

## Charter school gets \$500K grant

### Charter

### Collaboration envisioned with city public school

**JUSTIN MURPHY**

@CITIZENMURPHY

Genesee Community Charter School has received a three-year, \$500,000 grant to share the fruit of its experience with hands-on expeditionary learning with the Rochester City School District's Roberto Clemente School 8.

The grant was one of eight announced by the New York State Education Department on Wednesday, and the only one outside New York City. It would mark a significant collaboration between a charter and traditional public

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**Students at Genesee Community Charter School in 2013.**

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school; the two camps in Rochester have viewed each other largely with distrust over the last decade.

It is not a sure thing, however, that the collaboration will take place. In 2013, another charter school, Rochester Prep, received the same grant for professional development for RCSD teachers, but the city school board rejected the offer.

"I just don't believe for one minute that the charter school teachers have figured this out any better than our teachers," board member Willa Powell said then.

Neither Powell nor GCCS Leader Lisa Wing could be reached for comment Wednesday.

Under the new grant, teachers at GCCS would work with their counterparts at School 8 to help implement a new early literacy curriculum developed under the expeditionary learning model.

Expeditionary learning emphasizes inquirybased education, where students learn by doing. GCCS and World of Inquiry School 58 are two of its most successful adherents in Rochester. School 8, meanwhile, has struggled to put its precepts in place. The school on St. Paul Street is one of the poorest in the city: of its 615 students in grades K-8, only 15 are not classified by the state as “economically disadvantaged,” and its test scores generally reflect that challenge.

The curriculum in question attempts to address deficiencies in sensory processing that can derail a child’s ability to concentrate and learn. GCCS has been using the curriculum and has seen striking literacy gains in its kindergarten and first-grade classes.

The goal is to have 50 percent more third-graders reading at grade level in three years. GCCS’ grant application also refers to “creating opportunities for shared learning and mutual observations and feedback” between the two schools.

As charter schools have drawn more and more students from the district over the last several years, the relationship between the two sectors has soured.

Many in the district accuse charter schools of siphoning off resources and motivated students, leaving the most vulnerable students behind. In turn, charter school advocates point to decades of poor academic results in the district and ask why families should accept more of the same.

The circumstances of the grant to GCCS are somewhat different than the 2013 grant to Rochester Prep. For one thing, it focuses narrowly on a specific educational model in use at one school.

GCCS also has some history of collaboration with traditional public schools. It hosted dozens of outside educators, including RCSD teachers, at another professional development event in December. It is also a prominent supporter of the Great Schools For All project, which aims to create intentionally integrated public schools across existing district boundaries.

*JMURPHY7@ [Gannett.com](mailto:JMURPHY7@Gannett.com)*



**Lisa Wing of GCCS**