

Charlotte High set to close in June

School

Few students left; board must approve

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Charlotte High School, already slated to phase out by 2018, will instead be closed for good at the end of this school year if the Rochester school board approves a proposal from the district.

In truth, the once-prominent school is barely even open now. There was a mass exodus after former Superintendent Bolgen Vargas announced the phase-out plan in November 2014; there are currently 87 students on the books at Charlotte, compared with 448 in 2014-15 and 1,183 in 1998-99.

Of those 87 students, though, 69 of them attend programs elsewhere. That leaves 18 students actually attending Charlotte High School, almost all of

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whom will either graduate or drop out by June. There is a separate allboys district school that also is using the building.

Owing in part to its location far from the center city, Charlotte had become a school of least resistance, populated largely by students who didn't ask to go somewhere else. Every single one of its students this year is overaged and under-credited for graduation, said Deputy Superintendent for Administration Adele Bovard.

In most statistical measures, including attendance (75 percent) and graduation rate (37 percent), it is the worst high school in one of the lowest-performing districts in the country. In 2014-15, one in four students had a disability and not a single student attained the highest-level score on any Regents math test. For those reasons, Charlotte was one of four Rochester schools to land on the New York State Education Department's one-year receivership list. That gave the superintendent a year to significantly turn the school around or face the prospect of an outside operator coming in to run it.

Instead, the district had seen the writing on the wall and pre-emptively announced the plan to close the school on its own. The process was supposed to take three years, but nearly the entire student body transferred out this year.

Factoring out those students expected to graduate, drop out or turn 21 by June, 47 students need to be placed elsewhere, but only on paper.

All but one of them currently attend All City High, for students not on track to graduate, or Rochester International Academy, for students new to the United States. Those are programs, not schools, meaning

students who go there are counted toward their home schools for state reporting purposes.

The trick for the district in closing Charlotte is to distribute the remaining students — including those unlikely to graduate — without unduly affecting any other schools' metrics or putting them at risk for state receivership. For that reason, it placed most of them at higher-performing schools such as School Without Walls, Wilson Magnet and World of Inquiry.

Though Charlotte High School is closing in June, the building will remain open. It is also occupied by the Leadership Academy for Young Men, a growing all-boys program that served 474 students in the building this year.

There may still be extra space in the cavernous building after Leadership is fully expanded. The district is still deciding what to do in that case, Bovard said.

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Charlotte High School, on Lake Avenue in Rochester, also houses a separate, all-boys school.

TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/@TYEE23/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Of 87 students on the books, 69 of them attend programs elsewhere. That leaves 18 students actually attending Charlotte High School, almost all of whom will either graduate or drop out by June.