

# Seeding Youth Success







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THANK YOU\$

# welcome TO THE **11<sup>TH</sup>** **ANNUAL** STATE OF OUR CHILDREN REPORT CARD RELEASE

We begin this new year with a commitment to position every child in Rochester on a path to upward mobility by improving educational outcomes from cradle to career. Since its founding, ROC the Future Alliance has championed a vision that *Every Child is School Ready, Supported, Successful, and College and Career Ready.*

ROC the Future Alliance believes that to fulfill this vision, our community must share accountability for equitable outcomes, maintain an unwavering focus on results, commit to data-informed improvement, and consistently make practice and policy shifts across the systems that most impact children and families.

This year's theme is **Seeding Youth Success.** We know that when we make investments in our youth and ensure that they have supportive environments, they can learn and grow. That is why our Alliance—made up of leaders representing systems such as education, healthcare, housing, business, philanthropy, and government, along with parents and youth—comes together to promote intentional alignment of resources to accelerate and increase our collective impact.

We welcome our entire community—the village our children need—to join us in this work. We encourage you to visit [www.rocthefuture.org](http://www.rocthefuture.org) for more information and to share the data and stories in this report with others in your sphere of influence.

We invite you to get involved to make a difference. Consider joining an Outcome Team, aligning your organization's funding priorities with our goals, or advocating for policy change to create more effective systems that serve our children and families well. No one entity can do this work alone, but collectively, we can have a greater impact that will lead to meaningful change in our community.

In partnership,



**Lorna Washington, EdD**  
ROC the Future Alliance  
Chair



**Brian Lewis**  
ROC the Future Alliance Executive  
Director



ROC the Future Alliance (RTFA) is a member of the StriveTogether® network, a national movement of nearly 70 place-based partnerships improving key outcomes for over 14 million youth and counting.

We are an Alliance of over 60 leading Rochester-area institutions, Parent/Family Partners (PFPs) and youth. We promote the alignment of community resources and initiatives to improve the academic achievement of Rochester's children.

We use a collective impact framework that involves centralized infrastructure, a dedicated backbone staff, and a structured process to form a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities across organizations.



# SEEDING YOUTH SUCCESS

## Our Goals

- Every Child is School Ready
- Every Child is Supported
- Every Child is Successful
- Every Child is College and Career Ready

Since 2011, we've been committed to changing systems and improving outcomes for children and families. We've grown to include a backbone staff of 10 with plans to grow to 15, a robust leadership team, 35 Convener organizations who set the strategic direction of our Alliance, and multiple workgroups focused on strategic work.

## ROC the Future Alliance Officers and Workgroup Chairs



ROC the Future Alliance Chair –  
**Dr. Lorna Washington,**  
Sr. Program Officer, Konar Foundation



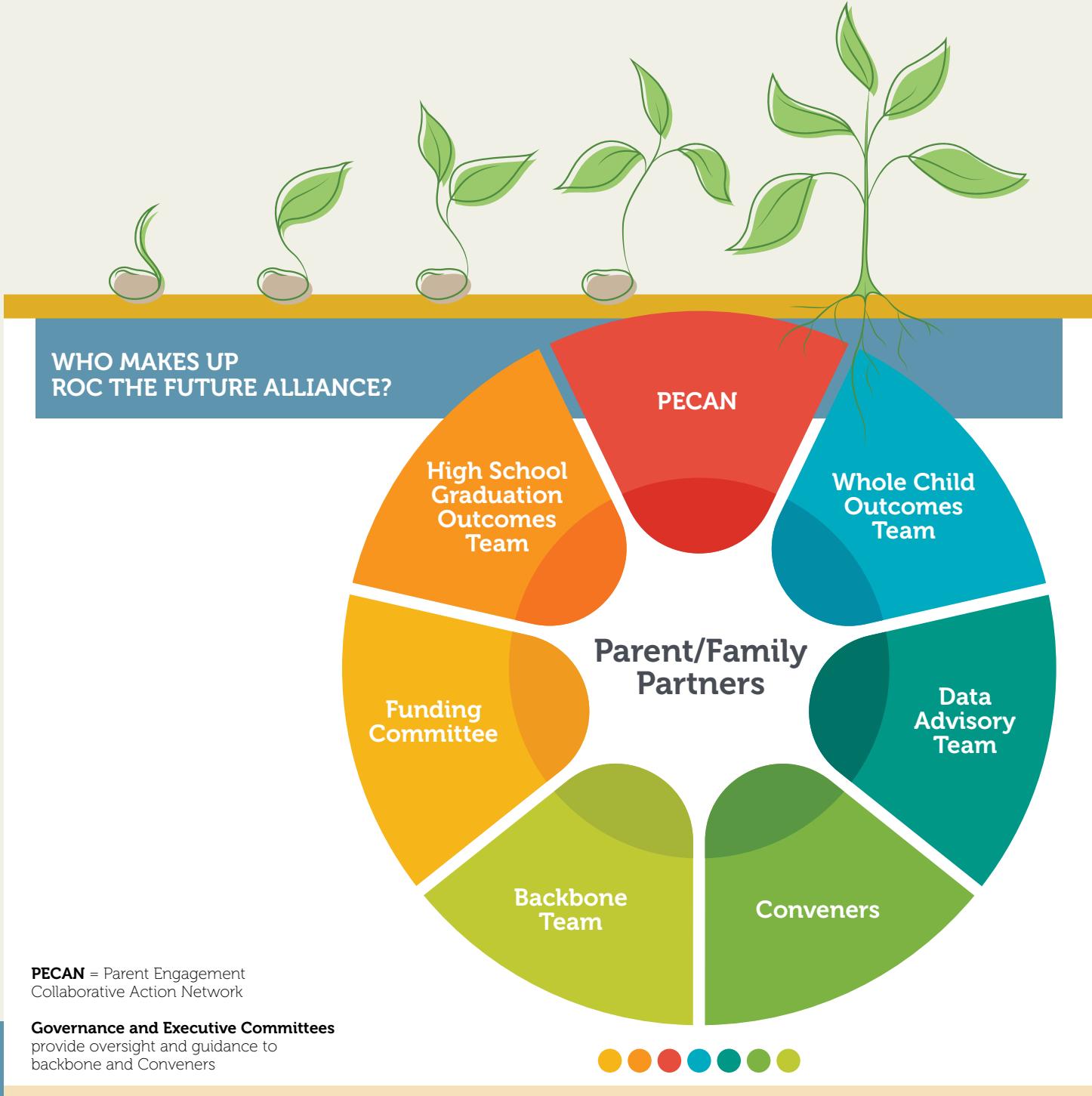
Vice Chair –  
**Dr. Shaun Nelms,**  
Vice President of Community Partnerships, University of Rochester



Treasurer –  
**Simeon Banister,**  
President & CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation



Secretary –  
**Dr. Shirley Green,**  
Commissioner of Recreation and Human Services, City of Rochester





**Caroline  
McClendon**

PECAN (Parent Engagement Collaborative Action Network)  
Co-Chair – Parent/ Family Partner



**Jasmine  
Vega**

Whole Child Initiative (WCI)  
Outcomes Team Co-Chair —  
Parent/ Family Partner



**Nicolle  
Haynes**

High School Graduation Outcomes Team (HSGOT) Co-Chair —  
Executive Director of Equity,  
Inclusion and Curriculum Program Audit, Rochester City School District



**Janice  
Kpor**

PECAN Co-chair —  
Parent/ Family Partner



**Dr.  
LeKeyah  
Wilson**

WCI Co-Chair — Medical Director of  
Community Pediatrics and Wellness,  
Rochester Regional Health



**Shawanda  
Evans**

HSGOT Co-Chair — Director of  
Pre-Collegiate Programs and  
Dual-Enrollment, Monroe  
Community College



**Dr.  
Lynn  
Lubecki**

WCI Co-Chair — Assistant Professor  
of Educational Studies,  
Empire State University



# OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



We are working together to clarify and convey our Alliance-wide problem definition, goal, framework for change, and plan for learning. With support from Causewave Community Partners, we are currently developing an Alliance-wide strategic plan. As a first step, we recently refreshed both our guiding principles and problem definition with input from current partners as part of our process to strengthen our common agenda.



## Strengthening Relationships

ROC the Future Alliance welcomes and values relationships with community partners while centering Parent/Family Partners and youth. Together, we co-create solutions to improve educational outcomes, including health and human services, for every child in Rochester.



## Community Engagement

ROC the Future Alliance aligns with Parent/Family Partners, youth, and the community—as contributors, co-creators, and decision-makers—to support children’s and family’s success through collaborative efforts.



## Racial Equity

ROC the Future Alliance commits to dismantling racism and transforming systems that perpetuate inequity by changing policies, practices, and power structures to ensure that Black and Brown children in Rochester have educational equity, health, and well-being.

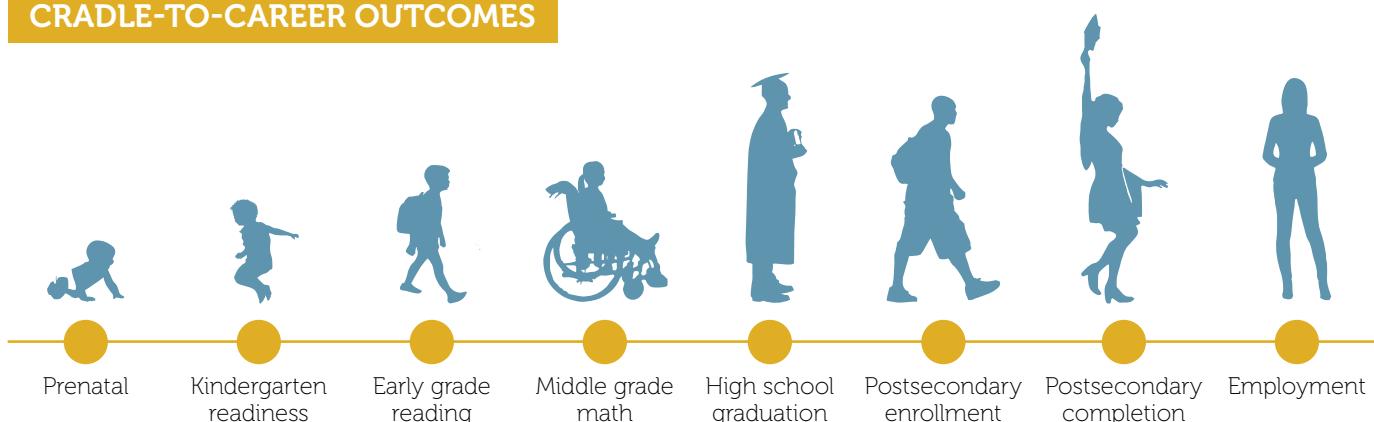


## Continuous Improvement

ROC the Future Alliance makes community-driven and data-informed decisions, continuously monitoring progress and making adjustments that change and improve systems so that every child in Rochester is positioned to achieve economic mobility.

**The work of our Conveners, Parent/Family Partners, and youth leaders is creating an impact. This report is an illustrative reflection, not an exhaustive list, of our collaborative efforts to position every child in Rochester on a path to academic success.**

## CRADLE-TO-CAREER OUTCOMES



# EARLY CHILDHOOD

## WHOLE CHILD INITIATIVE

The Whole Child Initiative (WCI) seeks to improve the physical and social-emotional health, education, and human service outcomes for children and their families, prenatal through age 8. The initiative is designed to strategically address goals at the child, family, community, and systems levels. We are committed to transforming Rochester into a community where...

- Children and families receive services and support to meet universal and identified needs; i.e. they are healthy, thriving, and meeting and maintaining their fullest developmental potential.
- Children and families live in safe, stable, healthy, and nurturing environments, including families, neighborhoods, and communities.
- Children are prioritized, and the whole community acts to support their health, safety, learning, and well-being.
- Systems work for families, and families are economically stable.

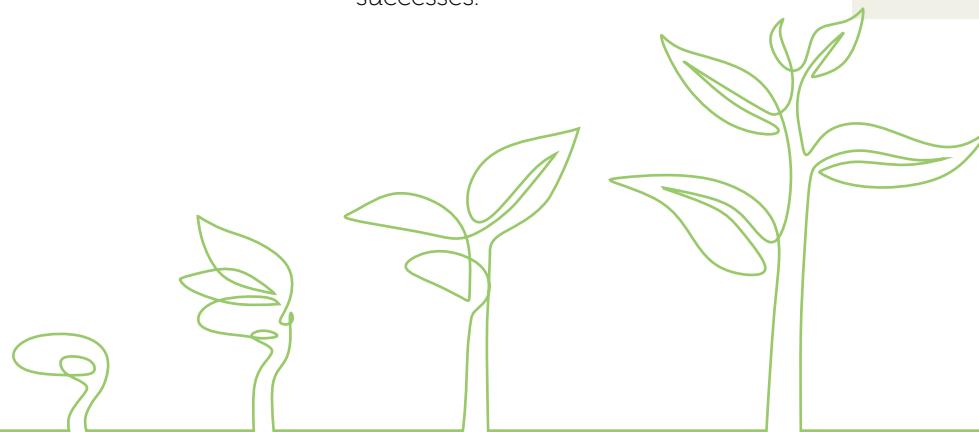
After launching in 2022 and completing an initial one-year planning phase, the WCI transitioned to implementation mode in March of 2023 with two key community engagement activities: System Support Mapping and Parent Cafés.

**System Support Mapping** is a guided approach to help community members think about and visualize systems that support children and parents. We use systems mapping to reach a better understanding of the complex systems people depend on, including healthcare, education, and human services. Creating system support maps is a great way to spark meaningful conversations about which aspects of these critical systems are working and which are not. System mapping can also be used to align Systems Partners and community members for transformative change through collective action.

**Parent Cafés** are structured, small group conversations that facilitate transformation and healing within families, build communities, develop peer-to-peer relationships, and engage parents as partners in improving the systems that serve them. Parent Cafés are physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about their challenges, strategies, and successes.

Several recurring themes have emerged as we've collected and synthesized the data from Systems Mapping and Parent Cafés

- Maternal health disparities for women of color including neonatal care.
- A need for mental health services for Rochester students.
- Deficiencies in early grade literacy and early childhood education.
- Lack of access to Early Intervention Services (EIS), especially in the neighborhoods where poverty, violent crime, and substandard education are most pervasive.
- Most of the 500 residents on the EIS waitlist are Black and Brown families living in these neighborhoods.
- Additional special education services are needed to meet the needs of students.
- Out of school time and after school programs are not aligned with school curriculums, making them difficult for families to access.
- A lack of affordable, quality housing.



The Whole Child Initiative has prioritized three key issues to address, and we have established specific goals to help focus our efforts, which were endorsed at our October 2023 Community Convening

1. 80% of Rochester's 2-5-year-olds will be kindergarten ready by 2030. According to the RECAP report published by Children's Institute, the percentage of kindergarten ready children for the 2021-22 school year was only 43.6%. It will take a coordinated and sustained effort to achieve this goal.
2. All children living in the focused zip codes (Upper Falls, MarketView Heights, JOSANA, Group 14621, and Brown Square neighborhoods) will have access to high quality PreK (Community Based Organization/School Based) by 2030.
3. The Whole Child Initiative will partner with RCSD and local health care systems to pilot an initiative that will address maternal health disparities and educational implications for children and families.

## WCI Building on a Successful First Year

Year one for the Whole Child Initiative was largely about building relationships and trust between Parent/Family Partners (PFPs), Systems Partners, and the broader Rochester community. Equally important is our ongoing commitment to build PFP power, which was our 2023 theme and a core principle that remains central to our work.

Among the many ways we've engaged PFPs is by providing ongoing professional development, including training them to facilitate system support mapping sessions. In addition, 95% of PFPs are certified Parent Café hosts, and many have taken project management training to learn about human centered design and consensus building tools.

To date, we have engaged more than 80 PFPs and Systems Partners in system support mapping. Over 200 parents across the Rochester community have participated in Parent Cafés, including a Spanish language Café where many of the participants were asylum seekers from Central and South America and new to our community.

We are proud of all that we've accomplished and look forward to building on this momentum in 2024!



## WHAT'S NEW IN THE RCSD PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR 2023-24?

The Rochester City School District is making significant strides to enhance its support and services for pre-kindergarten students and their families in the upcoming year. See below for several examples of RCSDs work in action:

- RCSD, in partnership with Get Ready to GROW, is providing enhanced entrant screenings for all pre-kindergarten students in community-based organizations and three large District pre-kindergarten sites.
- In 2022, RCSD secured a Student Mental Health Grant for PreK through Grade 12 based on data collected from Family Surveys and the Youth-Risk Behavior Survey.
- RCSD is opening the Mt. Hope Pre-kindergarten Trauma Center to provide services to pre-kindergarten students and families (both in schools and community-based organizations) who have experienced trauma.

# Get Ready To GROW

SUPPORTING KIDS® HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

## GET READY TO GROW (GRTG)

Get Ready to GROW (GRTG), a community initiative managed by Children's Institute, provides free comprehensive developmental screening and follow-up support for children from 12-60 months. GRTG began in 2016 by screening 3-year-old children in the city of Rochester. In 2020, GRTG expanded to include children from 12-60 months, and in 2021, it expanded to other counties in the Finger Lakes region. Currently, partners in Monroe, Wayne, Chemung, Yates, and Steuben Counties screen children in all developmental areas. The screenings include vision, hearing, speech, motor, dental, height & weight, cognitive, and social/emotional development.



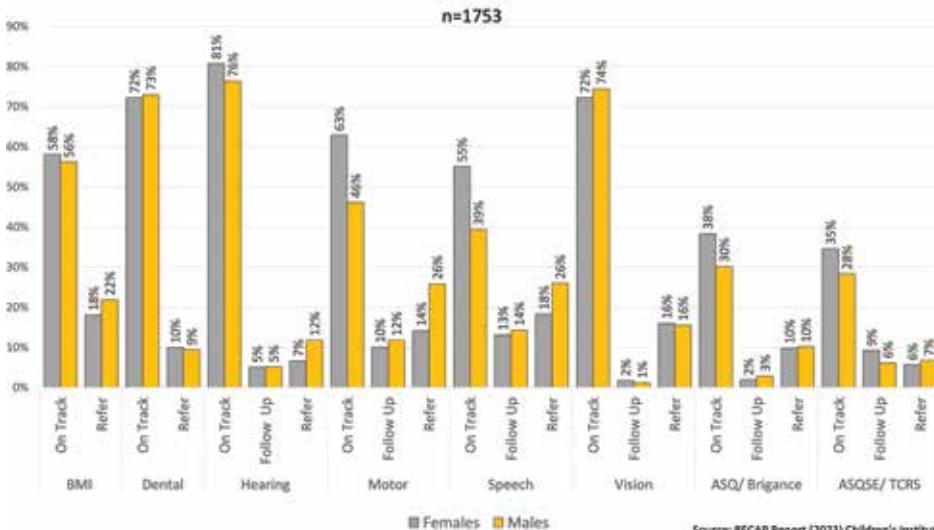
During the 2022-2023 academic year, GRTG screened 1,753 children in the Rochester area. Typically, about 50% of the children screened receive a referral for a full evaluation in one or more developmental areas. GRTG Navigators, together with community partners who have a trusted relationship with the families, share the screening results and provide guidance for next steps to ensure the child receives

a full evaluation and connection to services if a need is determined.

GRTG is an affiliate of Help Me Grow, a national screening model, and with this partnership, we successfully lobbied for screening funds to be included in the New York State budget. The amount was increased in 2023 with a goal to support new affiliates as well as the existing locations.

**Chart 1**

*Get Ready to GROW Screenings - SY2022 - 2023*



Source: RECAP Report (2023) Children's Institute



## RECAP Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3)



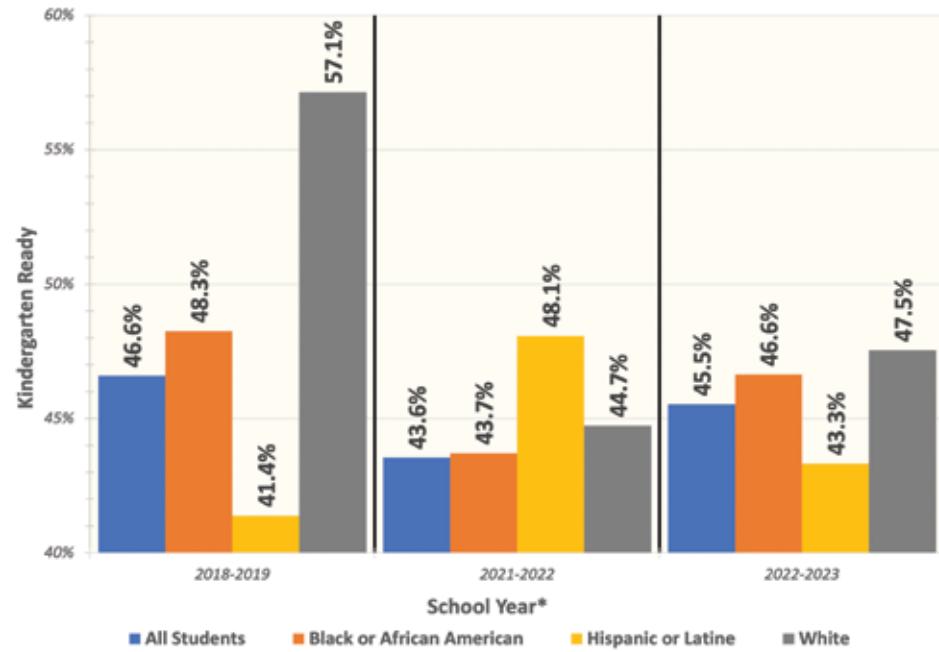
The Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership is a community-wide assessment program managed by Children's Institute and is dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education in Rochester. RECAP translates data into practical information for families, educators, and policy makers through community collaboration, technical assistance, and professional development. A major component of RECAP is to assess the quality of classroom programs in Rochester's pre-kindergarten system. RECAP annually recruits and trains early childhood professionals on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Third Edition (ECERS-3), a comprehensive assessment tool that measures both environmental provisions and teacher-child interactions that affect the broad developmental needs of young children, including cognitive, social emotional and physical needs as well as health and safety.

In the 2023-2024 school year, 16 Master Observers will conduct observations on up to 185 pre-kindergarten classroom programs. Observation results are securely delivered to individual teachers to show areas of strength and lesser strengths. Professional development and allocation of resources are targeted based on ECERS-3 outcomes data. RECAP has provided reliable and valid information on early childhood care and education in Rochester for more than three decades. As such, RECAP is an

essential partner within Rochester's PreK-12 educational system. For detailed information on RECAP ECERS-3 results, see the following

link highlighting the [Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership 2022-2023 Twenty-Sixth Annual Report](#)

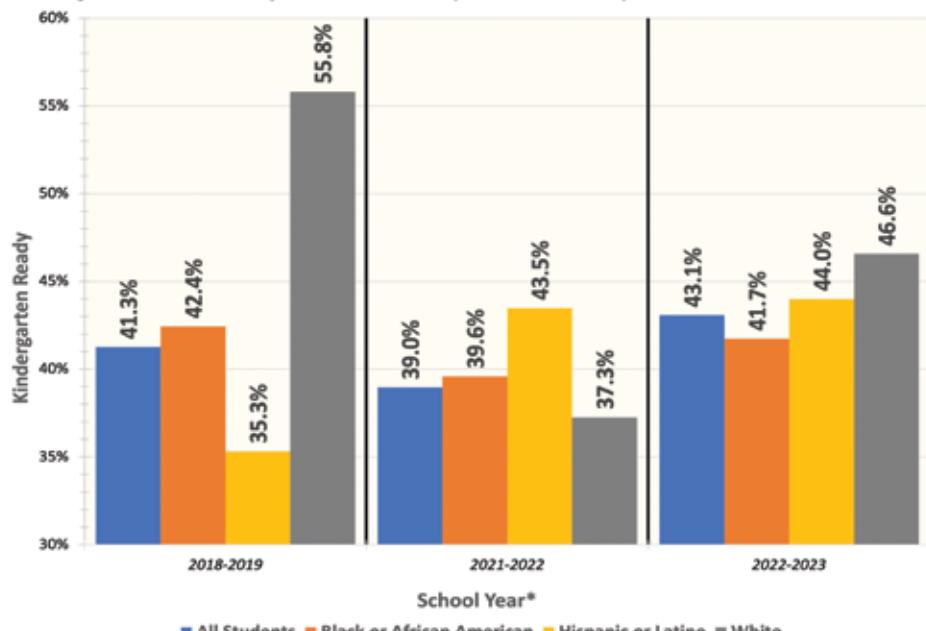
**Chart 2**  
*Kindergarten Readiness of Female Students disaggregated by Race & Ethnicity*



\* SY2019-2020 & SY2020-2021 not included due to impact of COVID-19

Source: New York State Department of Education (2023), <https://data.nysed.gov>

**Chart 3**  
*Kindergarten Readiness of Male Students by Race & Ethnicity*



\* SY2019-2020 & SY2020-2021 not included due to impact of COVID-19

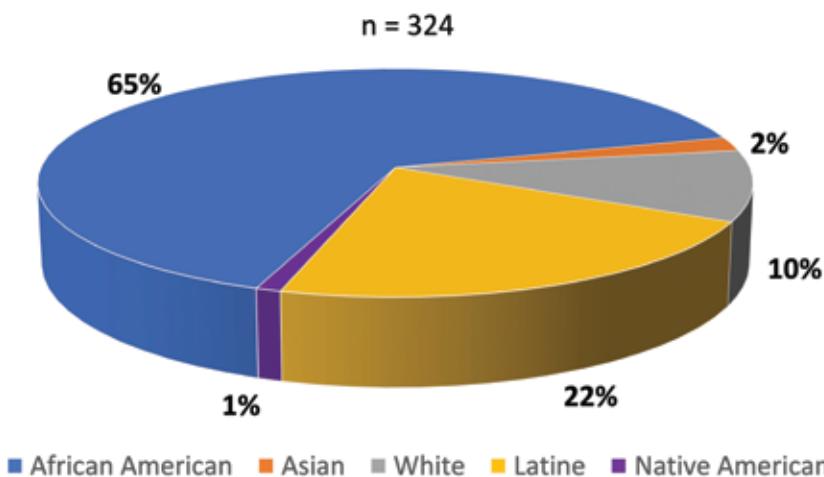
Source: New York State Department of Education (2023), <https://data.nysed.gov>

# GRSLA/ SUMMERLEAP INTO KINDERGARTEN



Chart 4

2023 SummerLEAP Student Participation by Race/Ethnicity



Source: 2023 GRSLA/SummerLEAP program



The Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association (GRSLA) is focused on minimizing the achievement gap by addressing the opportunity gap encountered by students from lower resourced families during the summer. SummerLEAP features a six-week /

five-days a week / six-hours a day program provided tuition-free. Recruited students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Data shows that academic support is most needed for reading and math. Community-based EPK/UPK centers host the SummerLEAP classrooms.



Two certified teachers and one paraprofessional lead each classroom (1:5 adult to student ratio).

The SummerLEAP program focuses on academics, enrichment, life skills, safety, and social-emotional growth. The curriculum is immersive and project-based, stressing literacy, numeracy, and science. Additionally, outside the classroom, the program focuses on family outreach grounded on the Development Relationships framework.

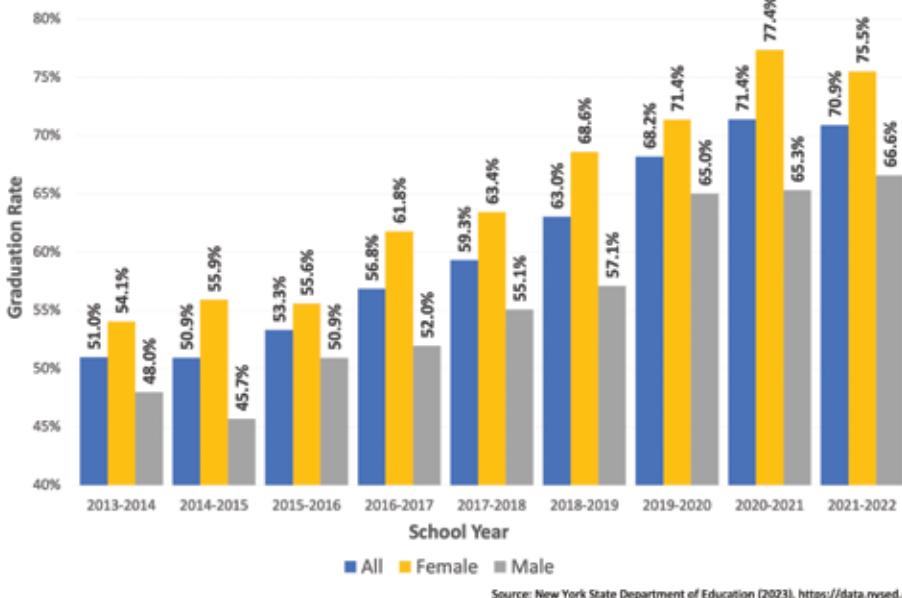
During 2023, the SummerLEAP program served 324 students in 21 classrooms across Rochester. Students received 170 hours of high-quality summer learning, including an average of over 80 in-classroom science lessons.

# HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES



## Chart 5

RCSD High School Graduation Rates by Gender



Source: New York State Department of Education (2023), <https://data.nysed.gov>

Over the last year, ROC the Future Alliance's High School Graduation Outcomes Team (HSGOT) has focused on engaging a diverse group of collaborators with the goal of using evidence-based strategies to improve the ninth-grade experience, attendance, and high school graduation rates. To date, the current RCSD graduation rate is 70.9%. We have spent time building the capacity of all collaborators to do systems-level work, including the application of [\\*Implementation Science](#).

Our current results statement is:

**II All students in the city of Rochester will graduate college or be career ready with an initial graduation-rate milestone of 80% by 2030. II**

Our strategic areas of focus are:

1. Build parent/family partnerships.
2. Infuse career and technical education, pre-kindergarten through grade 12.
3. Offer innovative academic enrichment, intervention, and support.

A key milestone toward achieving these results is to gather HSGOT strategy feedback from at least 80% of the providers who serve high school students in the city of Rochester. We also aim to achieve 50% HSGOT membership of parents/families and scholars. As part of that, we will establish two Parent/Family Partner HSGOT Co-chairs in 2024.  
[\\*https://nim.fpg.unc.edu/](https://nim.fpg.unc.edu/)

## HIGH SCHOOL DATA TRENDS

Over the course of the previous decade the Rochester City School District has made impressive strides in improving high school graduation rates, making consistent gains year over year. With this data in mind, the High School Graduation Outcomes Team has oriented toward determining what aspects of the high school experience are impacting our students' progress toward graduation so that we can achieve the goal of an 80% graduation rate by 2030.

As part of the High School Graduation Outcome Team's strategic focus, we support increased exposure to national, regional, and local career and technical education programs. Currently, the majority of our high school students are engaged in the Humanities Pathway. Relatively fewer students are engaged in STEM graduation pathways or career and technical education programs.

## The Children's Agenda

Smart Choices. Bold Voices.

## SOLUTIONS NOT SUSPENSIONS

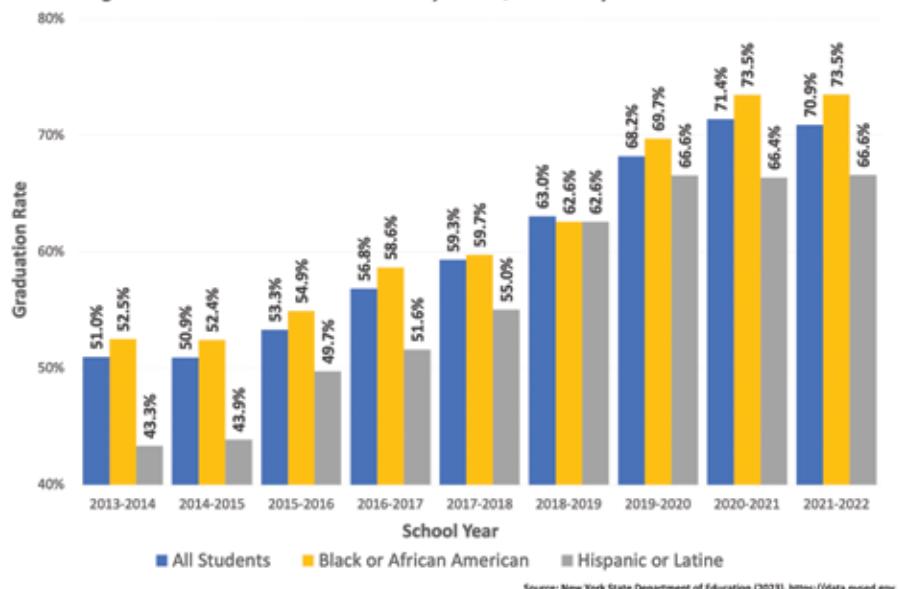
The Solutions Not Suspensions (SNS) Campaign seeks to amend New York State law to put common sense limitations on the use of exclusionary discipline in schools and promote evidence-based alternative forms of discipline. A bill by the same name, "Solutions Not Suspensions," is

currently under consideration in the New York State Legislature. Research shows that students of color, lower income students, and students with disabilities are suspended at the highest rates. As a result, suspensions contribute to students dropping out of high school and widens gaps in achievement by race, income, and disability status.<sup>1</sup> Passing the SNS bill would help close achievement gaps and improve high school graduation rates by reducing the harm caused by suspensions.

The SNS Campaign made significant progress in 2023, with the first-ever public hearings on the SNS bill held by the New York State Senate. Dozens of parents, students, educators, faith leaders, and community members traveled to Albany and New York City to testify on their experiences with suspensions. Parents in Rochester held a rally attended by more than 70 people who support the bill. The SNS bill came very close to passing in the State Senate in June, and we hope to ride that momentum into the 2024 state legislative session. In November, Children's Agenda will release a short brief on suspensions statewide using recently released data. Conveners can help distribute the brief to their networks, and use their relationships to build support for the SNS bill this coming year!

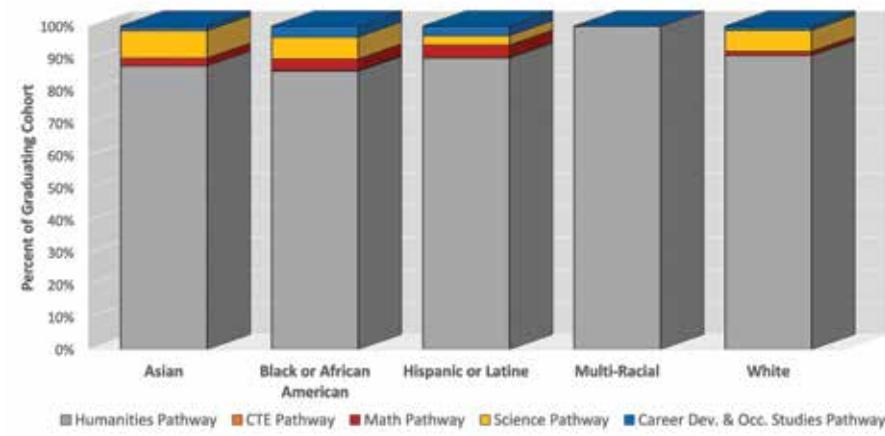
<sup>1</sup> 2015-16 School Climate and Safety. (2018). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>; Rosenbaum, J. (2020). Educational and Criminal Justice Outcomes 12 Years After School Suspension. *Youth & society*, 52(4), 515-547. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x17752208>; Lacoé, J., & Steinberg, M. P. (2019). Do Suspensions Affect Student Outcomes? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 41(1), 34-62. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373718794897>

### Chart 6 RCSD High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Source: New York State Department of Education (2023). <https://data.nysed.gov>

### Chart 7 Racial and Ethnic Difference in Graduation Pathways All RCSD Students SY2021 - 2022



Source: New York State Department of Education, Graduation Pathway Data (2023). <https://data.nysed.gov>

## EAST EPO COMMUNITY CAFÉ PROJECT

The Community Café Project at East EPO (Educational Partnership Organization) represents a transformative approach to community engagement—rooted in authentic dialogue and collaboration—within the framework of our community school. Drawing inspiration from the Be Strong Families Parent Café model, which





RTFA's Whole Child Initiative successfully rolled out in 2023, East EPO's Community Cafés serve as a sanctuary for fostering genuine connections among scholars, families, staff, and community partners. This initiative aims to broaden the circle of support for scholars by establishing a safe, respectful space where diverse stakeholders can gather to explore meaningful questions. Facilitators prioritize creating an environment where every contribution is not only encouraged but also deeply valued. East EPO began rolling out community cafes in December 2023 and will continue in 2024.



## Urban League of Rochester

### URBAN LEAGUE OF ROCHESTER

The Urban League of Rochester (ULR) has been actively engaged in promoting the development of students in our community for decades. Last summer, the Urban League hosted several chat sessions with students, asking for feedback and insight on their needs. Students shared their concerns about the lack of safe places to spend free time as well as a shortage of healthy activities and employment opportunities. The ULR is using this feedback to tailor its strategy to better meet the needs of our community.

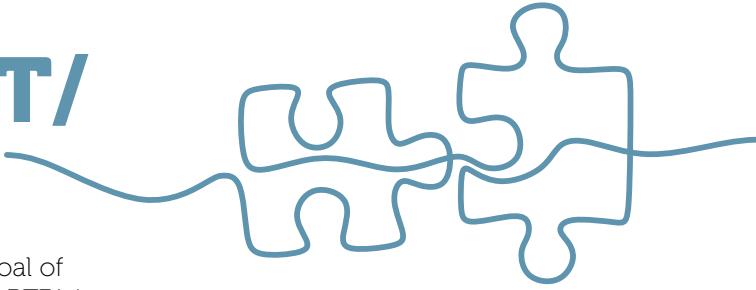
The Urban League Black Scholars program recognized 542 scholars in June for maintaining a B average or better for all four years of high school. The Urban League has also partnered with the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), which offers 900 students the ability to focus on improving their academic performance.

The Urban League seeks to expand its presence in the community in 2024, reaching parents and families in addition to youth. The organization plans to offer STEM related activities for the whole family to enjoy. This will cultivate teamwork and learning



while engaging entire families in positive educational experiences. Lastly, the Black Scholar program will be hosting more hands-on college workshops that will help students complete documents and processes that are required for college admission.

# BUILDING PARENT/ FAMILY POWER



Transformational change happens when Parent/Family Partners, Youth Leaders, and Systems Partners come together for student success.

One of the ways ROC the Future Alliance centers parent voice and shares power with parents is through our Parent Engagement Collaborative Action Network (PECAN), a parent workgroup designed to improve parent and family engagement in all aspects of their children's development and education. We make an effort to ensure that every table in the Alliance has parent representation for shared decision making and co-development of solutions.

In 2023, we established Parent/Family Partner Cornerstones to fortify our commitment to sharing power with parents.

## Parent/Family Partner Cornerstones:

- Recognize and challenge power imbalances.
- Hold lived experience as expertise.
- Create racial equity by partnering with those most impacted by decisions in the actual decision-making process.

ROC the Future Alliance understands that those most impacted by decisions must have a seat at the decision-making table, which is why we have established a goal of at least 50% Parent/Family Partner representation on all teams and committees by 2025.

In order to realize this goal of 50% PFP representation, RTFA is committed to breaking down barriers to parent and youth participation. Here are some ways that the Alliance has changed internal policies and practices to break barriers and promote PFP engagement:

- Childcare provided during all RTFA meetings.
- Transportation services to/from all RTFA meetings.
- Meals provided during RTFA meetings for both PFPs and their families.
- Tech support, including equipment (e.g. laptops, hotspots, etc.) and troubleshooting.
- Compensation rate of \$35/hr for all PFPs attending an RTFA meeting.
- Professional training/development.

Parent/ Family Partners, alongside the backbone team, showcased RTFAs collective impact approach last September, when twelve ROC the Future Alliance members joined more than 600 community leaders from across the country at StriveTogether's 2023 Cradle to Career Network Convening in San Francisco. Parent/Family Partners Nahmese Bacot and Toyin Anderson delivered a presentation on the topic, *Building Parent/Family Partner Power: A Systems Change Blueprint*. Attendees noted that RTFA was the only partnership at the event that invited parents to present on its behalf. Many left the session saying, "if they can do it, we can do it too."

This year, we ask you to consider how you can commit to building Parent/ Family Power, and what policy/ practice changes can you make within your own organization to better serve youth and families.



## Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) - Charting a Vision Through Healthy and Equitable Futures



The Greater Rochester Health Foundation's Healthy and Equitable Futures (HEF) initiative is a multicomponent strategy to achieve racial equity in health and wellbeing for Black and Latino children, ages 0 to 8, within Monroe County. They are intentionally changing internal grantmaking and community engagement practices to better share power with parents and communities.

Parents and families, alongside their children, are at the heart of the strategy, acting as the guiding force for change. Since the beginning, Parent Leaders have been integral in designing the HEF strategy, serving as facilitators in the HEF Learning Collaborative, working with organizational staff to implement practice changes, and developing grants for organizations to increase their capacity to support systems change. GRHF also provides Parent Leaders with training and support to build their leadership capacity across systems. GRHF, in alignment with StriveTogether's Community Engagement Spectrum and RTFAs Guiding Principles, is committed to centering parents as decision makers and promoting this power-shift across sectors.

To date, HEF has supported organizations in developing internal advisory groups to give parents representation and voice, which has led to more authentic collaboration and increased staffing from the communities being served. Community boards have also increased parent representation and leadership, ensuring that parents are in a position to make decisions that will affect their families.

HEF also recognizes that true systems change requires a deeper cultural transformation. This includes addressing concepts like race, history, structural inequity, and community values in order to support children and families. HEF promotes community dialogue and action for racial equity, with a focus on Black and Latino families. Through this initiative, GRHF is changing organizational policies and practices to develop a more diverse and representative workforce and ensuring organizations are tackling these structural barriers directly.

Here are just a few of HEF's achievements in Monroe County since 2021:

- 40+ organizational changes made to advance family leadership and racial equity.
- 18 grants awarded by Parent Leaders, totaling \$400,000.
- ~5000 individuals served annually by partner organizations.
- ~45 Parent Leaders involved in steering HEF and collaborating on organizational change.



# PERSPECTIVES FROM OUR PARENT/FAMILY PARTNERS



## CAROLINE MCCLENDON

"Shared power is important because parents are the ones in the trenches with our kids. We know what's going on, what's needed, and what will be helpful to motivate and push our kids to achieve their full potential. There is so much that administrators and organizations can do, but by uplifting parent power and parent voice, we can focus on what families *really* need. This is why it's so important to have parents at the table."



## JULIO CRUZ

"At ROC the Future Alliance, parent empowerment is at the forefront of everything we do. It's the cornerstone of our foundation. Parent/Family Partners are respected, encouraged, engaged and are involved in almost every decision made. We are trained and placed at the head, not the tail. Thank you, RTFA!"



## JASMIN VEGA

"I have a seat at the table with funders, systems partners, and the ROC the Future Alliance backbone staff. They want to hear our voice. Parents are equal partners in this work."

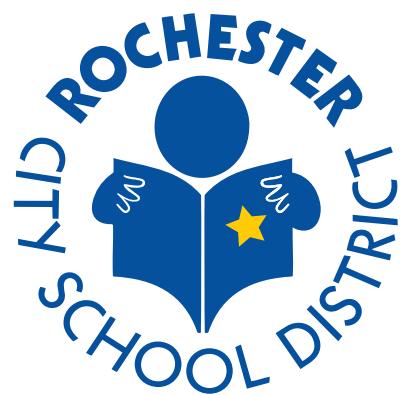


## JANICE KPOR

"I build parent/partner power by being the parent I want other parents to be."

## Rochester City School District (RCSD) Strategic Planning

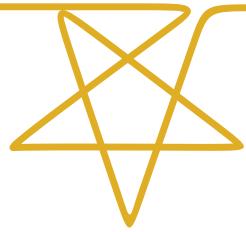
The RCSD Strategic Planning Process is a systematic and structured approach that helps the District define its long-term goals and objectives, allocate resources, and create a roadmap for achieving those goals. The process involves a series of steps and activities to clarify the District's mission, vision, and values; analyze its current state; identify strategic priorities; and develop action plans to achieve desired outcomes for students. The process includes foundational work, a stakeholder survey, District data analysis, steering committee and leadership team meetings, and focus groups. Each of these aspects is integral to developing the strategic plan.



RCSD has deliberately included the voices of youth, parents, and community members in the planning process. The District surveyed students, staff and community members to identify what the strategic plan should prioritize in the next 3-5 years.

- There were a total of 919 survey respondents that included responses in English and Spanish
- Survey respondents included 23% parents and 11% youth
- The top 3 priorities that emerged were **mental health/social emotional wellness, positive school climate & culture, and reading by third grade**.

# YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT



## YOUTH UNITED: BUILDING A BETTER ROCHESTER

At ROC the Future Alliance, we center parent and youth voice in everything we do. That is why we established the Youth Leadership Coalition (YLC) in 2020. Over the past few years, members of the YLC have emerged as key contributors, using their voices to inform our work and make transformational change. Each year, the YLC partners with other youth serving organizations to host a youth summit.



## "Youth United: Building a Better Rochester"

Youth United: Building a Better Rochester was a collaborative effort by ROC the Future's Youth Leadership Coalition (YLC), the Youth Ambassador Council at the Levine Center to End Hate, Youth Voice One Vision, Mayor Malik Evans' Youth Advisory Council, Cameron Community, and the Community Youth Development program at Nazareth College. More than 140 youth and chaperones joined us last April for a day aimed at teaching teens how to take direct action to improve their community.

Youth Engagement Coordinator at the Levine Center, Thomas Cuyler Jr., says it's time we listen to those who are directly impacted. "We wanted to let teens lead the way and create a



program that centered youth voice and choice in our community," said Cuyler. "Our young leaders are building a shared understanding of what underpins expressions of hate by examining the historic roots of systemic oppression in Rochester."

The summit connected youth throughout the Greater Rochester

area to work toward a larger goal of social change through conversations, hands-on activities, and youth presentations. Topics included an examination of Black revolutionary strategies from Reconstruction to the Black Lives Matter era, leadership styles, personal branding, creating an action plan in response to violence, and "Changemaker Competencies."

## COMMON GROUND HEALTH

Common Ground Health's mission is to enhance community health by employing data analysis, engaging residents, and implementing solutions. In 2023, Common Ground's Healthi Kids and Mental Health & Wellness initiatives worked diligently alongside ROC the Future Alliance to promote whole child health and well-being for children, youth, and families.

The Healthi Kids Coalition focused on #RescueRecess in the Rochester City School District, championing a pledge to ensure daily active play for every child. They succeeded in getting recess reinstated in the district's master schedule. They collected hundreds of community signatures that were presented to the RCSD administration in early 2024 to ensure compliance with the mandatory daily recess policy and will work with the district to celebrate the Global Day of Play in February.



In 2022, Common Ground Health initiated the Third ACE (Adverse COVID Experiences) project with partner CCSI, analyzing COVID-19's impact on youth mental health. Collaborating with an advisory workgroup, including 8 youth, 5 caregivers, and 10 organizational partners, they examined data from various sources, including the Monroe County Youth Risk-Behavior Survey and healthcare utilization data. In 2023, Common Ground Health enlisted youth from the Third ACE workgroup to co-design a primary research project, collecting data on youth mental health in Monroe County and their suggested solutions.

In October, Common Ground Health's Community Wellness Summit brought together over 150 youth, caregivers, community members, and leaders in Rochester and Monroe County. This event fostered healing, recovery, and collaborative problem-solving, centering the voices of youth through panel discussions and workshops. The Third ACE project will extend into 2024, delving deeper into the insights shared by young people and family members to co-create a change agenda for promoting positive mental health and wellness for young people and their families.

## RCSD Office of Parent Engagement

The RCSD Office of Parent Engagement is committed to lifting and leading with parent voices. Its mission and framework mirror its commitment to help students **R.E.A.C.H.** new heights of academic success by

- Responding to the needs of parents.
- Encouraging partnerships.
- Advocating on behalf of parents.
- Collaborating with community partners.
- Helping support parents with their child's academic success.

The Office of Parent Engagement continues to support parent groups and School-Based Planning Teams with the following supports:

- Attending parent meetings.
- Supporting and marketing parent recruitment events.
- Individual coaching and weekly school visits with Home School Assistants and Parent Liaisons.

The office's newest initiative is the Home School Assistant and Parent Liaison Professional Learning Institute, a series of ten virtual training sessions facilitated by Michael Herring, CEO of Personal Safety and Educational Development.

The workshops are designed to provide supplementary support to both parents and educators and to facilitate a successful learning experience for students. Workshop topics include:

- The Four Pillars to Increase Parent Engagement.
- Cross-Cultural Communication and Cultural Humility.
- Social-Emotional Learning for Our Current Times.
- Verbal De-escalation Strategies.
- Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: Cultivating a Culture for Learning.

The office has expanded its team to better meet the needs of parents and building-level staff. The Community Liaison Specialist Team is assigned to specific schools to coach all building-level Home School Assistants and Parent Liaisons, ensuring that all building-level parent engagements are compliant with Title I indicators.

## ROC the Future Alliance Community Onboarding & Reboarding Experience C.O.R.E.

RTFA founded C.O.R.E. in 2022 because *building a foundation of shared understanding across the whole Alliance is a critical step toward systems change and transformation.* C.O.R.E. is a customized learning series that helps us approach the collective work of the Alliance with more alignment.

We are proud to report that as of November 2023:

- 123 Alliance members completed C.O.R.E. Module 1: Mental Models & Racial Equity
- 68 Alliance members completed C.O.R.E. Module 2: Power Imbalances
- C.O.R.E. Module 3: Being an Anti-Racist Alliance Member was launched with Parent/ Family Partners, System Partners, and the backbone team. And, Module 3 designers have partnered with the



Antiracist Curriculum Project to enhance and expand the scope of this module.

# Thank you

**PARENT/FAMILY PARTNERS AND YOUTH** for stepping up to lead, representing community voices, participating in strategic decision-making, and shaping our future.

- Whole Child Initiative
- PECAN
- Healthi & Equitable Futures Project
- The Youth Leadership Coalition

**OUTCOME TEAMS** for leaning in and centering racial equity when identifying factors and root causes, identifying measurable outcomes, measuring impact, and providing recommendations.

- Whole Child Outcome Team
- High School Graduation Outcome Team

**CONVENERS** for setting strategic priorities, providing leadership, and elevating educational priorities in the community.

- Action for a Better Community
- Center for Governmental Research
- Children's Institute
- City of Rochester
- Common Ground Health
- Department of Pediatrics at Rochester Regional Health and University of Rochester Medical Center
- East High School
- ESL Federal Credit Union
- Farash Foundation
- Great Schools for All
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Rochester Health Foundation
- Ibero American Action League
- Konar Foundation
- Monroe Community College

- Monroe County Department of Human Services
- Nazareth University
- New York Charter School Association
- NYS Assembly Member Harry B. Bronson
- NYS Assemblymember Sarah Clark
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- Rochester City Council
- Rochester City School Board
- Rochester City School District
- Rochester Education Foundation
- Rochester Educational Opportunity Center
- Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative
- Rochester Public Library
- St. John Fisher University
- SUNY Brockport
- The Children's Agenda
- TogetherNow
- United Way of Greater Rochester
- Urban League of Rochester
- U.S. Congressman Joe Morelle

**FUNDERS** for making all of this possible.

- ESL Foundation
- Farash Foundation
- Greater Rochester Health Foundation
- Hallowell Fund

- Konar Foundation
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- Sands Foundation
- StriveTogether
- United Way of Greater Rochester
- Wegmans Foundation

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**IF YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED, PLEASE CONTACT US AT [INFO@ROCTHEFUTURE.ORG](mailto:INFO@ROCTHEFUTURE.ORG)**



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