



READ ALL ABOUT US

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) has a great story to tell. It is a story about every student in every classroom. *The Rochester Educator* tells that story.

In this inaugural edition, there are stories about academics, athletics, programs and partnerships. You will

read about the outstanding preschool program at sites in the city, including Caring and Sharing Child Care Center, where Curtis Birthwright reads to (from left) Xavier Collier, Roderick Hamilton, Natalia Flores, Jerry Daniels, and Jayden Covington. **Page 10.**

Rochester: Our goal is excellence

By RICH FAHEY

The Rochester City School District wants to ensure all students and teachers are on the same page. When the goal is excellence in achievement for all students, consistency is key.

In the past 18 months, the district has taken several strong steps to address issues impacting student achievement

"We've taken a critical look to see where improvements need to be made," said Marilyn Patterson-Grant, deputy superintendent for teaching and learning.

One of the first issues addressed was faltering test scores in secondary schools. Data showed that gains in student performance made at the elementary school level were being lost as students reached



Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard visits a classroom.

See **ACHIEVEMENT** Page 9

Inside

WINNING COMBO Page 5



Nothing can stop her East High School valedictorian heading to Columbia

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Instilled with a strong sense of drive and determination, East High School valedictorian Felicia Bevel has never been one to shy away from success.

"A lot has to do with how you're raised and the environment you go home to," she said. "My mom always told me to work twice as hard as everyone else."

Bevel, whose mother passed away two years ago, knows all about persevering in

the face of challenges.

"When I lost my mom, that was hard for me," she said. "The support I had from everyone at East helped me to get through that. It gave me the strength to keep going."

Bevel will attend Columbia University in the fall, where she was awarded a full scholarship. She hopes to pursue pre-dentistry, but is still undecided.

See **BEVEL** Page 9



Felicia Bevel will bring her many talents to Columbia University.

In Rochester, it is about every child



Jean-Claude Brizard

Welcome to the first edition of *The Rochester Educator*.

The students whose faces you see throughout this issue are what our work in the Rochester City School District is about. *It is about every child.*

Over the last year and a half, we have begun making fundamental changes to the way we serve our students. Through our focus on Achievement, Equity, and Accountability, we have begun seeing real improvement:

- ◆ More students are meeting state standards in English Language Arts in grades 3-8.
 - ◆ More students are meeting state standards in Math in grades 3-8.
 - ◆ Our four-year graduation rate has increased 13 percentage points in two years.
- These results are possible only through the

collaborative efforts of everyone working on behalf of our students: our school leaders, teachers, support staff, community partners, parents and families.

Of course, the true credit goes to our students themselves.

Clearly, there are many exciting things taking place in our schools and much for our community to be proud of. *The Rochester Educator* is a new way for us to publicize the good news that oftentimes is overlooked.

This newspaper, along with the launch of our redesigned Web site, will support us in being transparent in the work we do in service to students. It allows us to provide important news and information directly to you, giving you the complete picture of where we are heading in the Rochester City School District.

I hope you enjoy this issue and I look forward to sharing our students' success with you throughout the year.

Jean-Claude Brizard is Rochester City School District Superintendent of Schools.

Showcasing student achievement



The first-ever Districtwide Academic Showcase took place April 4 at the Riverside Convention Center. The event brought together every school in the district to display student work of the highest standard. Pictured above, Kiera Hudson, 2009 graduate of the School of Imaging & Information Technology at Edison, displays the logo she designed for the event.

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Parents are a priority in Rochester

BY RICH FAHEY

While Rochester's public schools are educating students, the district's Office of Parent Engagement is educating parents on how they can best help their children learn — and using 21st century tools to make that job easier.

One example is SchoolTube.com, an offshoot of the phenomenally successful YouTube. SchoolTube allows school districts to post educational videos in a central location where they can be easily accessed.

By going to the Rochester City School District's Web site — www.rcsdk12.org — parents can access videos explaining the Office of Parent Engagement, learn about the district's customer service center, get information about the Parent University program, or learn about Joyce Epstein's six principles of parental involvement.

The Office of Parent Engagement, directed by Nicolle Crocker, operates on four basic tenets: all parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them; all parents can support their children's education; parents and staff are equal partners in educating children; and school staff are responsible for initiating partnerships between home and school.

Meanwhile, parents of Rochester students are communicating with each other via the Flower City Parents Network (www.flowercityparents.org), a blog where parents can read about school issues from a parental point of view, post comments, and communicate with other parents.

The Web site is the brainchild of three Rochester parents: Hilary Appelman, who has a first-grader and fourth-grader in the schools; Lori Bryce, a parent of two elementary-school students and one preschooler; and Elizabeth Bakari, the parent of a high-school student and a sixth-grader. The site has been up and running since February.

"It's a support system for parents with valuable help on navigating your way around the various district departments," said Appelman. "It's also a clearinghouse for information, where parents can talk about

issues and address rumors."

The parents have spread word about the site at recent kindergarten registration events, e-mailed the parent liaisons at each school, and notified school libraries.

Appelman said the site aims not only to provide information, but support. "We want to get out accurate information about the schools

and have people give them a chance," she said.

Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth Development and Family Services, said that Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard has made parental engagement a key component of the district's plan to increase student achievement. The district is reaching out to parents in as many different ways as it can, including publishing *The Rochester Educator*.

She said the district offers a variety of courses for parents throughout the year, shares resources and information with parents, and empowers parents to support their children's education.

"We start to prepare parents to be leaders in their buildings, getting involved with PTO, PTA, and school-based planning teams," said Pedraza-Burgos.

On an individual basis, that can include explaining systems and regulations involving special education and ELL (English language learners) programs, or the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The goal is to have as many parents as possible involved in as many different ways as possible.

"We want to train parents in how to run meetings, take notes, plan events," said Pedraza-Burgos. "Everything they need to know to participate meaningfully in their child's education."

For more information on the Office of Parent Engagement, please call 262-8000, x1190.

“We want to train parents in how to run meetings, take notes, plan events. Everything they need to know to participate meaningfully in their child's education.”

**Gladys Pedraza-Burgos
Chief of Youth Development
and Family Services**

STUDENT PROFILES

Engineering a bright future

First-generation college student heading to MIT

By MEAGHAN CASEY

From Puerto Rico to Rochester to Boston, Eduardo Gonzalez-Lopez has traveled many miles to arrive at the point where he is today – approaching his next step as a first-generation college student.

Valedictorian of his class at James Monroe High School, Gonzalez-Lopez will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on a full scholarship in the fall, pursuing a degree in bioengineering. He was also accepted to Harvard University and Rochester Institute of Technology.

“MIT has the reputation as one of the top science schools,” said Gonzalez-Lopez. “It’s also the only one offering a higher degree in the field that I want to go into.”

Gonzalez-Lopez hopes to pursue his doctorate and a career in stem cell research to artificially recreate or clone organs for transplant purposes.

“I saw something on TV about a year and a half ago and decided to delve deeper and do some research,” he said. “It’s a really interesting



Eduardo Gonzalez-Lopez was this year’s valedictorian at James Monroe High School.

field.”

Gonzalez-Lopez moved from Puerto Rico to Rochester at age 8, enrolling in third grade at James P. B. Duffy School No. 12 as an English Language Learner (ELL). He entered the Language Academy at Monroe in grade 6. The Language Academy is an accelerated program

designed to help students maintain and continue to develop proficiency in Spanish and English, while at the same time giving them the opportunity to excel in math. It also features a hands-on science program based on a thematic approach. By the end of grade 8, Language Academy students earn three to four high school

credits in math and Spanish.

“The program was great in helping Spanish speakers adapt to an American lifestyle,” he said.

For the past six years, Gonzalez-Lopez has been the recipient of the Rochester Board of Education’s Hispanic Heritage Award. He also earned the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection’s Highest GPA Award and is a member of the Rochester Children’s Scholarship Fund in recognition for his consistently high GPA.

“Eduardo is a great kid – genuine, responsible and dedicated,” said Monroe Principal Vicky Ramos. “He’s a humble and hard worker, always willing to help others.”

At Monroe, Gonzalez-Lopez was involved with National Honor Society and chess club and was the student representative for the school’s United Way campaign. He also served as photo editor of the school newspaper in its inaugural year, and editor-in-chief this year. He enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish, U.S. History, English and Calculus classes and served as a Teaching Assistant for a biotechnology course. In addition to maintaining a strong academic record and extracurricular involvement, Gonzalez-Lopez has also held a part-time job at Wegmans, through which he helps support his family.

Poetry in motion

Powless combines love of writing with performing

By MEAGHAN CASEY

A master of the spoken word, Elliott Powless has the ability to come up with one slam-dunk after another, in an arena known as poetry slams.

Powless, a 2009 graduate of the School of Imaging and Information Technology at Edison, has been performing and competing in poetry slams, locally and nationally, throughout his high school career. The concept, created nearly 25 years ago, emphasizes that poetry belongs both on the page and on the stage. It puts a dual emphasis on writing and performance, encouraging poets to focus on what they’re saying and how they’re saying it.

Poetry slams have been incorporated into school curricula across the country and more than 45 cities now compete at Brave New Voices, the national showcase competition for teens. As a member of the Rochester Slam High Poetry Team, Powless has traveled to San Diego, New York City and Washington D.C. to perform his poetry in front of thousands.

“Over the last four years, Elliott has grown into an incredible orator,” said Principal Bonnie Atkins. “His words are meaningful and powerful; they touch upon the true essence and absolution of stereotypes and prejudices. It is as if he has the wisdom, experience and knowledge of a very old soul just aching to teach and show a younger generation something better.”

“As youth, we can have a big impact – but not by standing still or staying silent,” said Powless. “We have to take that risk

and speak our minds.”

True to his words on stage, Powless has taken on an active role in his community, organizing and participating in plays, barbecues and a host of peaceful gatherings through the Center for Teen Empowerment. He also became a facilitator to promote peaceful dialogues between local youth and the Rochester Police Department.

“I try to be the best person I can be and hope that other people will be inspired to help in their communities,” said Powless.

Earlier this year, Powless was recognized with the Princeton Prize in Race Relations. He also appeared in Russell Simmons’ docu-series on HBO, which was narrated by Queen Latifah and chronicled the 2008 Brave New Voices competition.

Yet Powless admits he never would have envisioned the impact he has had.

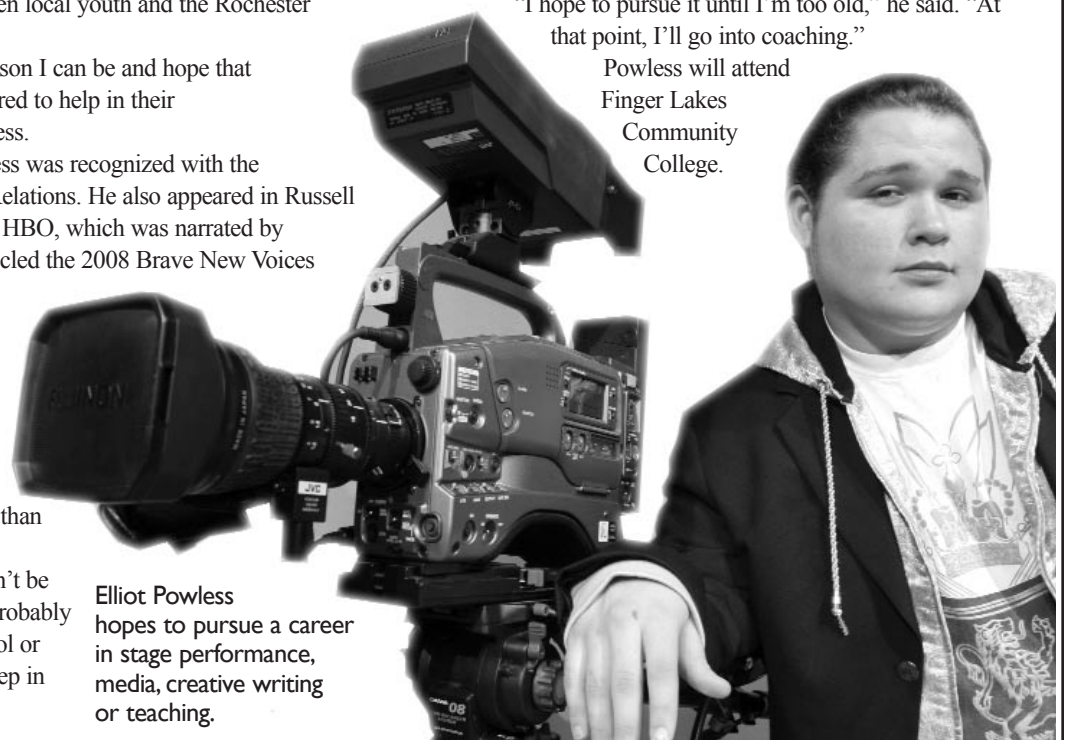
“Before eighth grade, I never saw myself becoming anything more than an average Joe,” he said. “Without poetry, I wouldn’t be where I am right now. I probably wouldn’t even be in school or thinking about the next step in

my education.”

As he looks ahead, Powless hopes to pursue a career in stage performance, media, creative writing or teaching. He is currently writing a script for his own play and will continue to participate in poetry slams until he reaches 21, the age cap to compete.

“I hope to pursue it until I’m too old,” he said. “At that point, I’ll go into coaching.”

Powless will attend Finger Lakes Community College.



Elliott Powless hopes to pursue a career in stage performance, media, creative writing or teaching.



Monroe High School AP teacher Carol Fries works with students, from left, Andres Ortiz and Michael Cunliffe-Northview.

AP story

\$2.5 million grant allows for expanded course offerings

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are on the rise in Rochester, thanks to a boost from a three-year, \$2.5 million grant.

The Rochester City School District was awarded the grant through the U.S. Department of Education's AP Incentive Program, for the purpose of increasing the number of AP courses in 14 of its secondary schools. The schools included are: Charlotte, Applied Technology at Edison, Business and Finance at Edison, Engineering and Manufacturing at Edison, Imaging and Information Technology at Edison, Global Media Arts at Franklin, Bioscience at Franklin, International Finance at Franklin, Jefferson, Marshall, Monroe, Northwest College Preparatory, Northeast College Preparatory and Dr. Freddie Thomas. Three additional high schools — East, School of the Arts and Wilson — will receive support for implementing a Mandarin Chinese course as part of their AP programs.

"It's intended to create a culture of academic rigor, encouraging more students to set their sights on AP courses," said Barbara Hasler, principal on assignment for the Rochester City School District.

Each of the 14 schools will develop and offer at least one new AP course in English language arts, mathematics and science in each year of the project. By doing so, the district hopes to increase student enrollment in AP courses by 45

percent over the three-year period.

To prepare for the new courses to be launched in the 2009-10 school year, AP teachers will receive intensive professional development in their content areas during summer institute sessions. Students will have the opportunity to participate in a five-day summer readiness workshop that will familiarize them with AP expectations



Destany Rivera, left, and Sylkia Nieves listen during an AP class at Monroe.

and the content of the courses in which they have enrolled. Pre-AP summer camps will also be offered to improve the academic preparation of students in grades 7-9 for AP math and science.

"We want to be able to plant the seed early and create a culture of high standards and expectations," said Hasler.

To ensure that enrolled students complete their AP courses

successfully, the grant funding will provide for an AP Skills Seminar to help students improve their writing, develop study habits, and learn note-taking, critical thinking and time management skills. Tutoring will also be offered three days a week for students enrolled in AP math and science courses. Zone coordinators are available to support principals, teachers and students.

The funding is also being used to create model AP classrooms, equipped with laptop computers and SMART Boards. Other materials and supplies funded through the grant include science kits, AP textbooks, and Ready Step and CollegeEd academic and career planning curricula.

Edison sheds light on college experience

BY BILL ABRAMSON

How can high school students prepare for college when they have no idea what college life is all about?

The answer to that riddle is to make sure they know what to expect after high school graduation.

Since last year, the Rochester City School District has been participating in a program with the College of Brockport. This summer, the program will bring students from the School of Applied Technology at Edison to the Brockport campus for a week.

"It started with last year's freshman class," Principal Matt Laniak explained. "We identified a group of students with a focus on academics and they came to our school for a summer school enrichment program to advance them in English. We put that group into the honors track.

"As sophomores, they took more advanced and honors courses. This summer, they will be spending some time on the Brockport campus. They will learn that this is what college expects and this is what college offers. This is what courses you should take and this is what SAT scores mean. We plan to have some of our teachers become adjunct professors at Brockport and come back and teach our seniors."

"We're trying to expose our students to college expectations and experiences earlier during the summer," said Donna Groff, assistant principal at Edison.

"If students don't know what to expect, close to 73 percent of them drop out in the first two years of college," Groff added. "We need to educate our students as to what to expect in college during their final two years in high school. They can do the work, but they also must learn how to balance their free time."

The environment inside Edison has changed for the better, according to Laniak.

"We're definitely changing that culture and environment," Laniak said. "Two years ago, we had 11 kids apply to our school. We have maximum capacity of 450 students and this year, we had over 350 students apply. They want to be here and their parents want them to be here."

"We double-block their math and English and put time in the schedule to support them," Groff said, describing the academic support the students are given to help prepare them for college. "To send them out to college, they have to be ahead in credits. They needed English and took honors classes in English. These 20 kids are able to come in for accelerated classes in the summer and will take leadership camp this summer."

The transition to the college culture has been gradual.

"We're beginning to see that if you create an environment, these students want to do well," Laniak said. "They have aspirations to do more. Brockport has been great to support us and we are going to have a great program."

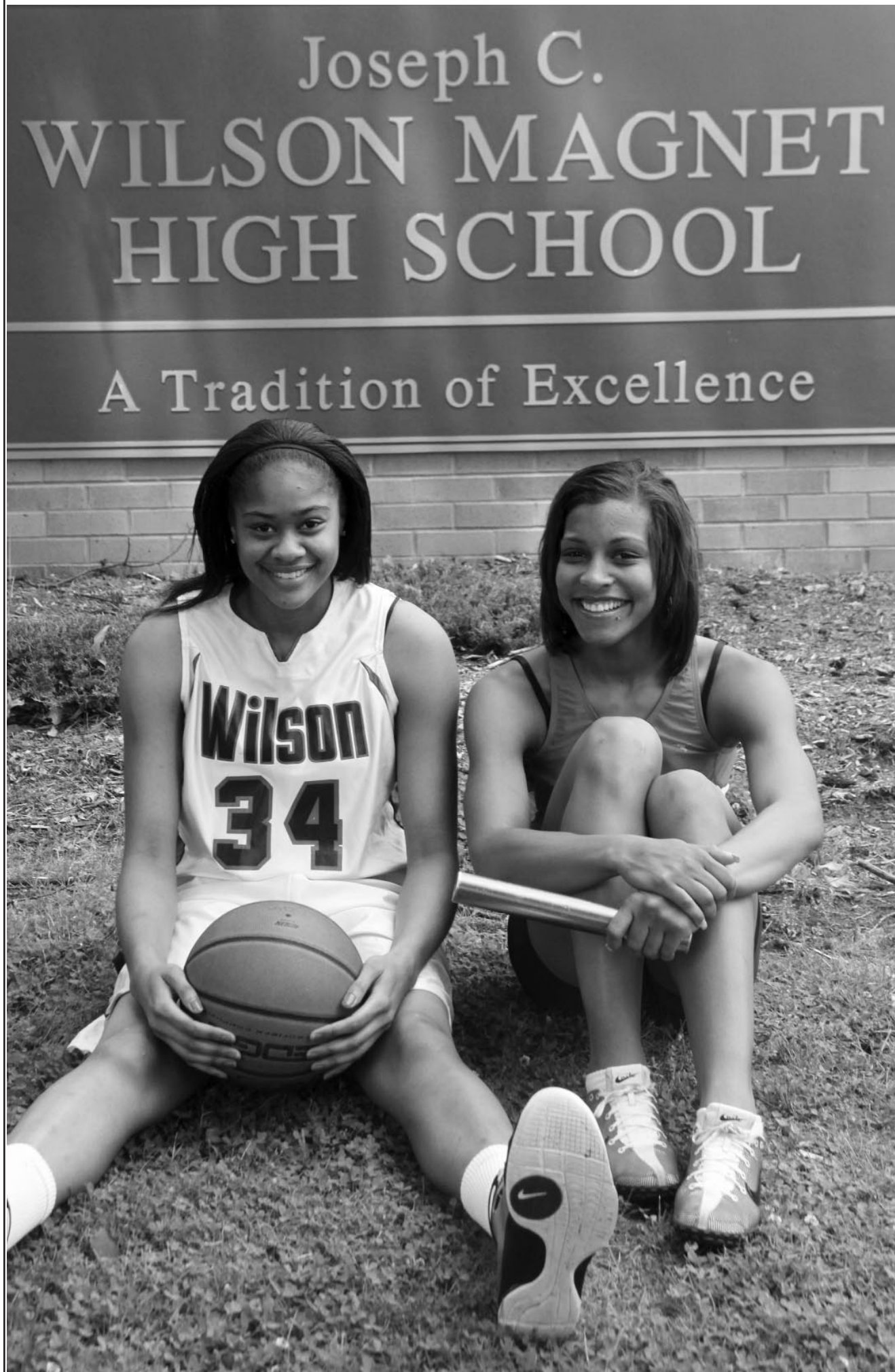
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We need to educate our students as to what to expect in college during their final two years in high school.

Donna Groff
Edison Assistant Principal

SPORTS

Magnet for success



Wilson seniors earn Div. 1 scholarships

By BILL ABRAMSON

When you match athletic ability with classroom excellence, you've got a winning combination.

Two student-athletes at Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School have parlayed that combination into college scholarships.

Asia Henry and Corinne Wellington have both received full athletic scholarships to Div. I schools. Henry will attend Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla., on a track scholarship, and Wellington will attend the University of Maine on a basketball scholarship.

"It doesn't happen every year or every day. It's something special and something students can attain by hard work and commitment," Wilson Athletic Director Joseph LaPietra said.

Henry was a record-breaking sprinter for the Wilson track and field team. This past school year, she broke three Section V records, including one that she previously set herself.

She graduated as the record holder in the 600 meters indoors and the 800 meters indoors and outdoors. The Democrat and Chronicle named her one of its All-Greater Rochester Indoor Track Athletes of the Year.

Henry also is near the top of her class academically, carrying a 3.8 GPA.

"Asia is a unique athlete," LaPietra said. "She's very committed and dedicated to her sport. Asia is a team player. Her teammates look up to her and she tries to be the best she can in sport and classroom. She's definitely a leader and she has great work ethic. She is well-rounded with great communication skills. She always has a smile on her face and a great aura about her."

Wellington was captain of the school's basketball team and its leading scorer. She was named Rochester City Athletic Conference Player of the Year.

Wellington is an all-star in the classroom as well, taking many AP courses and maintaining a 3.5 GPA.

"Corinne leads by example and her teammates look up to her," LaPietra said. "She's not a rah-rah kid. She keeps to herself and doesn't say too much. She's quiet, but does what she needs to do and keeps up in her class work. Corinne really picked up her game to another level last year and this year. She's a diamond in the rough who has the potential to be a dominant player in college."

LaPietra hopes the example set by these two young ladies will have a far-reaching effect on the students at Wilson.

"That's definitely important. Kids see what hard work and determination can do," he said. "It's right there for other students to achieve those things if they work hard, like Asia and Corinne have done."

"Have they maximized? No, there's more potential for them to improve, but they've taken it to that level where they can succeed and it's helped our athletes at Wilson. Students attended their press conference and saw them sign their letters of intent. They know that some day that could be them."

At left, Wilson Magnet High School Commencement Academy seniors Corinne Wellington, left, and Asia Henry.

Building for the future

Audubon School No. 33 staff, students happy to be home

By RICH FAHEY

Larry Ellison, principal of Audubon School No. 33, didn't want to use the disruption caused by the school's temporary move as an excuse for anybody taking their eyes off the educational ball.

"We knew going in we were going to spend between 1-2 years away from our home on Webster Avenue and had to make the best of it. Having said that, we're very anxious to get back home," he said about the move in August into the renovated and expanded School No. 33, adjacent to the Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr. Community Center and Library.

The Ryan Center will replace the current Webster Avenue Recreation Center and the undersized Sully Branch Library. The new

community center and library will provide a 40,000 square foot facility next to the 155,000 newly renovated square feet of School No. 33.

Construction on the school portion of the project began in the spring of 2008. Ellison and staff are on track to move into the building in August, ahead of the start of the new school year. The total project cost is \$36.5 million: \$30.3 million in school district financing, \$4.8 million in city and library funding and \$1.4 million in private fundraising and grants.

"The school project is, if anything, slightly ahead of schedule," said Operations Director Jim Fenton, who credited all involved, including the district's facilities staff and the contractors working on the project.

The school's temporary address has been at an eight-story building at 690 St. Paul St. on the northeast side of city, about three miles away from the renovated Audubon School.

Not all of School No. 33's 1,200 students moved to St. Paul Street; pre-kindergartners have been temporarily located at Dag Hammarskjold School No. 6, and will also be returning to their new home in September.

Ellison said that despite the disruptions, when it came to learning, it was business



Audubon School No. 33 Principal Larry Ellison, right, looks over plans for the new Ryan Complex with construction manager Mike Rogers of the Pike Company.



An exterior view of the Ryan Center Complex

as usual this year. Now he's looking forward to the improvements.

"The renovations and additions have addressed a number of needs," said Ellison.

Now, ceiling fans grace the classrooms to aid ventilation and cooling. Where four physical education classes were held at once in an undersized gymnasium, the school will have access to two gymnasiums, both larger than the former one. The old School No. 33 had no auditorium; the cafeteria was used for school events. One of the new gyms has a built-in stage that Ellison said will be a godsend for both school and community events.

The new Ryan Center will truly connect the renovated school with the community. It allows for shared gymnasiums and community meeting room space for both the school and the northeast neighborhoods. Other features include a football field and basketball courts, along with a tennis court and three

Little League baseball fields. The library will have 20 percent more room for books, media and periodicals. The Community Center will feature a new gymnasium and provide a teen media room, art and game room, as well as community classrooms and meeting space.

The recreation center will offer opportunities for arts partnerships while the library can be a home for school literacy activities. The redesign of the school has also made it closer to outside playground areas.

Ellison said he expects interest in the high-achieving school to grow even more beyond the present waiting list of students seeking slots at the school.

The project is a result of a collaborative effort between the City of Rochester, the Rochester City School District, the Rochester Public Library and neighborhood groups.

The center and library are named in memory of Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr., who served as the city's mayor from 1974-93.

Rochester offers students appealing alternative

By BILL ABRAMSON

For some young people in the Rochester City School District—many who are under-credited and over-aged—there used to be no place to go to complete their schooling. They now have an alternative: the Young Adult Evening High School (YAEHS). YAEHS came into existence this past school year and has already made a positive impact on the lives of its students.

As a stand-alone school, YAEHS provides a full high school curriculum for up to 150 students. Those students, who for a variety of reasons are unable to attend their regular school, can obtain their high school diploma in an afternoon-evening accelerated program.

Students must be enrolled (or re-enrolled) in their Rochester City School District high school and then apply for acceptance into

YAEHS. Upon successful completion of their studies at YAEHS, students graduate from their "home" high school, often with their original classmates.

"There are older students in the district who walked away from their education for a year or two," said Tony Robinson, principal of YAEHS. "They come here and are taking an accelerated program. They can cover one year in one semester. We also connect these young people to social service organizations outside the school."

Eighty-five students were enrolled at the evening school in its first year; of the 15 students eligible to graduate at the end of the first semester, 12 did.

"Currently, our population is 7-to-1 females to males," Robinson reported. "Many of these young ladies have one or two children under

the age of 5. These are young people who have adult responsibilities at home and are trying to get their high school credential.

"We're dealing with young people with adult issues, and a morning school operation doesn't work for them. They need a job and to put a child in a day care setting and they need to go to school."

When Jean-Claude Brizard became superintendent of schools, he gave Robinson the task of redesigning the district's evening high school program and sent him to New York City to view some of the evening programs there. Robinson took the best of what he found at schools such as Lehman High School.

"The students absolutely love it," Robinson said. "They tell me this is the best set up they've had in a high school setting. The population is smaller, there's more time with

teachers, and there is more interaction because we know you and know everyone. When they get to a small setting, it's more relaxed. There's more camaraderie with the kids and they're all working for a common goal, to graduate from high school. They have young ones who are depending on them to be successful."

For those students who live a lifestyle that is not compatible with a traditional high school setting, YAEHS is the perfect solution.

"I interview every student. I want to know what they are going to do to gain that high school credential," Robinson said. "I call this their job and they have to produce in their job. They have to learn how to get along in a small setting. We always want to paint a picture of success for them. This is the beginning of success you are going to find in the rest of your life."

Rochester schools earn national recognition

By RICH FAHEY

In the last five years, Dr. Freddie Thomas High School has made significant, sustained improvements in student performance and school climate which have attracted national attention. The school was awarded the 2009 Panasonic National School Change Award, the first secondary school in the Rochester City School District to win the award and the only high school in the country selected for the award this year.

The school joins past winners John Williams School No. 5 in 2003 and World of Inquiry School No. 58 in 2007.

Dr. Freddie Thomas High School received Panasonic products and a check for more than \$5,000 for school improvement. The school increased the number of students meeting New York State standards in math from 3 percent in 2003-04 to 64 percent in 2007-08, sharply increasing other scores while dramatically reducing the number of short- and long-term suspensions.

"The leadership team at Dr. Freddie Thomas has done a tremendous job of changing the school culture to one of achievement and connection with students," said Rochester Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard.

Principal Sandy Jordan-Conner and her leadership team will tout their success at a conference in New York City.

The Panasonic Award is only one of several important honors garnered by district schools recently.

◆ School of the Arts was selected as a GRAMMY Foundation Signature School for 2009. SOTA received an Enterprise Award, which recognizes schools that are economically under-served and includes a \$5,000 grant to be used for the music program. SOTA was one of six schools in the nation to receive the award, which recognizes top U.S. high schools committed to music education and excellence.

◆ Four Rochester teachers earned their National Board Certification in 2008 and one earned her recertification; the certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession.

Forty-three teachers in the Rochester City School District are nationally certified, 35 of whom are still active in the district. Earning their national certification in 2008 were: Melissa Anzalone-Haywood, fifth grade, School No. 28; Kyle Crandall, Mathematics, East High School; Elizabeth Foran, Social Studies, Monroe High School; and Miriam Santana Valadez, who earned her certification while a math teacher at Monroe High School and now teaches at RIT. Jennifer Tomm DiPasquale, a School No. 39 teacher on release as a district-wide teacher mentor, was recertified.

◆ World of Inquiry School No. 58 is one of 10 schools from across the country to win the 2009 National Excellence in Urban Education Award. Also, Nathaniel Hawthorne School No. 25 and Frank Fowler Dow School No. 52 were recognized for meeting the rigorous application criteria for the award, which is presented by the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) at San Diego State University.

◆ George Mather Forbes School No. 4 was named a New York State Title I Distinguished School for improving student achievement and reducing the gap in performance among student groups from 1999 to 2006.



School Without Walls Foundation Academy students Aliza Jenkins, right and Neriah Santiago work in the computer lab.

Inquiring minds EL schools promote project-based learning

When it comes to making choices about the schools their children will attend, "choice" is the operative word for parents.

That's why the Rochester City School District is developing a portfolio of schools that increases student performance and responds to community needs.

"We owe it to our students and their families to meet their needs with our school offerings," said Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard. "That's what our Office of School Innovation is charged with doing."

Mary Doyle is the Senior Director of School Innovation, and as such is overseeing the district's growing portfolio of schools.

"Our goal is to offer increased and improved school options for all students and families and to build on what's working well," said Doyle.

That includes expanding the number of Expeditionary Learning (EL) schools in the district. Two EL schools exist right now: World of Inquiry School No. 58 at 200 University Ave., a K-6 school adding grade 7 next year; and School Without Walls Foundation Academy, grades 7-9, at 111 North Clinton Ave.

In the fall, the Dr. Walter Cooper Academy will open its doors at 690 St. Paul St., serving grades K-2 in the 2009-10 school year.

Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS) is a national, non-profit organization that opens new schools and partners with existing schools to improve student achievement, build student character, enhance teacher practices, and instill a positive school culture.

The ELS approach promotes rigorous and engaging curriculum; active, inquiry-based lessons; and a school culture that teaches compassion and good citizenship. Learning is project-based, involving students in original research, often with the support of experts and professionals from the larger

community.

In Rochester, the organization is partnering with existing schools and staff, training teachers in its methods, which have proven successful in improving student achievement.

Doyle said the organization offers professional development for teachers and helps districts design their EL schools. "It's inquiry-based learning, more thematic and hands-on," she said.

Several times a year, the students go on "expeditions" to further research in a subject. Most often, the expeditions are community-based, using local resources.

"If they're studying the Erie Canal, they might actually go to the Erie Canal," said Doyle.

The schools, which have been partially underwritten by Gates Foundation grants, are open to all Rochester students. With more requests than there are seats, a lottery system is used. More than 400 students listed the World of Inquiry School as their first choice for grade 7, with only 75 seats available. There are 300 students at the school now and each year the school will add a grade to become the district's first K-12 school.

The school has consistently been one of the top-performing schools in the district.

There are 229 students in the School

Without Walls Foundation Academy, where students also are performing well. The newest EL school, the Dr. Walter Cooper Academy, will accept 150 students this fall under newly appointed Principal Camaron Clyburn. It, too, will add a grade each year to become a K-6 school.

The EL schools aren't the only ones generating excitement and high demand by parents and students. The district is partnering with the College Board at Northeast College Preparatory High School and Northwest College Preparatory School, which are also demonstrating increased student performance and high demand among students and families.



World of Inquiry students Aidan Delechanty left, and Dimari Rsoris.

Partners in education

By RICH FAHEY

One of the stakeholders in the Rochester public schools is the city’s business community. Businesses depend on Rochester schools to produce skilled graduates, and the business community is doing its part to ensure it has a steady supply.

Last December, the Rochester PENCIL Partnership Program was launched, with 85 Rochester businesses and civic organizations partnering with 62 public schools. The program is modeled on the successful PENCIL Partnership program in New York City.

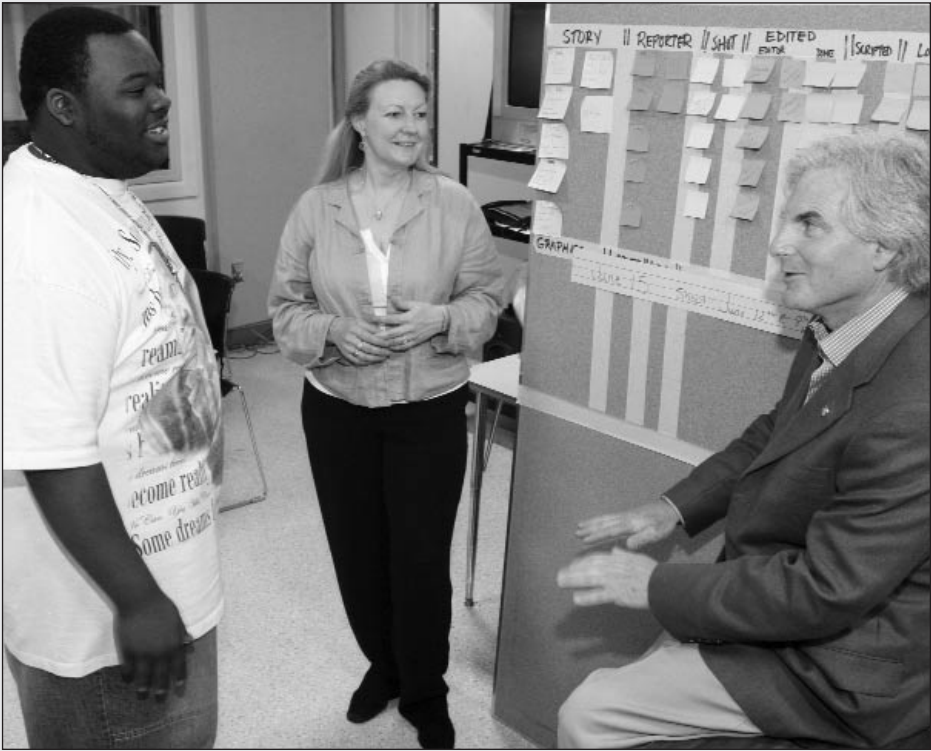
“PENCIL has a successful track record of private-sector engagement in the New York City public schools,” Rochester City School District Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard said. “We are collaborating with their leadership to make the same positive impact on our schools in Rochester.”

“Rochester’s business community is committed to supporting the future success of our city by investing in its most important resource — our students,” said Sandra Parker, president and chief executive officer of the Rochester Business Alliance.

Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez, director of strategic partnerships for the Rochester City School District, said the program is off to a very strong start, with several highlights, including:

- ◆ The partnership between Dale Carnegie of Rochester and Enrico Fermi School No.17;
- ◆ The partnership between Paychex, Inc. and Virgil I. Grissom School No. 7;
- ◆ The partnership between Dixon Schwabl Communications and the Global

Rochester schools benefit from alliance with business community



Global Media Arts High School at Franklin student Tyif A. Milton, left, chats with teacher Kathy Kristich and Howie Jacobson of Dixon-Schwabl Advertising and Marketing Interactive.

Media Arts High School at Franklin.

Herb Escher used the internationally known Dale Carnegie principles in training School No. 17 administrators and teachers how to build camaraderie with each other and communicate with students and parents in a positive manner, realizing it’s easy to

fall into negativity.

“We use the same techniques we use with our corporate clients,” said Escher. “After all, teachers are managers of the classroom.”

Howie Jacobson, managing partner of Dixon Schwabl, led a team of six employees in helping Global Media High School

launch its own live TV show, offering help in production and editing.

“We worked as a catalyst in helping the students to expand their horizons, one of the goals of the PENCIL program,” said Jacobson. “We’d never done anything like this before, and it was very gratifying.”

Tom Hammond, IT Director of Paychex, Inc., a payroll and human services firm, headed a team that partnered with School No. 7 last fall in launching a new school store that hones students’ business skills and provides an incentive for students, who need to achieve level 3 or 4 on state exams to be eligible to participate.

A group of 27 students from the fifth and sixth grades have worked with different Paychex employees on nine teams that have developed all aspects of the business, including inventory, information technology, sales and store management.

The store, which sells school supplies, opened on Jan. 7, and profits have been divided, with 50 percent going back into the school and the other 50 percent donated to a cause important to the community.

“I’ve been blown away by what the people at Paychex have done,” said School No. 7 Principal Wakili Moore. “They’ve been happy to be here and I wanted the kids to experience how hard they work to be successful in what they do.”

Rochester business partners recently received guidance on how to strengthen their collaborations at two workshops facilitated by the PENCIL program.

Area businesses interested in getting involved in Rochester’s PENCIL Partnerships can call 585-262-8133 or visit www.pencil.org.

Principal leadership is Rochester’s principal goal

By BILL ABRAMSON

It’s time for the principals to go back to school, only this time they will be the ones learning.

Principals in the Rochester City School District will participate in the Rochester Leadership Academy (RLA) that kicks off this summer.

The Leadership Academy of New York City is advising the RLA, which is funded through a grant from the Wallace Foundation in partnership with St. John Fisher College and numerous New York state educational associations.

“The correlation between school leadership and student learning is guiding our work,” said Michele Hancock, Chief of Human Capital Initiatives for the RCSD. “We are looking at curricula and academics, staff leadership and capacity building for strong instructional leaders in connection with the RCSD reform agenda.”

Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard sought to help the leaders in the school system move from a more centralized system towards a school-based system.

“This academy is built around the concept of helping existing

“

We are looking at curricula and academics, staff leadership and capacity building for strong instructional leaders in connection with the RCSD reform agenda.

Michele Hancock
Chief of Human Capital Initiatives

The principals themselves had input into developing the curriculum for the RLA. The RLA also involves a number of recently retired principals who have had years in the system and can share their experience and expertise.

“The beauty of this is we’re asking the principals what they

principals to lead to certain outcomes, helping our children to learn better,” Hancock said. “We are helping principals transition to making site-based decisions to improve student achievement. They know best the culture and climate in their schools.”

The purpose of the academy is to aid principals as they move to a different educational model that holds them accountable for decisions made for their schools.

need,” Hancock said. “They are part of the process every step of the way.”

In the busy school day, principals sometimes lack the time to have conversations with colleagues and discuss problems. When principals bring problems to the RLA, they will find support in getting strategies to improve the situation and have the opportunity to learn from each other. The academy will serve as a vehicle for principals to work together.

“This is not a one-shot deal,” Hancock emphasized. “It’s not a deficit model or disconnected from the school leaders and it’s not the latest gimmick. It’s an ongoing leadership academy where principals get ongoing training to support the specific needs of their schools.”

The school leaders will get help understanding accountability and management tools that are available. They will look at the state analysis of their schools and create a strategic plan of action based on their school improvement plan.

The RLA is about principals having a chance to look at their leadership and what they could do to be more effective to guide their colleagues and help their students achieve.

Rochester schools' goal is excellence

ACHIEVEMENT: from Page 1

secondary school.

"We identified problems beginning with students transitioning from elementary schools to middle schools and then from middle schools to secondary schools," Patterson-Grant said.

That led to the decision to develop the Rochester Curriculum, a district-wide curriculum for English Language Arts and Math in grades 5-9

The Rochester Curriculum provides a guide for instruction and a forum for teacher collaboration. It allows teachers easy access to long-range plans, teaching lessons, assessments, and resources—all based on a common set of goals and expectations for student learning.

"We're not telling teachers how to teach," said Patterson-Grant. "But we're being very explicit about what we expect students to know."

In conjunction with the new curriculum, benchmark assessments allow schools to closely track students' progress throughout the year, rather than waiting until the end of the year. The assessments enable teachers to target instruction and academic support to specific student needs, taking action before it is too late.

The district is now expanding on the Rochester Curriculum, developing a standardized curriculum for grades K-4 and benchmark assessments for grades 3-4.

"The goal is greater accountability for student success," said Patterson-Grant.

Other important developments include:

- ◆ Programs are in place to close the achievement gap between the student body as a whole and special education students and English language learners (ELL). The district's special education office has been reorganized and streamlined to optimize delivery of services to students and families. And the number of secondary schools with programs serving ELL students has increased, along with professional development for teachers in those programs.

- ◆ The district is putting more emphasis on programs that work and replicating them, such as expanding the successful system of Expeditionary Learning (EL) schools.

- ◆ The district is working to make sure career and technical education course offerings are certified and preparing students for college or employment after high school.

East High valedictorian heading to Columbia

BEVEL: from Page 1

"I'm looking forward to the experience," she said. "I'll have to get used to the size, but New York City is such a vibrant city, and everyone at Columbia – from the students to the admissions staff – were so welcoming."

Bevel was also accepted to Tufts University, Howard University, Hofstra University, the University of Rochester and the University at Buffalo.

Born and raised in Rochester, Bevel started out at James P. B. Duffy School No. 12. In grade 9, she entered East High School, which is the Center for Advanced Placement (AP) Studies in the Rochester City School District, offering 19 AP courses, more than any other city school.

"I was able to take nine AP courses," said Bevel. "That's really

prepared me, in addition to all of the activities I've been exposed to."

At East, Bevel served as senior class president and was involved in Model UN, Drama Club, Mock Trial, Math League and National Honor Society. She was also a member of the band and the varsity tennis team, and took private flute lessons at the Eastman School of Music.

"The key to balancing it all is leaving yourself enough time to do everything," she said. "You have to make a schedule and stick to it."

But, given her own experiences in life, she also understands the value of living in the present.

"While it's good to plan ahead and have everything laid out, you also have to enjoy the moment, because it can pass so quickly," said Bevel. "Enjoy life and everyone around you to the fullest, because you never know when you might lose them."

Rochester rides bus to safety and savings

BY BILL ABRAMSON

Each school day, 17,000 students board yellow school buses for the trip to one of Rochester's 39 elementary schools. Beginning next school year, that trip will be safer and less expensive to the school system. In many cases, it will also be quicker.

Beginning in September, the Rochester City School District will switch to a two-tier bus system for its elementary schools. Instead of all 39 schools operating from 9 a.m.-3:20 p.m., about half the schools will be on a 7:50 a.m.-2:10 p.m. schedule and the rest will be on a 9:15 a.m.-3:35 p.m. schedule.

The schedule change will allow the district to reduce the number of buses it leases since many will be able to carry students on both schedules going to and from school. That alone will save the district up to \$5 million a year.

James Fenton, Senior Director of Operations, oversaw changes to the contract between the district and the First Student bus company. The two-tier system was one of those changes.

"The bus contract language was from 1984, so we updated that language and put it out to market for bids," Fenton said. "We built the two-tier system into the proposal so companies knew we were headed in that direction. First Student was the low

bidder."

First Student added GPS systems and four digital cameras for every bus at no additional cost. They included 100 new monitors to provide additional adult supervision on the buses.

"Not only do we save money, but we also improve the ride for students. With triple the number of monitors and fewer buses, we have a greater ratio of monitors to students, more than three

“

The bus ride to school can have a tremendous impact on children's readiness to learn.

Jean-Claude Brizard
Superintendent of Schools

times the number we have now," Fenton added. "The digital cameras will improve behavior on the bus for students and drivers, and with GPS, we can offer increased safety, route efficiency and better communication."

The objective is to get students to school safely and ready to learn.

"The key factor for parents is safety," Fenton explained. "A monitor, who is trained and certified

and who stands on the bus is there to keep control. Last year, we had 40 monitors on 600 buses; this year it's 140 monitors on 400 buses."

Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard said, "The bus ride to school can have a tremendous impact on children's readiness to learn. We are confident that this new system will help students get off to a good start in the morning and enjoy the ride home after a productive school day."



First Student bus driver Clifton Brown.

Never too early to learn

Rochester’s pre-K program has long record of success



Caring and Sharing Childcare students, from left, Miyanna Knorr; CaQuan Wester; Quaron Wright, Alanis Gaetan, and Corey Freeman read together. Caring and Sharing is one of 21 community providers that are part of Rochester’s Universal Pre-K network, which also includes 24 elementary schools across the city.

Alumnos de Caring and Sharing Childcare, de izquierda, Miyanna Knorr; CaQuan Wester; Quaron Wright, Alanis Gaetan, y Corey Freeman leen juntos. Caring and Sharing es uno de los 21 proveedores de la comunidad que forman parte de la red de Pre-K Universal de Rochester, la cual también incluye 24 escuelas primarias en la ciudad.



Cheryl Cady reads with Timmy Simmons, left, and Joshua Juneau at School No. 34.

Cheryl Cady lee con Timmy Simmons, izquierda, y Joshua Juneau en la Escuela Núm. 34.

By BILL ABRAMSON

It’s one thing to be good and know it; it’s another to have the data to prove it. Rochester’s Universal Pre-K Program has been rated the best in the nation and western Europe by independent evaluators based on international quality standards. Research shows that children enrolled in quality pre-K are more likely to do well in school, stay in school, and graduate. “Our top-rated pre-K program provides the strong foundation children need in those crucial early years,” said Superintendent of Schools Jean-Claude Brizard. Programs are offered throughout the city through a network of schools and community providers, so parents can choose a program located near home, work, or daycare. Bilingual programs are also available. Prekindergarten education has deep roots in Rochester: Pre-K programs in the city have been around for longer than state-based programs. “The Rochester Preschool Parent Program began about 75 years ago and it’s still in existence,” said Robin Hooper, director of the city’s Pre-K programs. “The first state-supported Pre-K program in the history of American education is also in existence at the Florence Brown pre-kindergarten program.” Florence Brown was a teacher at the Demonstration Pre-kindergarten Center that was established at the former School No. 26 after New York state initiated a pre-kindergarten program for children from low-income families in 1966. In 1969, Brown became the director of the program. One year after her death, the school was renamed in her honor in 1991. “The premise was to involve parents from the onset of the program, and there is still an active parent piece,” Hooper said. “It’s so important for children to have a good first school experience.”

The path to a successful tomorrow begins today.

Rochester’s nationally acclaimed Pre-K program gets children started on the right path to high school graduation, college and a brighter future.

If your child is 4 by Dec. 1, 2009, register today for Pre-K...it’s FREE!

585-262-8140
rcsdk12.org/prek

The Florence Brown Pre-K program also has a strong parent program. There is a coordinator, social worker and program administrator, and it is the city’s only center-based program, with five classroom programs at one location. There are two bilingual programs; a third in which the language will be predominantly Spanish, is in the works. There is also a health center at the location, and the children have access to a pediatrician free of charge, which is a unique service. Children with significant health needs are recommended there for services. Enrollment in Rochester’s Universal Pre-K Program is ongoing, and programs are offered in all areas of the city. For information, call 262-8140.



Lillie Gilliam, left, and Gabrielle Benjamin play on the playground at Caring and Sharing Child Care Center.

Lillia Gilliam, izquierda, y Gabrielle Benjamin juegan en el campo de recreo de Carin and Charing Child Care Center.

Nunca es demasiado temprano para aprender

El programa preescolar de Rochester tiene una larga trayectoria de éxito

POR BILL ABRAMSON

Una cosa es ser bueno en algo, la otra es tener los datos para comprobarlo. El Programa Universal Pre-K ha sido considerado el mejor del país y en Europa occidental por parte de evaluadores independientes basándose en normas internacionales de calidad. Los estudios demuestran que los niños inscritos en programas preescolares de calidad tienen más probabilidad de sobresalir en la escuela, permanecer en la misma y de graduarse. “Nuestro programa de pre-K de la mejor calidad ofrece la estructura sólida que los niños necesitan a esa temprana edad”, indicó el Superintendente de Escuelas, Jean-Claude Brizard. Se ofrecen programas en toda la ciudad por medio de una red de escuelas y proveedores en la comunidad, para que los padres de familia puedan elegir un programa cerca de su hogar, lugar de trabajo o guardería. También se ofrecen programas bilingües. La educación preescolar lleva años en Rochester. Los programas preescolares de la ciudad han existido desde hace más tiempo que los programas estatales.

El camino a un mañana con éxito empieza hoy mismo.

El programa Preescolar de reconocimiento nacional de Rochester guía a los niños por el camino adecuado hacia la graduación de secundaria, la universidad y un mejor futuro.

Si su niño ha cumplido los 4 años antes del 1 de diciembre de 2009, inscribalo hoy mismo en Pre-K... es GRATIS.

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con un programa consistente para los padres. Hay un coordinador, un trabajador social y un administrador del programa, y es el único centro en la ciudad con cinco programas en aulas en la misma ubicación. Hay dos programas bilingües, y se está elaborando un tercer programa con énfasis en español. El establecimiento también cuenta con un centro de salud, y los niños tienen acceso a un pediatra sin costo alguno, lo cual es un servicio único. A los niños que sufren de problemas significativos de salud se les recomienda ir allí para obtener servicios. La matrícula en el Programa de Pre-K Universal de Rochester es continua y los programas se ofrecen en todas las zonas de la ciudad. Para obtener mayor información llame al 262-8140.



Michael Hunt-Woodruff works on the computer at School No. 34 as teacher Joan Harris observes.

Michael Hunt-Woodruff trabaja en una computadora en la Escuela Núm. 34 mientras que la maestra Joan Harris lo observa.



The Preschool Parent Program at School No. 34’s Lisa Adkins reads with Shaina Terrell, left, and Khaliah Jackson.

Lisa Adkins, del Programa para Padres de Preescolares de Rochester en la Escuela Núm. 34, lee con Shaina Terrell, izquierda, y Khaliah Jackson.



Mrs. Robin works with Miyanna Knorr at Caring and Sharing Child Care.

La Sra. Robin trabaja con Miyanna Knorr en Caring and Sharing Child Care.