

## Local charter schools create common application

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Parents looking for charter schools in the Rochester area can now apply to almost all of them through one common website and online application. The website, [goodschoolsroc.org](http://goodschoolsroc.org), was developed by the local charter advocacy group E3 Rochester, and went live last week. It features basic information on local schools as well as a single online application that all of them accept.

“It seems like the charter schools ought to be helping each other,” E3 Executive Director Jim Brush said. “(Managing applications) is an administrative workload for all the schools and they all do it a little differently. We thought we could increase productivity and see if we could do things better as a system.”

Charter school enrollment has been rising steadily for about 10 years. It now stands at about 6,000 students, versus about 27,000 in the Rochester City School District.

Each school chipped in about \$4,000 and E3 Rochester provided about \$25,000 for the website, Brush said. The idea was first proposed about a year ago.

While families only need to fill out a single application, some schools have different lottery priorities, such as a preference for students in poverty or siblings of current students. Leigh McGuigan, cofounder of Vertus Charter School on Humboldt Street, said she would like to see a common application that encompasses not only charter schools but RCSD and private and parochial schools as well. “I believe in school choice, and anything that helps families make wiser choices for their children is a plus,” she said. “(The website) gives a family the chance to see all the offerings and easily apply to the school that fits their preferences.” The only school not participating in the joint venture is Genesee Community Charter School, which enrolls a much greater proportion of white, middle-class families than the others.

School Leader Lisa Wing wrote in an email: “GCCS is heavily oversubscribed and typically has just about a dozen openings, so we’re going to continue to manage our own application and lottery system.” E3 Rochester, which helped bring Vertus and PUC Achieve to Rochester and is actively recruiting more schools, hopes to expand collaborative efforts to other areas, including teacher professional development and public relations, Brush said. The schools are accepting applications for the 2018-19 school year until April 1; some are also still enrolling for 2017-18.

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