

City school for refugees honored

Awarded as Gold School of Opportunity

JUSTIN MURPHY

@CITIZENMURPHY

The Rochester International Academy, a city school that mostly serves refugees, was one of eight schools in the country to be named a Gold School of Opportunity, intended to honor programs that help close the opportunity gap in education.

The school, founded in 2011 and located at the Jefferson campus near Edgerton Park, is usually the first educational stop for children who have just arrived in the United States from Asia or Africa and speak little or no English. It now has about 400 students in grades 4-12, including some from the suburbs.

The awards are from the National Education Policy Center in Colorado. One of the project co-founders is Carol Burris, a former New York State Principal of the Year and a vocal critic of the education reform movement.

RIA relies heavily upon technology to work with its non-Englishspeaking students. Another strength is its irrepressible founder and principal, Mary Andrecolich- Diaz. She will be honored separately at the annual Rochester Education Foundation banquet Oct. 19. Other honorees there are longtime Early Childhood School of Rochester School 57 teacher Bruce Finch and philanthropist Everett Williams.

The Rochester Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization supporting programs in the city school district. It has put a particular emphasis on music, literacy and college access.

For more information about the banquet, go to rochestereducation.org or call (585) 271-5790.

JMURPHY7@ Gannett.com



Sixth-grader Rebecca Baraka, a native of the Republic of Congo, center, joins with schoolmates in singing a pair of Swahili songs they learned in music class during the Rochester International Academy's fifth annual Thanksgiving Dinner in 2015.

SHAWN DOWD/@SDOWDPHOTO/STAFF FILE PHOTO