

RCSD graduation rate rises to 53.5%

More get local diplomas; dropout rate declines 10%

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The Rochester City School District's graduation rate continued its slow but steady ascent in 2018, rising to 53.5 percent, according to official statistics released Tuesday by the state Education Department.

The mark is the district's highest since the state changed its graduation rate calculation several years ago, up 10 points from 2013, when it was 43 percent.

The increase over the last several years is almost entirely attributable to fewer RCSD students dropping out and instead getting local, non-Regents diplomas. The former rate is down 10 points while the latter is up eight points.

The August graduation rate, which takes into account summer school graduates, rose to 59 percent, while the five and six-year rates were 62 percent and 61 percent, respectively.

"While we have reason to celebrate today, we must maintain our laser-like focus on meeting the needs of every student," Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams said in a statement. "We cannot afford to have one child slip through the cracks. It takes families, the community, and our schools working together to make sure our children succeed."

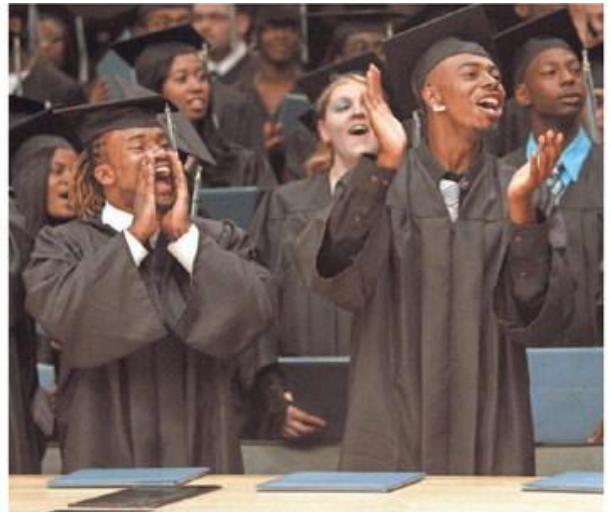
Monroe County's suburban school districts saw their rates rise or fall by several points. West Irondequoit was the biggest gainer, going from 91 percent to 96 percent, while Churchville-Chili (93 percent) and Spencerport (92 percent) added 4 points each.

Brighton (92 percent), Fairport (92 percent), East Irondequoit (86 percent) and Wheatland-Chili (87 percent) all lost 3 percentage points compared to 2017, while Pittsford (97 percent) had the highest mark.

The statewide graduation rate was flat at 80 percent. Buffalo's graduation rate stayed at 63 percent while Syracuse's fell to 58 percent.

"I'm confident that our (Every Student Succeeds Act) plan's focus on equity will keep our students and our schools moving in the right direction," state Education Commissioner Mary-Ellen Elia said in a statement.

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Brothers Elijah and Edgar Brown cheer for classmates during the Dr. Freddie Thomas high school graduation ceremony in 2011. KRIS J. MURANTE/2011 FILE PHOTO