

## 20 city schools sink in ratings

### Schools

#### Downgraded by NY education agency

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Twenty Rochester schools were downgraded by the New York state Education Department in its most recent release of school and district ratings, a sign that the City School District's reform plans have not yet paid dividends in state test results.

The state places schools and districts in four main categories: reward (the best), good standing, focus and priority (the worst). The grades are given out on the basis of students' performances on state tests as well as graduation rates.

In 2015-16, the district had 14 priority schools, 26 focus schools and nine in good standing. With the new release, there are now 28 priority schools, 13 focus schools and 10 in good standing.

To put it another way: The state's ratings show that 20 schools worsened, 10

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improved and 21 stayed the same.

In a memo to building principals, deputy superintendents Adele Bovard and Christiana Otuwa said the results are an indication of too-slow progress but also noted the district's high opt-out rate compared to other large urban districts. They also said the state is in "a moment of flux for the assessment and accountability systems currently in place."

They pointed to progress on attendance, early literacy and community partnerships as reasons for hope but acknowledged, "We need to sharpen our focus on providing students the instruction and support they need."

There was shuffling among the three categories across the state. There were 442 focus schools (including 14 charter schools) and 192 priority schools (including four charter schools). Nearly 200 schools that had been focus schools are now considered to be in good standing.

"We are encouraged by the large number of schools and districts whose hard work these past several years has resulted in improvements in their accountability status," State Education Commissioner Mary-Ellen Elia said in a statement. "But there remain far too many schools where far too many students are not achieving state standards." The focus and priority designations are also related to the state's list of schools under receivership. Across the state, 70 schools showed enough progress to be removed from receivership, including schools 22, 34, 44 and Northwest Junior High in Rochester.

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**New York Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia testifies during a joint legislative budget hearing on education last month in Albany.**

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