



March 1, 2019

Dear Commissioner Ella and Members of the NYS Board of Regents:

We are encouraged by your commitment to the education of our children in Rochester.

The Distinguished Educator's Report describes and focuses the attention of essential stakeholders and decision-makers on the irrefutable breakdown of public education in Rochester. The system is broken and must be replaced. Its cumulative failures have evolved over decades. They are systemic failures; certainly not failures of our children, nor of any one leader, teacher or board. They are failures that combine to perpetuate inequality based on race and income in our City and region. *Systemic and transformational change is needed now, and into the future.*

The Distinguished Educator's Report and your call to action, compel us all to reflect upon how we can best serve the children entrusted to our care, and to take action on their behalf.

We view the urgency of the opportunity you have given us through two lenses:

1. The long lens may best be expressed by a former Board president and current member of Rochester's City Council, as quoted in ROC City News on February 12, 2019: *"Seeing this challenge as just a city problem is dangerous. This is a regional and state issue. A state of emergency should have been called 30 years ago. We have spent years nibbling around the edges instead of calling for a complete overhaul of the entire school system."* Rochester's children deserve a world class education; let's start from the bottom-up and, in this moment and in partnership with you, commit ourselves to devote the time, resources, and creativity needed to design and build this for them.
2. The Distinguished Educator's report points to immediate actions, changes, policies and adults' behaviors needed to ratchet-up the quality of education students are receiving right now. These are starting points for the immediate improvements our students deserve even while we are at work on the long-term redesign.

Historically, there is no evidence that RCSD's governance has enabled -- or can enable -- the development and implementation of meaningful change strategies. Additionally, 95% of the Conveners responding to our most recent survey agree with the Distinguished Educator's report, and believe that the status quo is not acceptable and transformational change is required. As a cross-sector alliance of over 60 community institutions and leaders, ROC the Future has been successful driving some improvements in child outcomes in Rochester, largely from outside the district. It is time to drive change with the district to successfully achieve its legally mandated purpose of equitably and excellently educating our children.

To fill this breach, we are confident that both you and Mayor Warren understand that the voices of children and families, community, civic, business and nonprofit leaders must be represented and engaged at all essential decision-making tables. Roc the Future (RtF) steps forward as your best partner to actively assure that these voices are represented during the months ahead. RtF assumes this role because it is our mission to do so; we singularly exist as Rochester's far-reaching "Cradle to Career" collaboration, established to align the collective and individual influence and programmatic resources of our community to improve the academic achievement of children (roster of Conveners is attached). Importantly, in this role, we are actively working to expand our already-substantial representation, and to ensure that authentic community voices are engaged.

On Friday, February 8, 2019, RtF held an extended Conveners' Meeting to address the Distinguished Educator's Report and RCSD's response to it. Mayor Warren, Regents Brown and Norwood, Dr. Aquino, and other significant community stakeholders and education and State of NY officials were among those in attendance [*attendee list attached*]. This letter conveys RtF's consequent and strongly held consensus, and commitment to work collaboratively with you and RCSD to develop the necessary comprehensive, evidence-based, and transformational responses to the needs of our children.

We would like to meet with you to convey this commitment to you personally and offer assistance to generate partner and multi-stakeholder community engagement to co-develop a shared vision, solutions and strategies that improve outcomes for our children.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jackie Campbell
Executive Director, ROC the Future



Ajamu Kitwana
Chair, ROC the Future

ROC the Future Executive Committee:

Kirsten Barclay, Sr. Program Officer, Farash Foundation
Terry Hartmann, CFO, Children's Institute (RTF Treasurer)
Dirk Hightower, Exec. Director, Children's Institute
Ajamu Kitwana, VP Community Impact, ESL Federal Credit Union
Jennifer Leonard, President & CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation
Roosevelt Mareus, Exec. Dir., Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (RTF Governance Chair)
Larry Marx, CEO, The Children's Agenda
Shaun Nelms, Supt. East High School (RTF Vice-Chair)
Jaime Saunders, President & CEO, United Way of Greater Rochester
Patricia Uttaro, Director, Rochester Public Library (RTF Secretary)

City of Rochester, Mayor Lovely Warren



US Congressman, Joe Morelle



Action for a Better Community, Inc.



Center for Governmental Research



Children's Institute



Common Ground Health



ESL Federal Credit Union



Farash Charitable Foundation



Great Schools for All



Greater Rochester After School Alliance



Greater Rochester Health Foundation



Greater Rochester Quality Council



Monroe County



Nazareth College



North East Charter School Network



Rochester Area Community Foundation



Rochester Education Foundation



Rochester Educ. Opportunity Center



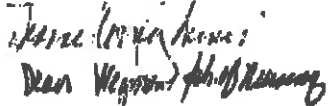
Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative



Rochester Public Library



St John Fisher College



The Children's Agenda



United Way of Greater Rochester



Community Advisory Council

