

Community Update

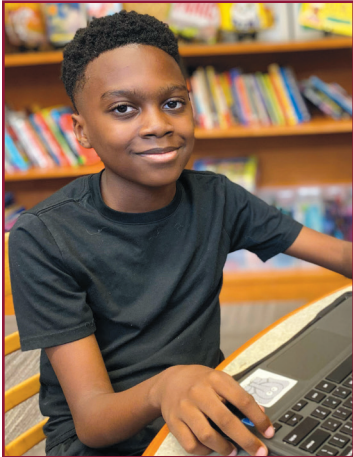
FALL 2024 EDITION



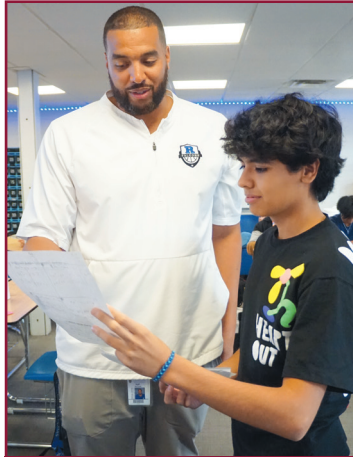
ROCHESTER
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

PRIDE IN EXCELLENCE

CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR MORE THAN 200 YEARS



Learning



Teaching



Leadership



Professional
Development



Community
Engagement

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Identifying priorities. Creating a unified sense of purpose. Driving action.

Rochester Community Schools has a rich history of excellence that has been strengthened over time through the strategic planning process.

Continually advancing educational experiences for all students and staff can be achieved through an evolution of the systems that drive learning and teaching. The foundation for this evolution is the development of a vision, which provides the basis for the district's strategic plans.

The vision outlines how Rochester Community Schools will continue to develop, support, enhance and drive forward learning through five key areas: learning, teaching, leadership, professional development and community engagement. It reflects a collaborative effort among all stakeholders, inclusive of district students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, caregivers, graduates, community members and the Board of Education.

Learning. Rochester Community Schools believes that well-rounded students who possess core academic knowledge, high levels of self-awareness and the ability to apply their learning have the skills that will enable them to thrive in a continually evolving global society. The district ensures all students have independence in foundational literacy, mathematics, science and humanities skills. These skills, along with embedded coaching on character, citizenship, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, cultural proficiency and

communication, will continue to prepare students for success beyond school.

Progress will be determined by evidence that includes, but also reaches beyond, grades and standardized test scores to demonstrate grade-level proficiency and growth. This evidence-based approach ensures that all students, at all ability levels, get learning experiences tailored to their needs. RCS empowers students to be owners of their learning by engaging them as co-creators of their experiences and action plans. Learners set and reflect upon goals while having opportunities to provide and respond to feedback from a variety of sources.

Relevance and global connection are developed through career exposure and exploration. A variety of specialized focus areas in individual schools, along with Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings across the district, enhance college-bound and direct-to-work pathways, enabling students to access career certifications, advanced coursework options and post-secondary credit.

The district creates a sense of belonging and supports the development of skills and habits that enable physical, social-emotional and mental wellness. Content is culturally relevant and includes opportunities for all students to concentrate

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Through a commitment to foundational academic knowledge, deepening learning skills and a culture of wellness, Rochester Community Schools will continue to develop the leaders and responsible citizens of the next generation.

The *Community Update* is the official publication of the Rochester Community School District.

To learn more, scan the QR code.



Board of Education approves agreement to invest an additional \$33 million in district teachers

The Board of Education of Rochester Community Schools approved the tentative contractual agreement as presented by district administration and the Rochester Education Association (REA) during a board work session on



Sept. 3, 2024. Through the agreement, the district is investing an additional \$33 million in RCS teachers over the next three years.

“One of the most critical investments we make for students is investing in our highly qualified and trained staff. Our RCS teachers are the core of this investment. I want to thank our Board of Education for approving the three-year contract with the Rochester Education Association, and I want to thank every member of our negotiating team who worked diligently over the course of months to bring and ratify

a contract that values and retains outstanding teachers and talent,” said Superintendent Nicholas Russo, Ed.S.

For seven months, administrators representing the district and the REA/ Michigan Education Association (MEA) engaged in negotiations using Interest-Based Bargaining, a process the district originally adopted in January 2019. Using this collaborative bargaining approach, the teams were able to focus on mutually beneficial interests and outcomes, while keeping students at the forefront.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

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on areas of interest and passion through remedial, on-level, and advanced/accelerated pathways. To ensure the district continues to foster this culture of belonging, students have meaningful input into practices and approaches to learning in collaboration with RCS educators.

Teaching. Rochester Community Schools is committed to cultivating the art of teaching through a culture of innovative excellence.

The district believes that teaching is both an art and a science, where approaches are flexible and adaptive to meet the needs of each learner. To sustain this culture, the district honors and respects innovative and effective educators and facilitates the sharing and adoption of their practices.

In an effort to enhance educator effectiveness, RCS evaluates and appropriately adjusts its time structures. Common planning empowers educators to collaborate on lessons grounded in academic standards, share promising practices, align assessments and hone their professional skills.

Educators have access to a variety of focused data sets that enable customized approaches to teaching to address individual learner needs. Lessons embed high-interest enrichment experiences in areas such as science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) and community-connected projects, in ways that are accessible to all students.

Environments that are safe and reflective of district values inspire innovative approaches to learning and teaching. RCS spaces continue to accommodate a variety of learning preferences and needs. Educators are provided with the technologies and support needed to deliver engaging, real-world, connected learning.

To ensure every learner gets the academic, social and emotional support they need, RCS utilizes a



Rochester Community Schools values and respects the art of teaching. By providing a variety of evidence-based resources and supports, RCS educators are empowered to personally meet every student at their level with the appropriate pacing, breadth, depth and level of challenge.

multi-tiered system of academic and behavioral support. As part of a proactive approach to behavior, RCS teachers continue to utilize a deep knowledge of their students' learning needs through relationship building, while modeling positive behaviors. Flexible staffing models may provide access to additional qualified educators, providing robust systems of intervention and enrichment.

Leadership. Leadership is demonstrated by a set of behaviors and actions that inspire and bring people together to achieve their best. To this end, RCS leaders foster a culture of transparency and empathy-building across the district that creates a sense of belonging, engagement and professional growth.



Through the highest quality executive and instructional leadership, Rochester Community Schools establishes the gold standard for building a framework of continued and sustainable excellence.

The RCS board of education, central administrators and school leaders regularly collaborate to develop a shared approach to district improvement. Policies, administrative regulations and structures support the district's vision while enabling RCS to align resources, personnel and budget to the prioritized needs of the district. These aligned systems allow the district to measure the effectiveness of its programs and work to make identified adjustments.

Alignment between the district and schools continues to ensure cohesive vision progress. Communication provides stakeholders with a clear view of strategic goals, innovative practices and decision-making processes.

Current employee effectiveness, commitment and happiness are the foundation for the district's continued excellence. Leaders model and support a healthy work/life balance. Administrators regularly engage staff members about what motivates them, their growth and initiative implementation while providing feedback about their practices. To ensure continuous improvement and achievement of the highest standards, evaluation structures will be responsive to the needs of students and educators.

Rochester Community Schools' recruitment, retention and hiring practices continue to include a variety of approaches to securing the best educators, support personnel and administrators who are able to carry out the district's vision. Cohesive development opportunities deepen the talent pool of leaders while creating sustainable systems that enable Rochester Community Schools

to evolve. District committees and subcommittees include educators, representative employees, parents/caregivers, community members and students to provide a problem-solving partnership that is equitable in representation, varied in perspectives and transparent in practice.

Professional Development. A focused and sustained investment in people provides the foundation for continued excellence, growth and innovation in Rochester Community Schools. The district believes this investment is most impactful and inspiring when it includes all employee groups.

District departments and schools collaborate to ensure coherent professional learning experiences. RCS continues to utilize a variety of assessment methods to identify the needs of individual employees, schools and the district. Employees, inclusive of leadership, are provided the opportunity to engage in regular professional learning that is focused on their personal development and collective growth.

Professional learning goes beyond single sessions to include job-embedded coaching and ongoing assistance. RCS works to provide the time and support needed to implement, adjust and evolve new strategies and initiatives. Coaching is non-evaluative and provides timely feedback and personalized assistance tailored to the individual. For those new to their positions, RCS provides in-depth onboarding coupled with sustained mentorship. Employees have the opportunity to collaborate with peers across the district through programs and services such as professional learning networks, teacher labs and model worksites to provide immersive and impactful development. These continued support strategies ensure that effective practices are implemented districtwide.



Rochester Community Schools' investment in professional learning enables its staff members to develop the practices that prepare RCS students for high levels of success in life, leading to unprecedented levels of pride in the profession and community.

Community Engagement. Positive relationships between the district and the wider community are essential to the continued success of each. Rochester Community Schools is committed to fostering strong partnerships with all stakeholders to enhance student success.

RCS engages families as partners in their students' educational experiences. The district continues to leverage a variety of communication methods and tools to provide strategic planning implementation

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

from page 2

updates, celebrate excellence, build trust and provide windows into life in the buildings. RCS schools share information that ensures families and the community have access to the resources needed to support student learning while providing opportunities to give feedback about the services offered.

District personnel continue to connect families in need with resources related to a variety of wrap-around services to ensure students are ready to engage in learning. To support parents and caregivers who are new to the district, transferring to a new school or interested in advocating for their students, Rochester Community Schools works to provide onboarding, support and collaborative opportunities.

The district continues to build partnerships with local government, businesses, educational institutions and philanthropic organizations that engage the local community in collaborative civic projects, volunteer opportunities, cooperative jobs, internships and apprenticeships. RCS employees build an understanding of local and global working practices to ensure the skills taught and learned are transferable. RCS strives to enable safe access to industry mentors and subject experts who are available through digital communication, face-to-face meetings and virtual field expeditions.

Because RCS is truly a community school district, facilities continue to be accessible, comfortable, technology-rich and of a professional standard so community members can use them for a variety of purposes.

To learn more about deliverables within the strategic

plan, visit the Rochester Community School District website at: www.rochester.k12.mi.us.



Rochester Community Schools' commitment to partnership and engagement empowers its stakeholders to develop a common vision and values that make for a thriving community.



Stop the Silence. Help End the Violence.

We're an OK2SAY School!

855-565-2729 652729 www.mi.gov/ok2say

Prioritizing safety

Protecting students, staff and the community remains a top priority.

By law, all Michigan schools must develop and adopt an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) with approval from the board of education. The Rochester Community School District EOP covers more than 100 topics and contains over 200 pages of information that addresses emergency medical response; threats and criminal activity; fire and weather-related emergencies; training; improvements for school security; communications; and more.



A team of district leaders continues to meet regularly to review and update the EOP. This team is comprised of school resource officers, safety consultants, principals, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, facilities and communications professionals.

Although detailed information within the EOP remains confidential and is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act for security reasons, the greater Rochester community can be assured that the district continues to prioritize safety.

This year, RCS teachers, administrators and staff received active assailant response information from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) training

unit, in a partnership with school resource officers from the Rochester Police Department and the OCSO. Students watched age-appropriate safety videos. Standard Response Protocol cards were updated and placed in every classroom and common area for easy access. Evacuation and reunification sites were reevaluated and adjusted districtwide. A self-harm assessment process was developed by our subject matter experts.

Facility updates include the installation of window tint and door shades; assessment of thumb-turn locks; additional portable automated external defibrillators (AEDs); installation of 200 security cameras in addition to the 1,500 cameras districtwide; providing critical-response floor plan maps; and more.

Partnerships remain critical to the district's success.

New this year is Michigan's Handle with Care program, a trauma-informed response to child maltreatment and children's exposure to violence. The goal is to provide protection, prevention, education, advocacy and services. When law enforcement has an interaction, where a student could have a traumatic response, the officer sends a Handle with Care message to the portal. The information is forwarded to school district contacts who then share it with the appropriate building administrator. This service helps to provide some context about a student's behavior or actions for better understanding and support.

"Nothing is more important than the safety of our school community; but we can't do it alone. We are truly grateful for our law enforcement professionals, mental health and service organizations, state agencies and safety experts who support our schools," said Deputy Superintendent Dr. Neil DeLuca. "Our students, staff and families have also played a large role by sharing information with trusted adults if they see or hear something that doesn't seem right. Confidential tips can be reported using OK2SAY, the Michigan student safety program."

Preparing future leaders in medical careers

Aspiring doctors and health care professionals can get an early start in their training, thanks to a new high school elective that explores medical careers and allows students to graduate with industry credentials and certifications. Through hands-on, work-based, experiential learning in clinical settings, students learn a wide variety of skills to prepare them for future health-related occupations.

This pilot program has 28 high schoolers from across the district who receive collaborative instruction from Tanya Regmont, the RCS school nurse, Erin Slomka, Rochester High School science



teacher, and health care professionals in the field.

“Students taking this class are building skills to identify, evaluate, prevent and treat diseases,” Regmont said. “No matter what they specialize in later, they will have a robust foundation in anatomy, pathophysiology, medical terminology, emergency response, basic first aid, workplace safety, legal and ethical considerations and cultural competence-- which are essential across all medical fields.”

Students work in classrooms and labs to master vital sign assessment, infection control and basic patient support to earn clinical medical assistant (CCMA) credentials from the National Healthcareer Association. In addition, they observe and learn

in clinical rotations with local health partners nine hours per week over four weeks. Clinical placements may include urgent care centers, hospitals, physician offices, rehabilitation centers and senior care facilities. RCS is grateful for the business partners who help train our students for potential careers in our own community.

This group of high-achieving students has expressed interest in a variety of careers including physician assistants, radiologists, respiratory care therapists, health fitness specialists, geneticists, pediatricians, cardiologists, pharmacists, nurses and more.

“Choosing a career can be daunting,” said Slomka, a high school biology teacher. “This early introduction to health care specialties really helps students create a well-informed educational path that suits their own interests, abilities and aspirations.”

“Medical professionals are in high demand,” said Regmont. “Whether they choose a clinical career path by providing direct patient care, or choose a non-clinical, behind-the-scenes career path, RCS graduates can expect to be knowledgeable, experienced and well-equipped as the health care leaders of the future.”



The medical careers elective combines classroom work and clinical rotations so students can gain experience and earn clinical medical assistant credentials while they are in high school.

RCS graduates with CTE training are in high demand

Career readiness initiatives prepare Rochester Community Schools students for professional pathways that align with their individual skills, interests, values and aspirations. For some, that means a traditional college degree after high school graduation. For others, the career journey may look different, with training in the military, trades or other industries where experience and knowledge is gained in different ways.



Woodworking students handcraft award-winning designs for practical use.

Beginning in elementary school, students use Xello, a comprehensive career and education planning tool, to regularly evaluate their interests, strengths and potential career matches. Through middle school and high school, RCS provides a wide array of career exposures so young adults can choose electives and extracurricular activities that align with their career goals.

RCS proudly offers 12 rigorous, focused, state-approved career and technical education (CTE) programs that provide work-based learning experiences, technical skills and the opportunity to earn industry certifications and credentials as an

extension of the high school curriculum. Program specialties include: business administration, management and operations; finance; marketing; computer science; digital multimedia; engineering technology; drafting and design technology; mechatronics; mechanical drafting; woodworking; health science; and educational careers.

“CTE training prepares graduates for immediate entry into high-wage, high-demand careers,” said Karen Malsbury, director of career readiness, CTE and career-focused education (CFE). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, for example, professionals in accounting make an average of \$80,000 per year; \$107,000 in engineering; and \$102,000 in computer programming.

“A postsecondary degree is valuable for many individuals, but the college-for-all model isn’t realistic in this dynamic and diverse job market,” Malsbury said. “CTE training is an effective pathway to stackable credentials, good paying jobs, on-the-job training, future opportunities and rewarding careers.”

Oakland Schools Technical Campuses, known as OSTC, provide additional opportunities for students in CTE-focused programs at various Oakland County locations. These programs are offered during the school day, in coordination with RCS class schedules.

Additionally, career technical student organizations allow high schoolers to learn, grow and excel beyond the classroom. Members compete in local and national competitions through the Michigan

Industrial & Technology Education Society (MITES), Business Professionals of America, FIRST Robotics, HOSA Future Health Professionals, Educators Rising and more. RCS students collect numerous awards each year, including recognition for virtual enterprise business plans, handcrafted wood items, robotics engineering, health care expertise and more.

Business students involved with DECA are currently filming video segments about companies trying to improve customer service by meeting increasing customer demands. These videos will undergo a competitive screening process to compete at the local, state and national level.

“As we learn about the principles of business management, we are also practicing marketing and video production skills to compete with other business students,” the Stoney Creek High School seniors said. “It’s real-world learning with real-world applications. It’s very exciting as we think about the next steps in our education and careers! We feel well-informed and well-prepared.”



High school students use their business knowledge and marketing skills to film a video segment for a national DECA competition.



Celebrating
PRIDE IN
EXCELLENCE



Celebrating family time and fitness in support of Rochester Community Schools

On Sept. 28, runners of all ages attended the Rochester Community Schools (RCS) Foundation Hometown Hustle 5K and one-mile color fun run, presented by Chief Financial Credit Union. With 1,333 registered participants, 60 community sponsors, and 175 volunteers who worked 874 hours, the event proved to be a huge success.



“The Hometown Hustle 5K has become an unofficial kick-off to fall for this community. It’s a great way to support our local students while getting outside and meeting the community,” said Tom Dluzen, Chief Financial Credit Union president and CEO. “It’s been an honor to be the presenting

sponsor for the Hometown Hustle for the past eight years and start the race right here at our Chief headquarters. Part of what makes our community special are the many families who are a part of the local schools.”

The mission of the RCS Foundation is to support and advance learning for all Rochester Community Schools students by obtaining contributions for academics, arts and athletics.

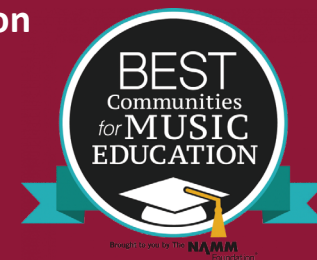
“The Hometown Hustle is not only a great community event, but it also serves as the principal fundraiser for the RCS Foundation, which supports student learning in the district through scholarships, grant opportunities and enrichment programs,” said Joann Beydoun, RCS Foundation director. “We are truly grateful for the support of our district colleagues, students, families, friends and local businesses.”

In recent years, the RCS Foundation has provided funding to establish a districtwide orchestra program, enrich classroom learning, award scholarships, provide wellness training and resources, and more. To learn more, visit: rcs-foundation.org.



RCS ranks among the country’s Best Communities for Music Education

For the tenth year, Rochester Community Schools has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from the NAMM Foundation. This award recognizes the outstanding efforts of RCS teachers, administrators, parents, students and community leaders to support music access and music education as part of a well-rounded education for all children. RCS is one of only 21 school districts in the state of Michigan to receive this honor for 2024.



“We are proud to be part of a learning community that values music education,” said Keenan Thomason, district music teacher and curriculum consultant. “Evidence shows that making music improves attentiveness, abstract reasoning and creativity for children. Plus, it showcases student talent and provides beautiful entertainment for our audiences!”

Board of Education approves agreement to invest an additional \$33 million in district teachers

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“As president of the Rochester Education Association, I’m proud of the collaboration and consensus building that the teams put at the center of the bargaining process. This contract provides teachers with much deserved raises. It also provides new parameters for evaluations and teacher protection that allow teachers to focus on what they do best, providing RCS students an excellent education,” said REA President Elizabeth Schroeck.



The bargaining teams participated in 21 sessions and spent more than 120 hours together, exploring options and then developing contractual language for the final tentative agreement. The REA membership ratified the tentative agreement on Aug. 29, 2024.

“Rochester Community Schools is fortunate to have a highly knowledgeable, caring and talented workforce. Our teachers are our backbone and the district is proud to have a collaborative relationship with their representatives. This agreement is an investment in our trusted professionals so that they may continue to do the vital work at the core of our purpose – the education of our students,” said Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dave Murphy.

Following district practices, the REA master agreement is publicly available on the RCS website.

Some of the contract details include: a reduction of the salary step schedule from 18 to 15 steps; increases in base salary by three percent in year one, three percent in year two, and \$2,000 in year three; increases in longevity pay; mutually agreeable language on formerly prohibited subjects of bargaining such as teacher evaluations, layoffs and

recalls, teacher placement and teacher rights.

“The board is pleased to have approved an agreement with our teachers that recognizes their dedication and hard work. This agreement reflects our commitment to providing a high-quality education for our students while also supporting our educators with fair compensation and working conditions. I want to thank all those who were involved in the negotiations over the past year. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the teachers to ensure the success of our schools and the well-being of our community,” said Board of Education President Michelle Bueltel.

The former labor contract covered the period from Feb. 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024. The new contract is a three-year agreement, from Sept. 3, 2024, through June 30, 2027.

“As shortages in the workforce continue to challenge many industries, I believe this long-term contract will prove pivotal in providing increased stability for our organization,” said Russo. “Today’s contract approval demonstrates how our Rochester Community Schools Board of Education and our leadership team value our dedicated teachers.”

Making sense of math with empowered learners and problem-solvers

Gone are the days of rote memorization. With new, engaging math instruction, Rochester Community Schools students experience rich, inquiry-based learning that promotes a growth mindset, builds positive math identities and values deep conceptual understanding over speed.



The RCS K-12 math curriculum challenges students to gather evidence, think critically and share multiple math strategies, so they are able to build problem-solving and communication skills, make connections across concepts and develop procedural fluency to last a lifetime.



“Traditionally, math instruction was heavy on memorization and mimicking,” said Mike Gittner, district math coach. “In the past, students may have gotten by with memorizing an isolated technique for a quiz, but they didn’t necessarily understand why they were doing it. They weren’t required to know how the math worked. In contrast, we build thinking classrooms where students are the doers of mathematics. Math instruction doesn’t just happen to students; they are actively engaged with it. We want student-mathematicians to

build number sense and deep comprehension of concepts so they can apply math knowledge to new situations beyond the test questions and beyond the grade level. The knowledge carries through.”

The Bridges in Mathematics curriculum is in its third year of implementation for RCS students in kindergarten through fifth grade. It features relevant, open-ended tasks and lessons that allow educators to make productive adaptations to

ensure each student can develop a positive math identity.

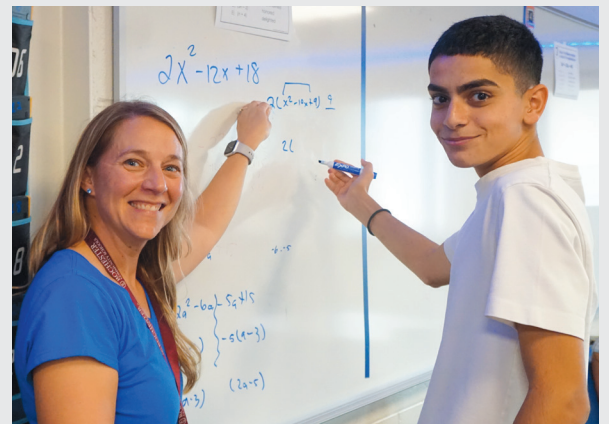
“In RCS classrooms, students gather evidence, explain their thinking and develop respect for others’ reasoning. Teachers encourage students to employ multiple strategies when solving problems. They empower students by providing opportunities to work in pairs, discuss in small groups and share with the whole class,” said Kim Mroczek, district math coach. “There is dialogue and rich thinking around the work.”

Using manipulatives, visual models and connections to the real world, RCS K-12 math students employ mathematical reasoning in all aspects of their engagement with math concepts. Bridges assessments and i-Ready diagnostic assessments show measurable growth from fall 2023 to spring 2024 and multi-grade interactions help students understand and build on concepts and move them forward.

Middle school math coach Julie Schmidt highlights that RCS educators are helping students reduce math anxiety and overcome “I can’t” feelings by turning mistakes and struggles into learning experiences that value persistence, perseverance, effort and productive struggle.

“Math classrooms aren’t quiet places where students sit alone at their desk and hide their work,” she said. “Classmates work together at vertical whiteboards, notice strategies used by partners, discuss different approaches and justify and respectfully critique each other’s reasoning. These effective teaching and learning practices exist as a through line for RCS K-12 mathematics.”

At the high school level, this K-12 preparation leads students to construct strategies and reason through concrete, representational and abstract understandings of math.



Collaboration and problem-solving are important components of the RCS math curriculum.

“With a growth mindset, students collaborate and grow in math content knowledge, strategy development and confidence,” said math coach Jill Gumz. “As our students engage in the standards of mathematical practices, they are developing the analytical, modeling and critical thinking skills that will equip them to succeed in the evolving demands of career, college and life.”

Rochester Community Schools recognized for excellence in financial reporting

Rochester Community Schools has been awarded the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fiscal year ending in 2023. This honor recognizes districts that have met the program’s highest standards for financial reporting and transparency.

“For over half a century, ASBO International’s Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting has been the gold standard in promoting and recognizing excellence in financial reporting,” said ASBO International Executive Director Jim Rowan. “Communicating the financial and economic state of a district is so important when engaging with the school community and building their trust. Districts that receive the COE award have demonstrated their ability to do that at the highest level.”



By participating in the ASBO program, school districts demonstrate their commitment to financial transparency. The district’s annual comprehensive financial report was reviewed by a team of financial professionals who provided feedback to improve future documents. The report met the requirements of the program and received the Certificate of Excellence.

“We are proud to have earned this award for the

fifth consecutive year,” said Matthew McDaniel, assistant superintendent of business operations. “Sound financial processes and transparent reporting ensure RCS can remain focused on the very important mission of educating our students.”



Congratulations to the 2025 National Merit® Scholarship Program semifinalists and commended scholars



Celebrating academic excellence

Congratulations to the Rochester Community School District's 2025 National Merit® Scholarship Program semifinalists and commended scholars!

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is a standardized assessment administered nationally through the College Board to measure 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.

Congratulations to our district scholars from Adams (AHS), Rochester (RHS), and Stoney Creek (SCHS) high schools and the International Academy (IA).

Semifinalists

Rishika Balakrishnan, **RHS**
 Vaughn Campbell, **RHS**
 Adit Garg, **RHS**
 Ana Grajales, **AHS**
 Minjun Kim, **IA**
 StanLi McHaney, **AHS**
 Jay Modi, **AHS**

Vishal Myneni, **AHS**
 Jackson Otlewski, **IA**
 Jaden Singer, **SCHS**
 Sanjith Sambath, **IA**
 Stefanie Schneider, **IA**
 Tymon Szawiela, **RHS**
 Franny Wang, **AHS**

Commended

Aayushi Banerjee, **AHS**
 Garrett Berry, **SCHS**
 Siddhant Bhat, **AHS**
 Carly Bruce, **SCHS**
 Hardy Chen, **AHS**
 Sofia Dobrin, **SCHS**
 Vivian Ferow, **AHS**
 Emily Gamage, **SCHS**
 Adam Glinski, **RHS**
 Aarush Gota, **AHS**
 Daniela Guedez-Chirinos, **SCHS**
 Abigail He, **RHS**
 Thomas Kawasaki, **AHS**
 Aiden Kim, **AHS**
 Isaac Kurian, **AHS**
 Joseph Lentz, **AHS**

Kevin Li, **AHS**
 Prisha Malani, **AHS**
 Immanuel Moses, **RHS**
 Paige O'Neill, **RHS**
 Momoko Paris, **RHS**
 Liliana Pastora Monterosso, **SCHS**
 Naiylah Qadri, **RHS**
 Robert Romanski, **AHS**
 Julia Salanta, **RHS**
 Anasua Shome, **SCHS**
 Yashieta Somani, **AHS**
 James Tsamaidis, **AHS**
 Isabel Wilinski, **SCHS**
 Eryn Yang, **AHS**
 Hyein Yang, **SCHS**
 Matt Zhang, **AHS**

90-DAY PLAN

Superintendent Nicholas Russo

To ensure a successful transition, Mr. Russo outlined a framework for his first 90 days leading the district. The plan includes an intentional focus on building trusted relationships with students, staff, families and community partners, and gaining the knowledge, perspectives and understanding necessary to honor the legacy of the district's educational excellence.

"My 90-day plan supports an itinerary that prioritizes student success," said Mr. Russo. "Relationships remain at the core of teaching, learning and organizational excellence. I am committed to building upon the partnerships that support social, emotional and academic wellness, while utilizing relevant, dimensional data to drive high-yield instructional practices."

The plan identifies attributes that high-performing school districts have in common.



01 Governance

High-performing school districts are led by a strong, student-centered and cohesive board-superintendent team with aligned values and philosophies to provide a stable environment for students, staff and community members.

02 Executive Leadership

The superintendent's cabinet provides strategic guidance to manage and maintain organizational systems and daily operations with a future-focused vision for growth.

03 Organizational Culture

A culture of acceptance, belonging and purpose ensures that the district remains a destination for students, staff and residents.



04 Teaching and Learning

Student success remains at the core of the mission and vision. Teaching and learning is the basic measurement for all decisions and processes.

05 Systems and Operations

Being fiscally responsible, recruiting and retaining high-quality talent, and proactively managing our geographic footprint ensures structures, systems and operations that effectively impact our core mission.



06 Community Relations/ Communications

Community connections are vital to the engagement, enrollment and success of the district. Communications set the foundation for calibration and ambassadorship of Rochester Community Schools.



Moving forward

Mr. Russo remains focused on: Building connections with students, staff, families, board and community stakeholders; Executing the strategic plan; Initiating a districtwide facility study to determine program and real estate needs; Advocating for RCS students and public-school children; Engaging with local law enforcement to enhance safety; Promoting executive leadership learning and the collective decision-making process; Creating a cohesive understanding of the metrics and data that indicate student growth; and fostering opportunities for student achievement.