

ANSWERED,

ROUND TWO

TIME TO EDUCATE YOUR QUESTIONS

Justin Murphy Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK What percentage of boys and girls entering RCSD in kindergarten graduate high school on time with a Regent's diploma? - Andy Aligné, Rochester The traditional graduation rate is defined as the percentage of ninthgraders who go on to graduate four (or more) years later. The exact calculation can differ from state to state; in New York students are tracked individually, so if a student moves from Rochester to Buffalo in 10th grade, she goes off Rochester's books and onto Buffalo's.

One reason the cohort is based in ninth grade is that hardly any students drop out of school altogether before reaching that level. On the other hand, there is a great deal of transience in Rochester from age 5, when a child starts kindergarten, to age 18, when she might graduate. That is particularly true considering the proliferation of charter schools in Rochester.

About 11 percent of RCSD students leave the district each year and are replaced by a similar number of newcomers. Compounded over 12 years, that level of mobility would make it unwise to draw conclusions based on cohort data.

What happened to the discussion of mayoral control of the school district? - Eric Morris, Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren has consistently said she is not interested in overseeing the school district. She did float the concept of a "receivership district," which would have blurred the line of district and mayoral control, but the idea never gained traction. Even then, she was careful to say she was not advocating for mayoral control, something she repeated during her 2017 campaign for re-election.

In short, there does not appear to be any organized momentum pushing for mayoral control at the moment. Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams has had a mostly friction-free relationship with the mayor; the school board, for its part, has been seeking to assert its authority, not cede it.

Why doesn't RCSD divide the district into quadrants — essentially four smaller districts, each with its own superintendent? - Anonymous This is an interesting question — not because it will ever happen (it won't), but as a way to examine some of the structural problems with which the district must contend.

Breaking the district into four would immediately shake up the existing bureaucracy, both at central office and as it extends out into buildings. Somewhere in that bureaucracy lies the ineffable morass that has swallowed well-intentioned plans and employees for generations. Getting rid of it would be a monumental achievement.

Each of the four mini-districts would presumably be empowered to seek its own solutions for the problems they have in common. The new climate would surely foster innovation, and splintered unions would introduce a new dynamic at the same time.

At the same time, administrative costs would rise sharply. Deane-Williams and her two deputy superintendents were budgeted to earn a total of \$532,000 in 2018-19; four districts would mean 12 people in those positions, and their salaries certainly would not be reduced by three quarters. The same goes for a wide swath of central office staff, from secretaries to athletic directors. Economies of scale would be ruined.

Even if there were four districts, the city of Rochester itself remains the salient unit for families looking for housing or community agencies seeking to partner with schools. A family moving from the 19th Ward to Lyell Avenue, or from Beechwood to Monroe Avenue, would have to re-enroll in a new district, introducing even greater instability than exists now.

There are a host of other complicating factors, not least of which is Gov. Andrew Cuomo's crusade for government consolidation rather than fragmentation. And indeed, the trend across the state is for districts to join together providing services, or even to merge.

In sum, don't hold your breath waiting for the Northwest Rochester Central School District.

JMURPHY7@Gannett.com



Aligne



Morris