

YOUR RCSD QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Justin Murphy Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK Dozens of people submitted questions and coverage suggestions about education in Rochester in response to the *Democrat and Chronicle*'s Time to Educate project.

Go to www.democratandchronicle.com/time-to-educate/raise-yourhand to read other contributions, submit your own and participate in our first voting round.

So far your submitted questions can be grouped into these four main categories:

■ Accountability

■ Policies and Procedures

■ Segregation

■ Poverty Join us on our Facebook page on Tuesday June 18 at 12.30 p.m. to chat with project leaders Julie Philipp and Matthew Leonard as they launch the first round of voting on a selection of top reader questions.

Your vote will help us prioritize which stories we should investigate first. Don't worry if we don't get to your question this round.

Our team will continue digging into many of your current questions in greater depth throughout the summer.

Here are three I could answer quickly. Thank you for submitting them.

What's the graduation rate for each high school in RCSD? Which ones offer credit recovery?

People often fail to recognize the wide range in graduation rates among RCSD schools. World of Inquiry School 58, School of the Arts and Early College International High School all have graduation rates above 80 percent, beating the state average and some suburban districts.

Seats in those schools are highly sought after; by comparison, many students end up at schools like Monroe and Vanguard more or less by default, and their graduations rates are much worse.

East has made great strides since the University of Rochester got involved three years ago and expects to be above 50 percent in 2018. Charter schools continue to be the top performers; Rochester Prep's first senior class in 2018 is expected to have a rate above 90 percent as well.

Go online for more at www.democratandchronicle.com/time-to-educate/.

How much does RCSD spend per pupil compared to other districts

within Monroe County?

In some states, urban school districts are badly underfunded compared with wealthier suburbs. That is not the case in New York — at least when comparing per-pupil spending — because the state government provides the majority of the money instead of making cities draw from local property taxes.

The county average is about \$22,000 per pupil, with schools falling either side of that. East Rochester tops out at nearly \$28,000 per student, while Hilton, Webster, West Irondequoit and Penfield all come in under \$20,000.

Rochester comes in at more than \$24,000.

For the full breakdown go online to www.democratandchronicle.com/time-to-educate/.

Rochester is near the top in large part because of additional state and federal funding RCSD gets for its more vulnerable students. In 2017, for example, it received \$29.9 million in federal Title I funding, meant to help children in poverty. The next-largest local recipient was Greece, which received \$2.9 million.

How do average class sizes in RCSD elementary schools compare with those in Monroe County suburban schools? If they are higher, why?

Class size is difficult to measure, and it doesn't always show what you'd think it does. Is it better to have 25 students in a room with two teachers and a paraprofessional, or 20 in a class with just one teacher? What about special education students or others who need extra attention?

I took a shot at addressing this problem in the New York School Quality Index; that's where the numbers above come from. They factor in the state-reported class size for elementary schools as well as the quotient of students per teacher as defined by staff and enrollment counts.

Rochester is slightly above the county average. As with graduation rates, there is a wide variation among schools: Children's School of Rochester School 15 had 14.7 students per class, for instance, while the soon-to-close Kodak Park School 41 had 23.3.

For the full data go online www.democratandchronicle.com/time-toeducate/.

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Dountonia Batts, (right), a leader of IPS Community Coalition, a group of more than 200 parents who see innovation schools as a threat to local control and traditional public education in Indianapolis. MAX SCHULTE, @MAXROCPHOTO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER