high schools across the country, U.S. News and World Report ranks RCS schools in the **top 5%** or better. Out of 651 public high schools in Michigan, Adams, Stoney Creek, and Rochester rank in the **top 35**



beliefs. This dataset addresses student climate within the school district, to include perceptions about academic standards, connections to the school and feelings about a variety of school experiences.

Demographic data provides information about the characteristics of the student population that can impact learning, such as economic status, disabilities, ethnic background and attendance.

Process data can include policies and procedures, as well as parent and caregiver participation and professional learning plans.

“The process is fluid. Students, staff and families can change from year-to-year. We are also intentional about the need to continuously align methods, techniques and delivery of content with current best practices. As a district, MICIP serves as a guide so we can make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of all our students,” said Cory Heitsch, assistant superintendent of early childhood and elementary education.

Leveraging MICIP, RCS teachers use both formative and summative assessments to determine where students are in their learning journey and tailor instruction to meet their needs.

Formative assessments are practices that allow teachers to gather information from classroom activities, so they can adjust their instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of the students. The feedback from a formative assessment is specific and immediate, allowing teachers to confer with learning consultants, interventionists and coaches and quickly adjust the method or approach of learning to meet the needs of the student.



Summative assessments evaluate student achievement against a benchmark, such as with tests, projects and essays. They can illuminate areas of strength, along with gaps in curriculum and instruction, particularly within student subgroups.

Mandated assessments: how RCS aligns with state standards.

The state provides mandated testing to inform schools and districts about student performance and help detect the need for improvements in the level or rate of student achievement. Mandated testing includes the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), i-Ready or comparable testing platform, and the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test® (SAT) suite of assessments.

At RCS, mandated tests are part of a balanced approach that contribute to a student’s learning profile. They are used with other forms of assessments to ensure continuous improvement, such as the District Literacy Profile, Bridges Unit Assessments for math, checkpoints, observations and monitoring activity to inform instruction.

To measure student achievement using the Michigan academic standards, the M-STEP English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments are administered to students in grades 3-7. The science and social studies assessments are administered in grades 5, 8 and 11.

M-STEP identifies areas of strength, as well as areas where additional supports are needed to meet grade-level standards. However, it’s important to note that individual student reports for M-STEP are not used to make day-to-day program and placement decisions or determinations

about continuous improvement goals. Teachers will continue to teach content standards, rather than teaching to the test.

M-STEP results. The spring 2023 summative M-STEP results indicated that RCS ranked as a top five school district in Oakland County. In both ELA and math assessments, RCS students outperformed the state average by 25 percent and the county average by 16 percent.

“RCS is the largest school district in Oakland County, yet we receive some of the lowest per-pupil funding from the state. The level at which our students perform is a credit to our highly skilled teachers, administrators and staff, along with our family and community partners. We truly are grateful for their support,” said Heitsch.

The i-Ready diagnostic assessment is administered three times a year to all RCS kindergarten-through-grade-8 students. Similar to M-STEP, i-Ready serves as an indicator of grade-level proficiency in the areas of reading and math, while focusing on growth and performance relative to historical national norms. Data categories also consider English/multi-language learners, students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who are of an identified race.

A key advantage of the i-Ready assessment is that teachers have the ability to progress-monitor the impact of their instructional strategies due to the multiple administrations within a school year.

i-Ready results. For the 2022-23 school year, RCS scores fell within the high-performance and high-growth quadrants, with room for continued improvement.

“We are always in the continuous improvement mode,” said John Silveri, interim superintendent. “Throughout the district, our dedicated staff members work tirelessly to ensure students are consistently engaged in high-level activities that stimulate their learning. They are also passionate about enhancing the overall student experience, which includes a feeling of belonging.”

The SAT is administered to all students in 11th grade throughout the state of Michigan in the spring. The SAT suite of assessments includes the Preliminary SAT (PSAT 8/9) for students in grades 8 and 9; the PSAT 10 for students in 10th grade; and PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST), which is offered to all 11th graders in the fall.

SAT results. The Rochester Community School District’s SAT scores have increased from 2022 to 2023 in all areas, to include the mean SAT composite, math and evidence-based reading and writing sub-scores.

“This is a remarkable achievement for our schools and demonstrates the dedication and hard work of our students, educators and community partners. Every high school within our district has seen an improvement in their total mean scores,” said Neil DeLuca, executive director of secondary education.

SAT - Predicts success for the first semester of college

	Total Mean Score		Mean Reading and Writing		Mean Math Score	
Year	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
RCS	1106	1114	553	558	553	556
State	960	958	490	489	470	470
RCS % difference	↑15	↑16	↑12	↑14	↑18	↑18

Rochester Community Schools scores continue to exceed state averages by as much as 18 percent.

See STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA on page 3

Student achievement data

from page 2

Caring for the whole child.

Current curriculum provides wellness programs to assist students in making independent, informed decisions concerning their physical, mental and emotional well-being. This year RCS added new counselor positions at each of its four middle schools and three high schools, and hired additional behavioral interventionists to support its 13 elementary schools. These professionals join the district’s highly skilled educational teams who work with community stakeholders to meet the social-emotional wellness needs of all RCS students.



“Different students have different needs. What truly sets RCS apart is our team of caring professionals who build strong connections with our students, families and community partners. These trusted relationships and meaningful conversations play an important role in our students’ overall well-being, as well as our ability to ensure continual growth and development so all students can reach their full potential,” said Debi Fragomeni, deputy superintendent for teaching and learning.

Informed instruction ensures plans and strategies are in place for all students, including those with disabilities. The continuum of instruction

begins with education in a general classroom and adjusts as needed to include co-teaching, team teaching, the addition of a resource program, and finally categorical classroom instruction.

“Assessment-based, responsive teaching is inclusive of our entire community. We constantly review the data and align our interventions and multi-tiered systems of support to meet the needs of the student. Monitoring and evaluating progress remains a continual process,” said Concetta Lewis, assistant superintendent of special populations, diversity, equity and inclusion.

RCS remains proud of student academic achievement and strives for continuous improvement.

The MICIP district improvement team continues to evaluate data and processes, implement appropriate instructional best practices, monitor current systems in place, and make necessary adjustments based on the needs of the whole child.



“At Rochester Community Schools, we believe that each and every student can learn at the highest levels,” said Silveri. “We are passionate about providing our students with the tools to be successful, not only while they are enrolled in our schools, but also when they graduate to pursue their life’s work.”

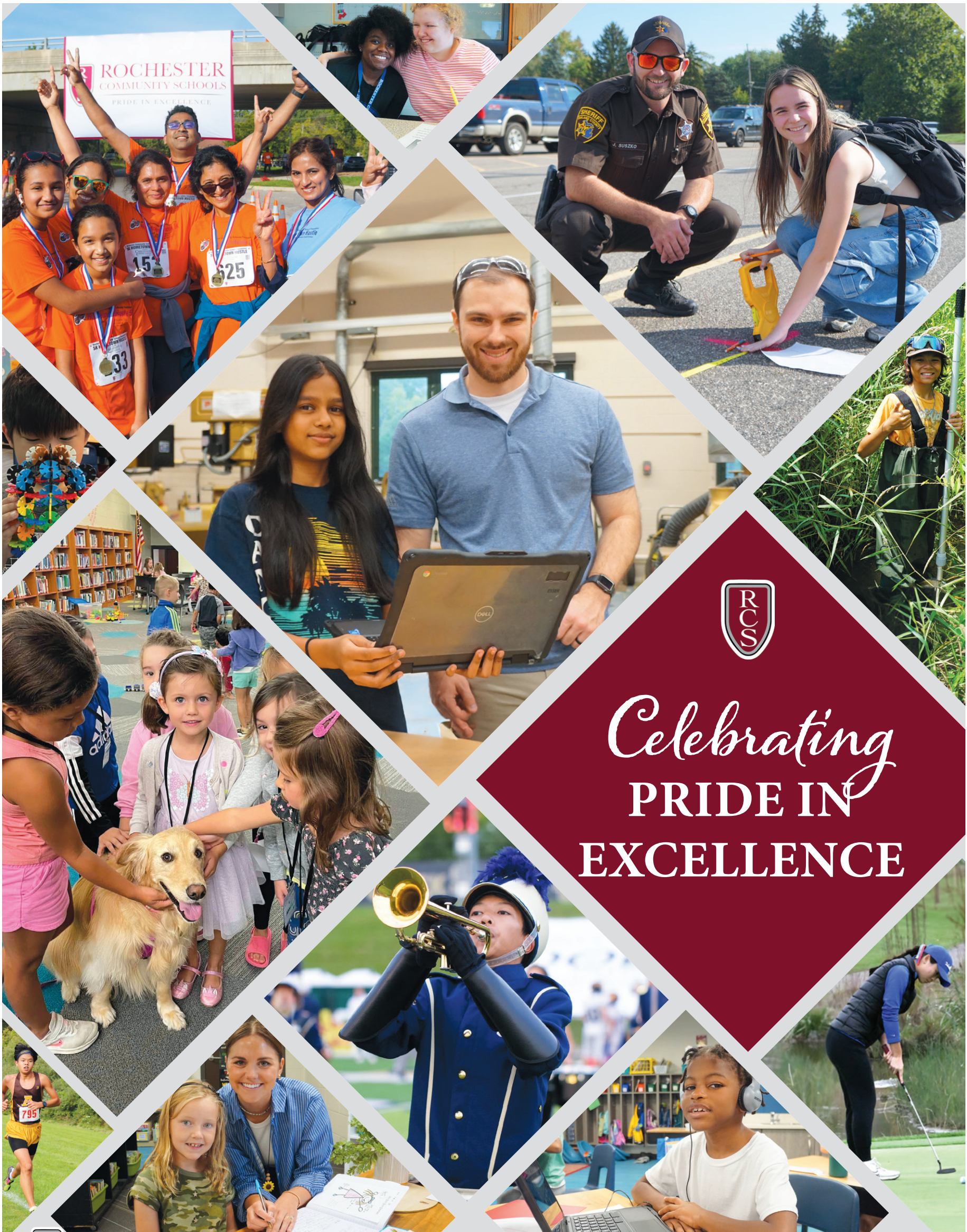


RCS invests in 3D anatomy teaching tables

RCS brings state-of-the art technology to advance studies in anatomy and biology, thanks to a collaborative effort between the RCS Foundation, career readiness and curriculum departments.

Asclepius is a virtual dissection table that serves as a medical teaching aid, most often at the university level. Through detailed 3D anatomy structures, this tool provides students with the ability to visualize the complexities of the human body and perform dissections.

RCS has installed three tables in our high school science departments. Staff will be professionally trained in the coming weeks so students can maximize this new and exciting instructional technology.



Celebrating PRIDE IN EXCELLENCE

Increased support services help students succeed

A \$1.7 million investment in additional support staff is helping Rochester Community Schools meet the comprehensive needs of students and raise their level of academic and personal success.

With the addition of seven new school counselors and eight academic interventionists across the district, RCS educational teams are better equipped to help students overcome challenges in the classroom and achieve their personal goals. These qualified professionals work alongside teachers, administrators, staff and families to provide multi-tiered systems of support including individualized coaching, collaboration and intervention for students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12.

Research shows that learning is impacted by many factors including students' health, environment, cognitive abilities and previous experiences," said Cory Heitsch, assistant superintendent of early childhood and elementary education. "Expanded educational teams are working with classroom teachers and families to increase resources and design individualized support programs that best fit the academic and social-emotional needs of each student."

Building connections

"It's important to build connections in school," said Jessica Book, Stoney Creek High School teacher and interventionist. "Experience has shown and experts agree that students who are more connected to school are more motivated and more likely to find academic and personal success," Book said. "This goes beyond grades. We may help students complete club applications that suit their interests. We may suggest service organizations or volunteer opportunities that build peer relationships and give a sense of gratification in helping others. These activities outside the classroom can build self-esteem and self-reliance which are important to overall satisfaction and success.



"It's not enough for students to simply show up each day. We want school to be meaningful and engaging. We want each student to know

that we care about them; we want them to be here. We help them make concrete connections between their school work and life goals."



Additional counselors and interventionists allow more direct personalized attention and small-group support for RCS students.

Supporting growth in learning and well-being

Academic resource centers in RCS middle schools and high schools provide a smaller learning community for students who want some one-to-one support. This benefit is available to all students, whether they need temporary, drop-in, situational help or more permanent, scheduled support.



By providing multi-tiered systems of support, RCS educators are meeting the comprehensive needs of students, improving well-being and maximizing success.

Students may visit resource centers to catch up on homework after an absence, utilize tutoring on a difficult assignment, work with a paraeducator on time management, access testing accommodations to ease stress, have a regularly scheduled hour for academic support, and a range of other individualized services.

"Our middle schools are busy, dynamic places," said Jennifer Windeler, West Middle School interventionist. "Some students just need a quiet spot between challenging classes to regroup. We provide that."

Working closely with learning consultants, counselors and classroom teachers, Windeler and other district professionals advocate for specialized student needs. "We help students

so they can access resources and close learning gaps. We review their schedules, check homework, ease stress, build life skills and most importantly, make sure that each individual is seen, heard and cared for."

Counseling teams nurture potential

During these foundational TK-12 learning years, school counselors have a positive impact on students by collaborating with school staff, families and the community to create safe and respectful learning environments. RCS counselors enhance student learning through academic, career and social-emotional development.

"Hiring additional school counselors helps lighten caseloads, increasing the level of direct service that can be provided to students, including personalized guidance, academic planning, need-based counseling and crisis intervention," said Neil DeLuca, executive director of secondary education.

Early interventions maximize success

By recognizing struggles and personalizing learning before a child falls behind, school teams help fill gaps to ensure that students are progressing and developing. This begins early in elementary school where educators help coordinate interventions to support core instruction and well-being.

"Even a little support can produce big gains in giving students the boost they need," said Robert Zajac, teacher at McGregor Elementary. Zajac also directs a summer literacy and math camp, which served 140 students last summer in a flexible, small-group, hands-on learning environment.



New staff positions are initially supported by a state grant that focuses on improving student mental health. For Rochester Community Schools, this totals more than \$1.7 million.

"Sometimes we just need to help students remove old mental blocks so they can move to something more positive," he said. "With additional time and resources, we are better able to provide individual attention to each student as needed."

School funding basics

With modest state funding and the fourth-lowest school tax rate in the county, Rochester Community Schools maximizes opportunities to ensure students excel at the highest levels.

It is widely recognized that great schools are the bedrock of a great community, but did you know that public schools in Michigan are not funded equally?

The following information highlights some school funding basics.

How are schools funded?

Before 1994, local property taxes funded local schools; but that created challenges. People were concerned about high property taxes, and there were funding gaps between school districts across the state.

In 1994, legislation was placed on the ballot, called Proposal A. Michigan voters approved it, and school funding in Michigan changed dramatically.

After Proposal A, local homeowners' property taxes no longer funded local schools. Instead, a statewide education tax of 6 mills on all property was established. Other sources like state sales and income tax, lottery revenue, tobacco and use taxes contribute to school funding.

Districts began receiving a per-pupil payment from the state, called the foundation allowance. This enabled the lowest funded schools in the state to receive a basic level of funding, which helped narrow the funding gap between school districts.

How does the state allocate funds to school districts?

Public schools in Michigan are funded on a per-pupil basis using the pupil blend count, also known as the State Aid Membership. Each district counts the number of students twice during a school year, once in October and once in February.



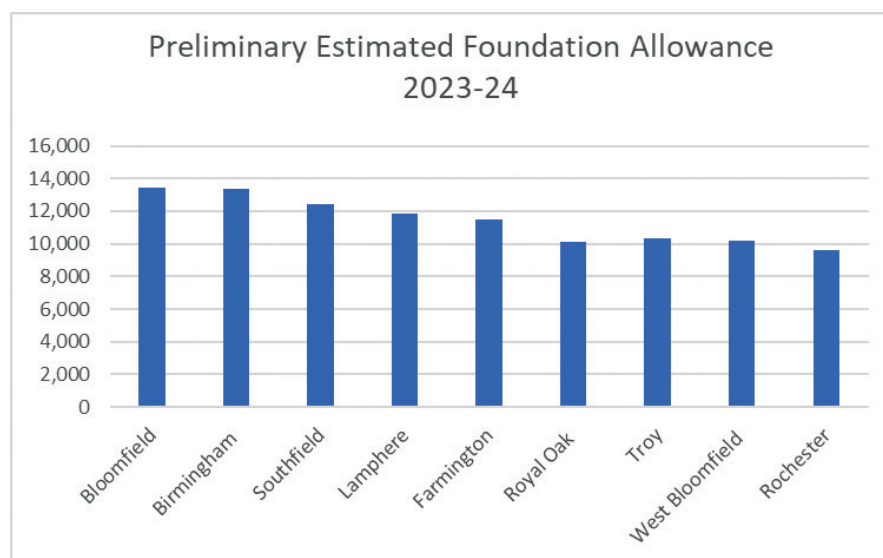
The pupil blend count is generally calculated by adding 90% of the current student full-time equivalence from the October count to 10% of the previous February's FTE count. Different proportional weights have been applied over time. For example, the most recently signed state school aid budget included a two-year average for fiscal year 2022-23 and 2023-24 for schools with declining enrollment.

The state decides the amount of foundation allowance for each school district and multiplies that number by the number of fully qualified students in the district.

The foundation allowance has two components: state aid and local non-homestead property taxes. The state calculates their portion of the foundation allowance as if the district is collecting 18 mills, whether it actually does or not. If the voters do not approve the 18 mills levy, the district does not receive the full foundation allowance.

Here's how the estimated FY2023-24 foundation allowance for RCS

currently compares with some other districts in Oakland County. The numbers indicate that the Rochester Community Schools foundation allowance is quite modest. When considering the district with the highest foundation allowance and the approximate number of students in the Rochester Community School District, the difference totals more than \$57.5 million.



RCS plans a budget for every fiscal year that is sustainable, promotes growth, minimizes impact on student programs, is team-based, open and transparent, and supports the district's strategic plan. While the foundation allowance is the major source of funding for RCS, the district also gets a small amount of federal funding.

Inter-district funding comes from the County Act 18 special education tax. This revenue includes the renewable 18-mill non-homestead property tax, tuition from special programs, dues and fees, community services like preschool, and other miscellaneous sources.

With taxpayer approval, districts can also tax local homestead property to fund construction, technology and purchase of land.



How does the district spend its funds?

The general fund is the primary operating fund for the district and accounts for everything it takes to teach a child in a classroom, such as teachers, paraeducators, ancillary staff, administrators, bus drivers, custodians, and grounds and maintenance staff.

Rochester Community Schools budgets in four main areas: instruction; support services; community service; debt service and capital outlay.

School funding basics

from page 6

Instruction includes salaries for teachers to educate our students. Support services include counselors, speech therapists, psychologists, social workers, athletics, transportation, operations and maintenance, and administration. Community service (<2%) includes recreation and enrichment programs and school-age care. Debt service and capital outlay (<1%) includes copiers, furniture and equipment.

Most of what school districts spend their funds on is salaries and benefits. For teachers and support staff, that makes up 82% of the total RCS budget.



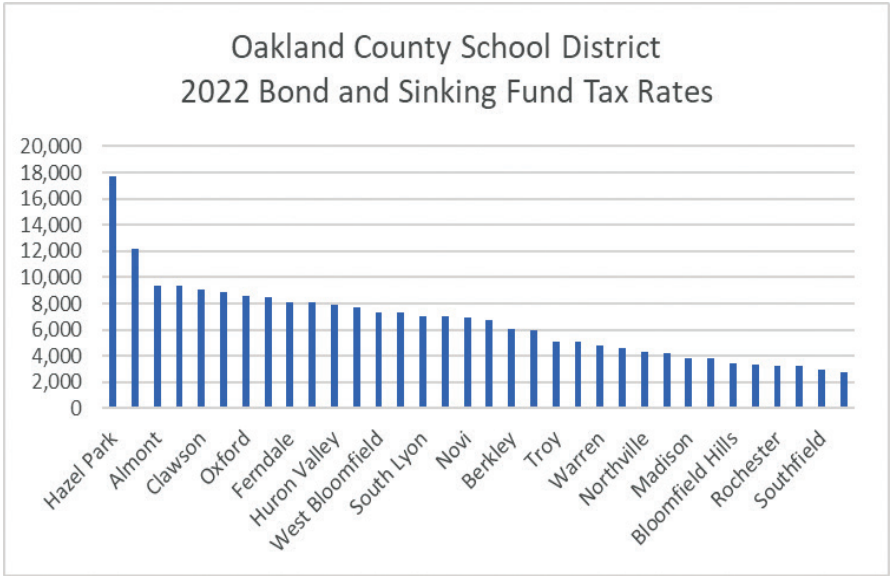
“Our ability to accomplish the goals set by the strategic plan can be credited to our outstanding teachers, administrators and staff who partner with our families and community members to promote student success,” said Matthew McDaniel, assistant superintendent for business operations.

How can schools increase funds beyond what is allocated by state and federal sources?

Building and site bonds and a sinking fund provide an opportunity for schools to increase funds beyond what is allocated by state and federal sources.

Since the majority of school operating funds are spent on salaries and benefits, RCS has historically used the general fund and/or bond proceeds to protect its investment in facilities.

In 2019, voters approved a zero-tax increase sinking fund as a sustainable means to support critical facility and infrastructure needs with no borrowing or incurred interest involved. The sinking fund also keeps tax dollars local – every dollar of the sinking fund benefits every student and every school in the district.



How do the RCS bond and sinking fund tax rates align with other districts in the county?

Rochester Community Schools continues to provide the highest quality education in safe, modern facilities with a modest tax increase. According to the Stifel public finance report for 2022, Rochester Community Schools has the fourth-lowest school tax rate in the county.



How does Rochester Community Schools perform at such a high level with a modest foundation allowance and bond and sinking fund tax rates?

RCS carefully monitors the budget to make sure expenditures align with available resources. The district also maintains an adequate fund balance to make sure it has enough money to continue operations in case of surprise expenses or state revenue shortfalls. This is especially important since school districts do not receive the first payment of the year from the state until October, after school has already started.



“Maintaining fiscal stewardship is critically important to our mission. The district’s budget includes a balanced and equitable spending plan that is sustainable, promotes growth, and ensures high quality student programming,” said McDaniel.

The district also credits its outstanding teachers, administrators and staff who partner with parents and caregivers to inspire excellence.

“The high level of achievement within our district reflects the hard work, dedication, and tenacity of our students, along with the collaborative efforts of our community,” said Debi Fragomeni, deputy superintendent for teaching and learning. “Whether our graduates are pursuing their post-secondary education, the arts, athletics, the military, or industry apprenticeships, we are confident they have the tools to succeed,” said Fragomeni.

“It is with sincere gratitude that we thank our district colleagues, the Board of Education, and our community members for their continued partnership and support.”

Congratulations to the Rochester Community School District's 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program semifinalists and commended scholars!

Rochester Community Schools celebrates 39 commended scholars and another 27 students who advanced to semifinalist status through the National Merit® Scholarship Program!

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is a standardized assessment administered nationally through the College Board that measures knowledge and skills in reading, writing and math.

By taking the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of their junior year, students have the opportunity to meet the requirements for the esteemed National Merit Scholarship Program, an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955.

Out of 1.3 million entrants, approximately 34,000 with the highest PSAT/Selection Index Scores were designated as commended scholars.

More than 16,000 of the highest scorers, representing less than 1% of the nation's high school graduating seniors, qualify as semifinalists. According to nationalmerit.org, approximately 95% (more than 15,000) of the semifinalists are expected to become finalists in the competition, attesting to their distinguished academic performance.

This outstanding academic achievement is a tribute to the hard work and determination that is in keeping with the highest tradition of excellence within the Rochester Community School District.

Semifinalists		
Zoeya Ali, RHS	Selena Cooper, AHS	Eryk Nguyen, AHS
Moamel Al-Saedi, AHS	Maya Dahanukar, AHS	James Peng, SCHS
Claire Bahk, SCHS	Askhaj Enaganti, IA	Arya Rukadikar, RHS
Zayn Baig, RHS	Isabella Guthrie, AHS	Shifan Saeed, AHS
Drew Brown, SCHS	Tyler Horvath, AHS	Peter Santia, RHS
Caroline Bull, AHS	Thomas Ignaczak, SCHS	Swapna Srikantan, AHS
Kairui Cong, IA	Laura Liu, AHS	Tarik Taskin, IA
Haechan Chung, SCHS	Sahana Macedo, RHS	Kian Zadeh, AHS
Erin Coleman, SCHS	Griffin Moore, AHS	Jason Zhang, AHS

Commended		
Arjit Agarwal, AHS	Demetri Karras, AHS	Shravya Rao, RHS
Rose Albert, RHS	Shahzeb Khan, SCHS	Alissa Shen, AHS
Hala Al-Dib, RHS	Seohyeon Kim, AHS	Megna Srikanth, RHS
Salem Al-Hadrusi, AHS	William Korson, RHS	Chester Van Daele, SCHS
Yuan Chen, AHS	Ella LaMendola, SCHS	Charles Wagner, AHS
Siya Chhabra, IA	Drew Lenard, RHS	Bryce Wood, AHS
Kaiwen Cong, IA	Ryan Loren, RHS	George Wright, SCHS
Abigail DeGraw, SCHS	Ethan Lyons, AHS	Jihyo Yoo, SCHS
Tristan Dobrzynski, IA	Kayan Mehta, SCHS	Chongxi Zhou, RHS
Stefan Dredetean, RHS	Raphael Mousaad, SCHS	
Liam Duggan, SCHS	Thomas Pintar, SCHS	[SCHS =Stoney Creek; RHS =Rochester; AHS =Adams; IA =International Academy]
Katherine Fodale, AHS	Quinn Pollock, RHS	
Zaima Hossain, RHS	Aaryan Prabhu, IA	
Jacob Kantzer, AHS	John Price, AHS	
Peter Kardasis, AHS	Thomas Radabaugh, AHS	

RCS welcomes John Silveri as interim superintendent

John Silveri was appointed as interim superintendent by the Board of Education of the Rochester Community School District on August 21, 2023.

Silveri's career in public education includes service to several Metropolitan Detroit area school districts as a teacher, counselor, principal, human resources director, assistant superintendent and superintendent, as well as a consultant for the Michigan Leadership Institute.



"Mr. Silveri is highly regarded and well respected in the field," said RCS Board President Michelle Bueltel. "When I spoke with numerous individuals who have worked with him and know him well, some very consistent themes emerged. He is a person of immense integrity, which will undoubtedly influence and guide his decisions for the betterment of our students, staff, and families. His calm and levelheaded demeanor and ability to take action and achieve results will be crucial in maintaining a steady course for our district during this transitional period."

Silveri holds a bachelor's degree in education from Central Michigan University, a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Eastern Michigan University, and an education specialist degree in administration from Wayne State University. He is a graduate of the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators (MASA) Courageous Journey Program and the Michigan Leadership Institute Superintendent Preparation Series Academy.

"We look forward to working with Mr. Silveri as we continue our commitment to providing the best teaching and learning environment possible for our school community," said Debi Fragomeni, deputy superintendent for teaching and learning.

Silveri is a member of the greater Rochester community and has lived in the area for the past 15 years.

Having visited all RCS schools, Silveri noted, "I see students who are highly engaged and involved in high-level activities that stimulate their learning. I see staff members who are dedicated and passionate, and I see administrators who are working tirelessly and continuously to improve. We have an amazing school district."

RCS is in the process of updating its strategic plan and has selected G&D Associates to serve as its facilitator. "I'm thrilled the district has committed to a strategic planning process," Silveri said. "It's recognition of the fact that we need to improve, make sure we focus on the most important things, set strategies, determine how we're going to assess our progress, and hold ourselves accountable for that."

"I look forward to working collaboratively with the dedicated members of the Rochester Community Schools staff and the entire school community in the best interest of our students."