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ROC THE FUTURE ALLIANCE UNVEILS PLAN TO PUT 11,000 LOCAL YOUTH ON A PATH TO UPWARD MOBILITY BY 2030

12th Annual 'State of Our Children' Report Card assesses academic outcomes for Rochester's children and charts course for a better future

ROCHESTER, NY – [ROC the Future Alliance](#) (RTFA) will release its **State of Our Children Report Card** on January 17 at its 12th annual event for community leaders, changemakers, parents, and students working to improve educational outcomes for Rochester's youth. The event will take place from 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM at the Harro East Ballroom (155 N. Chestnut Street) in Rochester. Tickets are available online through Monday, January 13 at <https://tinyurl.com/52h3994u>.

The theme of this year's event is **'11,000 Futures on a Path to Upward Mobility by 2030.'** This year's theme reflects RTFA's recently launched "know your number" initiative, which aims to position 11,000 young people on a path to "cradle to career" success. "We need to make sure every child in Rochester is kindergarten ready, reading at grade level, graduating high school, and going on to meaningful and successful careers," said ROC the Future Alliance Executive Director Brian Lewis.

RTFA brings together a coalition of more than 60 systems partners including professionals from the education, health care, and government sectors, parents, and students, all working toward a shared vision of academic success for every child regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

A Powerful Lineup of Speakers

This year's **State of Our Children Report Card Release and Address** continues RTFA's tradition of advancing strategies to change systems and improve cradle to career outcomes that are informed by data-driven measurement and grounded in public accountability. The event features a powerful lineup of speakers including **Rochester Mayor Malik Evans, Monroe County Executive Adam Bello, RTFA Board Chair Dr. Lorna Washington, and keynote speaker [Dr. David E. Kirkland](#), PhD**, an acclaimed author, educator, and thought leader on culturally responsive-sustaining education. Kirkland's insights have shaped national conversations and been featured in prominent media outlets such as **The New York Times, NPR, CNN, and The Washington Post.**

Dr. Kirkland's forthcoming book, [Pedagogy of the Black Child](#) (Routledge, May 13, 2025), offers a revolutionary approach to education rooted in dignity and justice. Kirkland challenges educators to confront systemic inequities and prioritize healing and empowerment in classrooms. In a preview of his remarks, Kirkland said, "Education must begin where the wounds are, but it cannot end there. It

must stretch toward something greater—toward healing, growth, and joy. If we are serious about justice, we must be serious about dignity because dignity is not an afterthought; it is the foundation for learning, the soil from which hope grows.”

“Dr. Kirkland is a foremost expert on literacy, pedagogy and a lead author and architect for the New York State [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#),” explained Lewis. “If you're a parent or an educator interested in advancing culturally relevant teaching and learning, you won't want to miss this keynote.”

The State of Our Children Report Card focuses on four areas that impact academic achievement:

- **Early Childhood Development:** Pre-K and Head Start programs make a profound impact on kindergarten readiness. Similarly, afterschool and summer enrichment programs significantly improve early grade literacy.
- **High School Outcomes:** Educators are using [multi-tiered systems of support](#) to create a more engaging ninth-grade experience, which can lead to better attendance throughout high school and ultimately, higher graduation rates.
- **Parent/Family Partnerships:** To empower Parent/Family Partners (PFPs) to drive systems-level change, RTFA provided several hours per month of leadership and professional development workshops. PFPs benefit from building skills to tackle complex systemic issues.
- **Youth Leadership and Engagement:** RTFA recruited more than thirty students (8th-12th graders and first-year college students) in 2024 to join its Youth Leadership Coalition (YLC). Their work includes exploring the history of K-12 education in Rochester with a focus on racial equity and major systems changes that have occurred over time.

Emcees for this year's event will be Danette Campbell-Bell, Senior Program Officer at the Greater Rochester Health Foundation and Nazareth Miller, a sophomore at the University of Rochester pursuing a degree in Neuroscience. There will be live performances by World of Inquiry School #58 band and the Diamon Renee Dance Studio, a presentation on key findings from the State of Our Children Report Card, and an awards presentation.

State of Our Children Awards

- **Jacque Cady Annual Advocacy for Children Award** recognizes an individual for extraordinary accomplishments in advancing public policy or funding decisions for the benefit of our community's children.
- **Parent Leader Award** recognizes parents who have exhibited exemplary leadership by engaging and partnering with other parents to support the success of the community's children and families.
- **Systems Change Award** (formerly Organizational Partner Award) recognizes an organization that demonstrates exemplary leadership working with other organizations in collective impact and collaboration in support of ROC the Future's mission to improve cradle-to-career outcomes for Rochester's children.
- **Youth Leadership Award** recognizes a young leader who inspires other youth to use their voice—to make a change in the Rochester community—in support of ROC the Future Alliance's mission.

“There's tremendous energy and excitement across our community to do good work,” concluded Lewis. “Now is the time to use that momentum to position 11,000 young people on a path to upward

mobility by shifting policies, changing power structures, reallocating and realigning resources. I believe we can impact far more than 11,000 lives if we work together.”

A detailed agenda can be found [here](#). Tickets [are available online](#) through Monday, January 13.

About ROC the Future Alliance

[ROC the Future Alliance](#) is a community-wide, childhood education alliance in the Rochester community. Our collective impact initiative brings together a coalition of partners and parents working towards a shared vision of academic and social-emotional success for every child. We recognize that no one individual or business can accomplish significant change alone, which is why our funders, providers, staff members and parent/family partners work toward a common goal. Since its founding, ROC the Future Alliance has championed a vision that *Every Child is School Ready, Supported, Successful, and College and Career Ready*.

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