

RCSD graduation rate rises to 51.9 percent

Grad

Still lowest of urban districts, but big jump

Joseph Spector and Justin Murphy

Albany Bureau USA TODAY NETWORK

The Rochester City School District saw its graduation rate jump 4.2 points in 2017, the largest year-over-year increase it has seen in several years, according to data released Wednesday by the New York State Education Department.

Of the students who entered ninth grade in the district in 2013, 51.9 percent of them graduated high school by June 2017, up from 47.7 percent in June 2016. That remains the lowest mark among the state's large urban districts, and one of the lowest overall in the country, but at the same time reflects intensive efforts under Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams to shepherd students toward the credits they need for a diploma.

The August graduation rate, reflecting students who finished their coursework during the summer after

See **GRAD, Page 9A**

RCSD graduation rate rises to 51.9 percent

Grad

Continued from Page 1A

12th grade, was 57 percent, a promising figure for the district.

Special education students saw a significant gain, from 27.6 percent to 33.7 percent. That, too, is the worst mark among the state's large districts.

Rates rose broadly across the state; for the first time, more than 80 percent of New York students graduated by June, and other large districts saw gains as well.

Elsewhere in Monroe County, five districts graduated at least 95 percent of their students: Brighton and Fairport (95 percent); Pittsford (96 percent) and Honeoye Falls-Lima and Penfield (97 percent).

Wheatland-Chili had the largest percentage gain, going from 81 percent in 2016 to 90 percent this year. The district is by far the smallest in the area.

Gates Chili (78 percent) and East Rochester (79 percent) had the lowest rates, and also saw some of the largest decreases from 2016.

The state Education Department was pleased with the results, saying the most recent graduation rate is more than 11 percentage points higher than it was a decade earlier.

"New York's graduation rate continues its steady, upward trend," Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia said in a statement. "We see incremental improvements across the state, holding onto last year's gains and

slowly building upon them.”

But Elia noted that “troubling gaps in achievement persist,” such as the difference between wealthy and poor districts and white students compared to minority students.

In the city of Rochester, University Prep Charter School for Young Men and Rochester Academy Charter School had the highest graduation rates, both at 90 percent or higher. World of Inquiry School 58 had the best mark in RCSD, at 88 percent.

East High School remained the lowest mark in Rochester, but its 39 percent graduation rate was up from 32 percent in 2016 and 30 percent in 2015.

Average- and low-need districts continue to have the highest graduation rates, with 94.8 percent of students in low-need districts graduating in four years.

The average was 63.9 percent in the high-need large city districts: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.

Also, a gap remained between the graduation rate of black and Hispanic students compared with their white peers. The difference was about 20 percentage points. “Troubling gaps in achievement persist, and we must accelerate the pace of improvement,” Elia said.

JSPECTOR@Gannett.com JMURPHY7@Gannett.com