

Three schools spared further sanctions

Schools

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Three struggling Rochester schools got good news Wednesday when the state education department announced they would not be forced to submit to an independent receiver. East High School, Monroe High School and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School 9, on North Clinton Avenue, have all been tagged as “persistently struggling” and are currently in local receivership. That means Rochester City School District Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams (or, in the case of East, the University of Rochester) has increased autonomy to make changes there with the goal of improving student performance.

Before the school year began, the district set out performance targets for the schools. If they failed to meet them, the state would have imposed an outside receiver to take control of the school and, presumably, make more drastic changes.

For the time being, that has been averted. In a letter Wednesday, state

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Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia announced Monroe and School 9 both made “demonstrable improvement” and can continue to operate under local control.

East Upper School (grades 9-12) was judged not to have made demonstrable improvement, but was given a reprieve due to its UR partnership. East Lower School, for grades 6-8, cleared the bar. “Today’s announcement is a welcome affirmation of hard work by the School 9 and Monroe High School communities to improve student achievement through focused, collaborative effort led by their principals,” Michele Alberti, the district’s executive director of school innovation, said in a statement. “Under Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams, our district is strengthening its focus and support so that every receivership school can meet its improvement targets this year.” “We are pleased with our performance in the first year as the University of Rochester serving as the Educational Partnership Organization (EPO) for East Upper and Lower Schools, and we appreciate the State’s ongoing support and acknowledgment of our efforts throughout this process. While success will take years and continue to be measured in incremental steps, we remain committed to and optimistic for the future of East.” said the current East High School superintendent Shaun Nelms, via email.

As measured by standardized testing, Regents passage rates and graduation rate, the three schools are among the most challenged in Rochester. Their progress targets, in turn, were not overly ambitious.

For instance, just 27 percent of students in grades 3-8 at School 9 received a grade of 2 or higher (on a scale of 1-4) in 2013-14. The school’s “progress target” for 2015-16 was 1 percent increase, which it achieved by moving from 27 to 29 percent.

Out of 389 students tested, that still leaves all but 20 as less than proficient, according to the state.

The receivership determinations come with the state teetering toward another revamp of its evaluation system. After an outcry over the validity of the 3-8 tests, the state announced they would not be used to evaluate either students or teachers. The receivership determination appears to be one of the only situations in which the test results were still considered.

Even then, the state cautioned specifically against comparing the 2016 results to previous years because there were differences in how they were created and administered.

Charlotte High School had also been included on the receivership list when it was first announced, but the district closed the school for good in June.

There were 10 schools across the state that needed to show demonstrable improvement or face an outside receiver. Of the others, two were in Buffalo, one was in Hempstead and three were in New York City.

Only one, New York City's Junior High School 162 Lola Rodriguez De Tio, failed. It will have 60 days to choose an outside receiver.

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East High School student Samarrian Williams high fives with school staff as students are cheered on by staff, area residents and cheerleaders on their first day of school in 2015.

TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/@TYEE23/STAFF FILE PHOTO



RCSD Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams

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