



The Warren Education Plan

Charting a Path to Success for All of Rochester's Children

Lovely
for Mayor

Friends of Lovely Warren
Rochester, NY
www.lovelyformayor.com

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“What the best and wisest parent wants for [her] own child, that must the community want for all of its children.” -John Dewey

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Dear Rochester Residents,

The most important issue of the 21st Century is the education of our children. It is at the root of every problem Rochester faces and the heart of every solution. Any conversation about jobs and economic growth must begin with education.

As a long-standing member of the Rochester City Council, I have met with countless parents, educators, community and political leaders who have expressed frustration over the education of the children in our city. My own parents shared this frustration and when I was in the fourth grade, they scraped together to send my sister and me to Catholic school until we both entered Joseph C. Wilson High School. Once ranked 24th in the nation, Wilson has fallen on to the New York State In Need of Improvement list. Today, only three Rochester high schools graduate more than 50% of their students.

The time has come for the city of Rochester to exercise leadership in the area of education.

Despite the many well-intentioned and sometimes successful programs over the years, the plight of urban education systems across the country has remained unchanged. For example, we know that early childhood education is essential to any educational program and here in Rochester we have many successful Pre-K programs. But studies show that for many urban children, the effects of these successful early childhood programs fade by fourth grade. What happens? It depends on whom you ask. Some blame poverty, others blame the K-12 educational system and some blame the parents. We must stop the blame game and elevate the conversation to what is in the best interest of the children in our city. It is time we stop focusing on school type and start focusing on school quality.

The first step toward rebuilding a prosperous Rochester is to be honest with ourselves that the number one reason middle class families move out of our city is because of the education system. As they leave for the suburbs, they often tell me they will “not sacrifice their child.” Who are we to ask them to? Today, only 8 out of Rochester’s 62 schools are in good standing—hardly acceptable odds for the choosy parent.

In the near future, my own daughter will enter Kindergarten and my husband and I will be faced with the same odds that drive many of our families to the suburbs. We will have to decide what school will put her on the path to college and career, to a successful life. But unlike most Rochester parents, we have the freedom to consider all of our options—public, charter and private.

The Warren education plan will give every parent across our city the same choices my husband and I have. For parents who choose the Rochester City School District, my plan creates a meaningful partnership with the Superintendent to make every school a high performing school. For parents who want an innovative charter school, I will work to bring proven, high performing charter providers to our city. For those who believe private school is the best fit for their child, my plan advocates for New York State tax credits to spur private scholarships in Rochester.

The Warren education plan is founded on the principle that every child born within our city limits deserves a fighting chance, not just at educational success, but life--a chance that few of our children are getting today. A staggering 82% of Rochester City School District eighth-graders are functionally illiterate, the lowest reading proficiency rate in the state. When our eighth-graders become adults, they will struggle to read a newspaper, a job application, a voter ballot. And when they become parents, they will struggle to read to their own children. A majority will never graduate from high school. A heart-breaking 91% of our Black boys and 89% of our Latino boys won't graduate on time, the lowest in the country. Each year, more than 1,000 Rochester students will drop out, destined to a life of low wages and unemployment, public health care, food stamps and housing assistance. Too many will end up in prison. Their children—like more than half of Rochester's children—are fated to live in poverty.

Rochester cannot continue down this path. We cannot afford to do business as usual.

More must be done to support education outside the traditional school model. Indeed, the city of Rochester can stimulate educational innovation that breaks from tradition by bringing into our community successful new schools and new educational approaches that we have never seen before. Across the country, extraordinary schools and cities have been able to defy the same odds that Rochester's children face. These extraordinary communities know that hand-wringing and cheerleading cannot fix the urban educational crisis. They know the difference between programs that benefit poor children and those that benefit the adults. They've learned that what happens outside of the classroom is just as important as what happens inside. We have a duty to learn from their success.

I invite you to read more about my approach to education and the initiatives I plan to implement as mayor of Rochester. Some of these ideas will come with virtually no cost; some will be funded through a more efficient realignment of city resources. Others will require new funds. Yes, we will have to bring more resources into our city if we expect to truly invest in our children. But my approach is one that favors public-private partnerships -- leveraging the strength and innovation of the private sector -- in order to bring about educational change. This plan is concrete and action-oriented. I am confident that I will be able to implement this bold plan with little, if any, impact on the budget or the taxpayers. The potential return from the successful implementation of this plan, though, will be enormous.

It's time we stop talking about putting children first and start doing whatever it takes to ensure that all of Rochester's children have the opportunity to lead healthy productive lives. Our children do not choose their parents or the economic situation into which they were born, nor do they get to choose who teaches them or what school they attend. Those decisions are made for them by adults and none of this will be easy. Join with me in elevating the conversation because Rochester's children are the responsibility of all of us. *They are our children and it is truly our choice.*

Sincerely,



Lovely A. Warren

Rochester's Dropout Crisis

A high school dropout earns **\$10,386 less a year** than a high school graduate and **\$36,424 less** than a college graduate

Among dropouts 16 - 24 years of age, **incarceration rates were 63 times higher than** among college graduates

Among Americans 18 - 24, **dropouts were more than twice as likely to live in poverty**, compared to college graduates

It is estimated that a dropout will cost taxpayers an average of **\$292,000 over a lifetime** due to costs of incarceration, social services and other factors such as how much less they will pay in taxes compared to college graduates.

Source: Department of Education, US Census Bureau, "The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School," Northeastern University study

AN UNDENIABLE CRISIS.

By any measure—Reading and Math proficiency, graduation rate, college-readiness—Rochester’s educational outcomes are the worst in the state. Each year, more than a thousand students will drop out, destined to a life of low wages and unemployment, public health care, food stamps and housing assistance.¹ Too many will end up in prison. Their children—like more than half of Rochester’s children—are fated to live in poverty. According to a study by the Schott Foundation, only 9% of Black boys and 11% of Latino boys will graduate on time, the lowest in the nation. Of those 46% of students who do graduate, only 6% are college-ready. Those few who persevere and enroll in college will be burdened with significant and unplanned costs for remediation courses, few will complete their degrees. This, in an economy that is increasingly demanding high-school completion and post-secondary study.

The seven strategies in this plan are drawn from extraordinary communities like Pittsburgh, Newark, New Orleans, Boston and others that have been able to overcome many of the same challenges facing Rochester’s children. Their examples are important reminders that schools cannot solve this crisis alone and that providing Rochester’s children with high-quality pathways to adulthood is a collective responsibility. While none of these strategies requires mayoral control of the Rochester City School District, they all require mayoral leadership and take full advantage of the convening power of the office.

1. Empower parents with greater educational choices and greater transparency.

The Greater Rochester region is home to some of the best and worst schools in the country. If you are a poor, black or Hispanic parent, your child will likely attend one of 53 failing city schools, schools that for decades have been unable to deliver on their promises of change.² Research shows that low-income parents, in particular, struggle to navigate the system and are less likely to have access to school data or visit schools when they make enrollment decisions.³ Rather than continuing to ask Rochester families to be patient with these failing schools, the Warren administration will empower them with better information and better options. Specifically, it will:

- Recruit **high-performing charter operators** with proven results serving urban students, to supplement the Rochester portfolio of district, charter and private schools.
- Advocate for the passage of the **Education Investment Tax Credit/A.1826**—to encourage the formation of private scholarship funds in Rochester.
- Launch the **Opportunity Finder**, a web-based tool connecting parents and students to the city’s many educational opportunities (district, charter and private schools; pre-K programs; enrichment and expanded learning opportunities; college scholarships; internships and vocational opportunities). The Finder will present key assessment data from the New York State Education Department in a convenient, parent-friendly way to support good school choices.

- Launch **“Our children. Our choice,”** a new informational guide aimed at helping Rochester parents navigate the successful path to college or career.

2. Expand access to high-quality early education for all children.

The successful path to college or career begins well before a child enters Kindergarten. Sadly, too many of Rochester’s children start school behind their peers. Research shows that as much as one-half the achievement gap between poor and affluent children is already established before first-grade. Research also shows the promise of high-quality pre-K programs to narrow the gap and ensure children living in poverty also stay on track to graduate, college- or career-ready.⁴ An investment in high-quality pre-Kindergarten programs for the neediest children has also been found to significantly reduce costs of remediation, social and health services and incarceration. The Warren early education initiative will:

- **Expand high-quality pre-K** programming through the Beacon Schools Program.
- **Connect parents to high-quality pre-K** programs through the Opportunity Finder—the new web-based City directory of educational programs and data.
- **Educate parents** on the importance of early reading through the Early Literacy Project that includes toddler reading time, a book drive and parent workshops.

3. Launch the Mayor's Beacon Schools Program.

The new Mayor's Beacon Schools program will re-imagine the city's schools as neighborhood centers that extend the hours, services and partnerships of traditional schools. Conceived and executed in partnership with national experts on community schools and local stakeholders, the Mayor's Beacon Schools program will create incentives for Rochester schools—district, charter and private—to forge partnerships with community agencies around a common focus of improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

Based on the best practice known as the “developmental triangle,” the program will recognize schools that integrate a strong instructional program with expanded learning opportunities and human services designed to remove barriers to students’ learning and healthy development.⁵ For the parent making enrollment choices, the Mayor's Beacon School designation will be the “gold standard,” signaling a school's academic excellence and demonstrated commitment to ensuring its students’ social-emotional health.

Schools that have been awarded the Beacon School designation must meet certain criteria and agree to a rigorous evaluation process. They will receive startup funds and technical assistance to implement the Beacon School concept; City resources, including use of City facilities; and facilitation of school-agency partnership agreements. Through the Mayor's Beacon Schools program, the City will work to:

- Better **align and coordinate City resources**, targeting them to what must be the City's top priority: addressing the needs of children living in poverty
- Expand access to **quality pre-Kindergarten**
- **Expand learning opportunities** before and after school, and on weekends and recesses
- Expand access to **critical social and medical services**
- Increase **parental involvement** and choice

4. Recruit extraordinary urban teachers to Rochester.

Research has consistently shown that of all school-based factors, teacher effectiveness matters most. Students taught by the top teachers are less likely to become pregnant as teenagers, more likely to enroll in college, and more likely to earn more money as adults.⁶ For children starting school already behind, the impact of an effective teacher is even more dramatic. The data show that three consecutive years with a strong teacher can all but reverse the achievement gap. Sadly, the data also show that poor children and children of color are less likely to be taught by those top teachers and

are more likely to be placed with ineffective, inexperienced and unqualified teachers.⁷

City Hall doesn't control how schools evaluate or train their teachers, but it can give them powerful tools to recruit extraordinary teachers who have high expectations for our children. The Warren teacher recruitment strategy has four parts:

- **Partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and alternative certification programs like Teach for America** to increase the number of candidates with explicit training in urban education, data-driven instruction and shortage areas like Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, bi-lingual and special education.
- **Rochester Educator Job Bank**, housed on the City's web site, will provide a searchable listing of educator job openings in Rochester schools and educational programs (district schools, charter, city private, pre-K and enrichment programs).
- **Excellent Educator Hiring Bonus grants** to K-12 district and charter schools that agree to the highest standards in educator screening and hiring.⁸ New hires at eligible schools will receive a \$4,000 signing bonus.
- **Rochester Educator Housing Fund** will provide an incentive for schools (district, charter, private) to attract and retain top teaching and administrative talent and increase the number of educators living in the city of Rochester. The employer would provide a minimum \$1,000 benefit to new or existing educators who are purchasing a home in the City of Rochester and meet the eligibility requirements. The City of Rochester will match the employer benefit dollar for dollar up to \$3,000, as it currently does with the Employer Assisted Housing Initiative.

5. Expand College Access and Attainment.

Our City's economic future depends on an educated workforce. According to the Center for Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, roughly two-thirds of all new jobs require some form of postsecondary education; seven of the top ten fastest-growing occupations will require at least a bachelors degree.⁹ While our area's many colleges and universities boast cutting-edge degree programs for today's global economy, many of their graduates relocate to other cities to build their careers and families. Few of our local colleges and universities—many nationally recognized—enroll Rochester city students.

In fact, college attainment is out of reach for most Rochester high school students. Although 83% of district seniors report that they plan to attend a post-secondary institution, only a few hundred will enroll each year.¹⁰ Even Rochester's high-

achieving, low-income students are likely to encounter barriers to college attainment. A national study from the Brookings Institution found that poor information about college opportunities is likely to blame for the fact that these high achievers often miss out on admission to selective colleges where generous financial aid packages for low-income students await.¹¹

The Warren college initiative will create a city-wide focus on the need to both better support Rochester's college-going students and stem the drain of young college-graduates from our City:

- A **new City of Rochester Internship program**, modeled after the Monroe County Bar Association and New York State Assembly internship programs, and other internships that have been successful at recruiting the best young talent to public service. Interns will receive a \$4,500 stipend.
- **Rochester College Internship & Scholarship Bank**, housed on the City's web site, will provide a searchable, comprehensive listing of scholarships to local institutions and internships (public, private and non-profit sectors).

6. Strengthen and Expand the Pathways to Career.

In the 2006 Civic Enterprises report, *The Silent Epidemic*, high school dropouts reported the most frequent reason for leaving school was that classes were not interesting or relevant to the real-world.¹² In contrast, students enrolled in rigorous Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs are found to have higher attendance and graduation rates, as well as improved exit exam passing rates than the general student population.¹³ Likewise, teens who have had positive high school work experiences are more likely to graduate and are less likely to get in trouble with the law or become single parents.¹⁴ These employment opportunities are particularly critical for poor Black and Hispanic teens, whose employment rate is four times lower than upper middle-income white teens.¹⁵

A city-wide focus on strengthening the school-work connection offers great promise for the thousands of Rochester students at risk of dropping out each year. The Warren initiative to improve and expand the path to career has three parts:

- **Survey of local businesses** to determine the current and emerging employment needs and skills gaps of Rochester students.
- **Study of Rochester's Career Tech Ed programs**, conducted with support of the CTE Technical Assistance Center of NY, will examine all CTE programs (district, charter and private) to identify program gaps and recommend ways to better align with industry needs.

- **Annual recognition program** to acknowledge local employers offering work-linked learning opportunities for Rochester students (district, charter and private).

7. Fight Summer Learning Loss through Re-tooled City Rec Programs.

Researchers estimate that more than half of the achievement gap is due to unequal access to summer learning opportunities.¹⁶ Mayor Warren will leverage the power of her office to build community support of our students and schools, particularly during non-school hours. The Warren strategy to fight summer learning loss will:

- Strengthen the **role of City Recreation centers** to provide strategic partnerships with schools focused on extending learning activities for students throughout the year
- Lead a **STEM-focused summer learning initiative** that will provide a high-quality learning opportunity for every student that wants to participate by connecting schools, non-profits, city agencies, and others.¹⁷
- Educate the community on the importance of stemming summer learning loss through a **community outreach campaign**.

EXECUTION

New Office of Educational Innovation.

First of its kind city department charged with executing the mayor's vision of reform, including forging public-private partnerships and fundraising. Expected to be self-sustaining, with annual budget of \$150-200K.

Rochester Education Reform Commission.

Comprised of experts and external stakeholders (volunteers) who share the Mayor's vision for education reform, the commission will advise the mayor on critical issues and work to create political will for a sustained reform effort in the city.

Rochester Education Summit.

An annual event aimed at showcasing Rochester's educational innovation across all sectors and building broad-based engagement and focus on what is best for Rochester's children.

Rochester Innovation Fund.

Through a mix of private-public funding, competitive grants from the City and targeted private philanthropy, the Innovation Funds will catalyze change in Rochester.

Components of the Fund include:

- **Revolving charter school facilities loan** to attract proven charter operators to Rochester and support growth of high-performing existing Rochester charters
- **Mayor's Beacon Schools** to transform schools into community hubs that integrate strong instruction with social, health and other services, as well as after-school programming to support students and their families
- **Teacher Recruitment Fund** to recruit extraordinary urban teachers to Rochester's schools

Projected Costs.

The following new initiatives will be initially funded through efficiencies and re-aligning of city budget; expected to be cost-neutral in year 2:

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|--|------------------|
| Office of Educational Innovation | \$200,000 |
| <i>Annual cost.</i> | |
| Community Outreach Campaigns | \$10,000 |
| <i>Annual, on-going. Summer Learning, Early Childhood literacy</i> | |
| Web-based tools | \$30,000 |
| <i>One time cost, assumes \$10K annual maintenance thereafter</i> | |
| Intern stipends | \$45,000 |
| <i>Ten interns</i> | |

We will aggressively pursue private funding sources for the following Rochester Innovation Fund initiatives:

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Annual Education Reform Summit | \$20,000 |
| <i>Annual cost.</i> | |
| Mayor's Beacon Schools | \$300,000 |
| Charter School Facilities Loan Fund | \$20,200,000 |
| Teacher Recruitment Incentive | \$225,000 |
| Teacher Housing Fund | \$132,000 |
| Study of Career Tech Offerings | In kind |

Figures are estimates and subject to change.

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- ¹⁵ Pathways to Prosperity.
- ¹⁶ The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores. (1996) H. Cooper. For more information go to the National Summer Learning Association <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/EveryChildMemorable.pdf>.
- ¹⁷ For further detail on the Chicago Summer of Learning, see <http://chicagosummeroflearning.org/>.