

# Improving Educational Outcomes through Socio-economic Integration



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## PROJECT SUMMARY:

Rochester is a city fraught with poverty and high rates of segregation. The racial and socio-economic division is most notable in the public schools where urban children are struggling to meet state standards.

I am working with Genesee Community Charter School as well as Great Schools For All to raise awareness about and promote the expansion of socio-economically diverse schools in Rochester. Social determinants of health (SDH) have a huge impact on health throughout the life course. Level of education is one of the biggest SDHs.

## BACKGROUND:

- We have known since the Coleman Report (1966) that concentrated poverty—more than an individual's socio-economic status—negatively influences school performance.
- Rochester has the highest rates of extreme poverty when compared to similar sized cities (Table 1). As a state, New York has the highest rates of school segregation in the country.
- In 2016 & 2017, over 90% of RCSD students in grades 3-8 failed state tests in English and Math.
- There is significant evidence that integrating schools on the basis of socio-economic status results in improved outcomes for all students.
- In Raleigh, NC, in 1976, the city school district was integrated with a suburban district and subsequently a "poverty cap" of 40% was set at each school. In 2003, 91% of K-8 students in these schools passed the state math and ELA tests. Raleigh is still known for its great schools today.

## OBJECTIVES:

- To raise awareness of socio-economically diverse schools as well as the benefits of this diversity in education
- To improve educational outcomes for all students by promoting diverse schools
- To pass legislation allowing charter schools to enroll a student body that does not match the socio-economic background of the district
- To open a sister school to GCCS that will allow for continued socio-economic integration in RCSD

## Primary Measurable Outcome:

- We will monitor interest in the school by following the number of students signing up for the lottery annually. This number will be used as a proxy for increased awareness of the impact of diversity on educational outcomes.

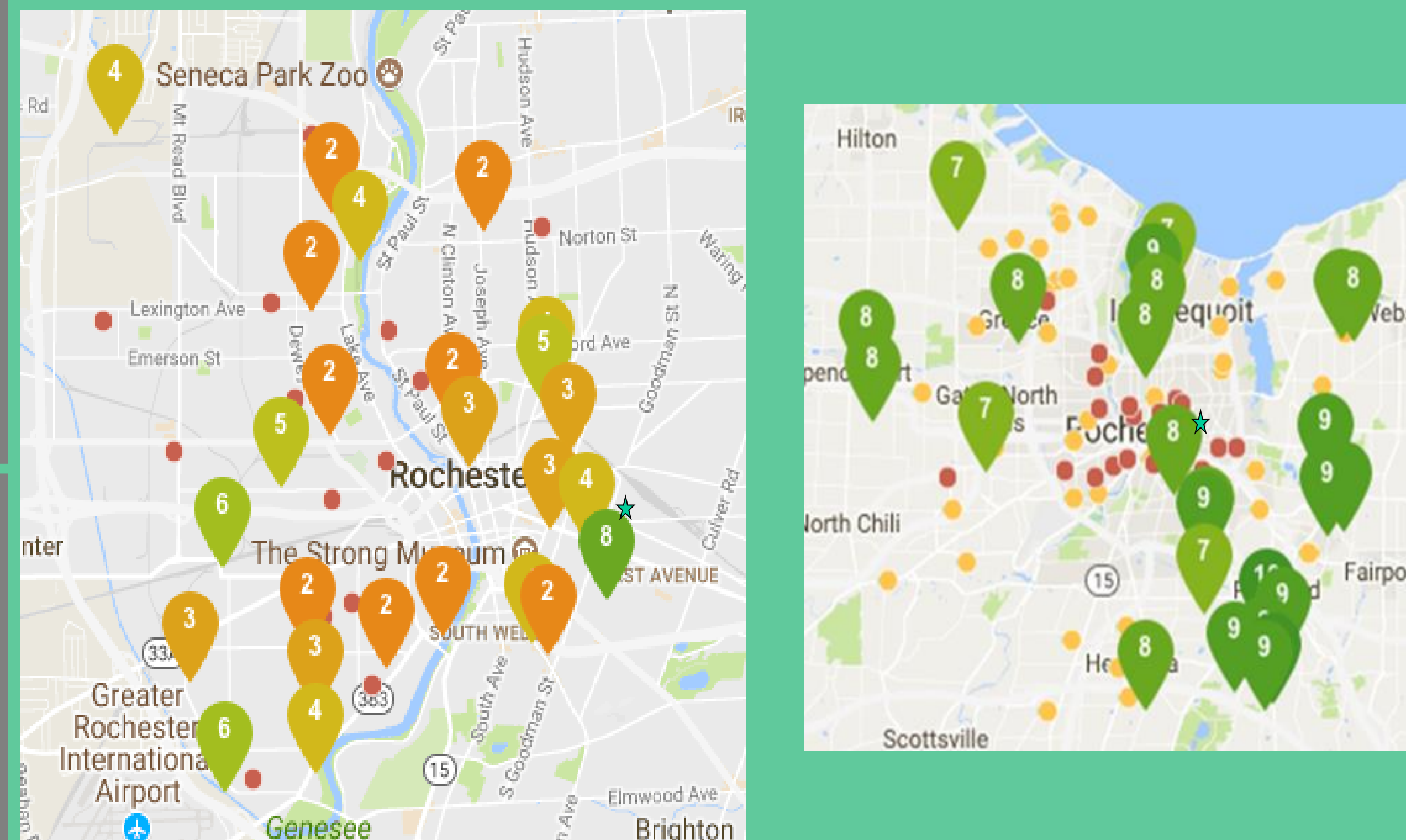


Figure 1. Students at Genesee Community Charter School (GCCS) continue to thrive. Each tag on the map above represents a school rating from 1-10 assigned by greatschools.org. A rating of 1 is below average, 10 is above average. The star on each map represents GCCS. The ratings are determined by performance on state tests, student progress from year to year, and whether the school helps underprivileged and minority students to succeed.

Table 1: Extreme Poverty Rate Among Cities of Rochester's Size <sup>4</sup>		
Rank	City	Extreme Poverty Rate*
1	Rochester	16.2%
2	Hartford	16.0%
3	Buffalo	15.1%
4	Richmond	13.9%
5	Birmingham	13.7%
6	New Orleans	13.6%
7	Fresno	13.2%
8	Grand Rapids	11.9%
9	Tucson	11.8%
10	Bridgeport	10.9%
Mid-point of range <sup>5</sup> →		10.2%
11	Tulsa	9.4%
12	Salt Lake City	9.0%
13	Worcester	8.8%
14	Albuquerque	8.2%
15	Louisville	8.2%
16	Oklahoma City	7.8%
17	Raleigh	7.7%
18	Honolulu	6.0%

\*Percent of total population below half the federal poverty level

## METHODS:

- Meet with GCCS and GS4A leadership to strategize the promotion of socio-economically diverse schools
- Publicize the benefits of this type of schooling in newspapers and on the radio
- Collect yearly enrollment and application data for GCCS
- Continue to trend state test scores
- Work with community partners and law colleagues to draft an amendment to the charter law
- Investigate possible sites for a second, socio-economically integrated school located in the city—this will cut down on suburban flight (Figure. 3)
- Follow up with key stakeholders in order to bring the discussion about diversity in education to the forefront in Rochester

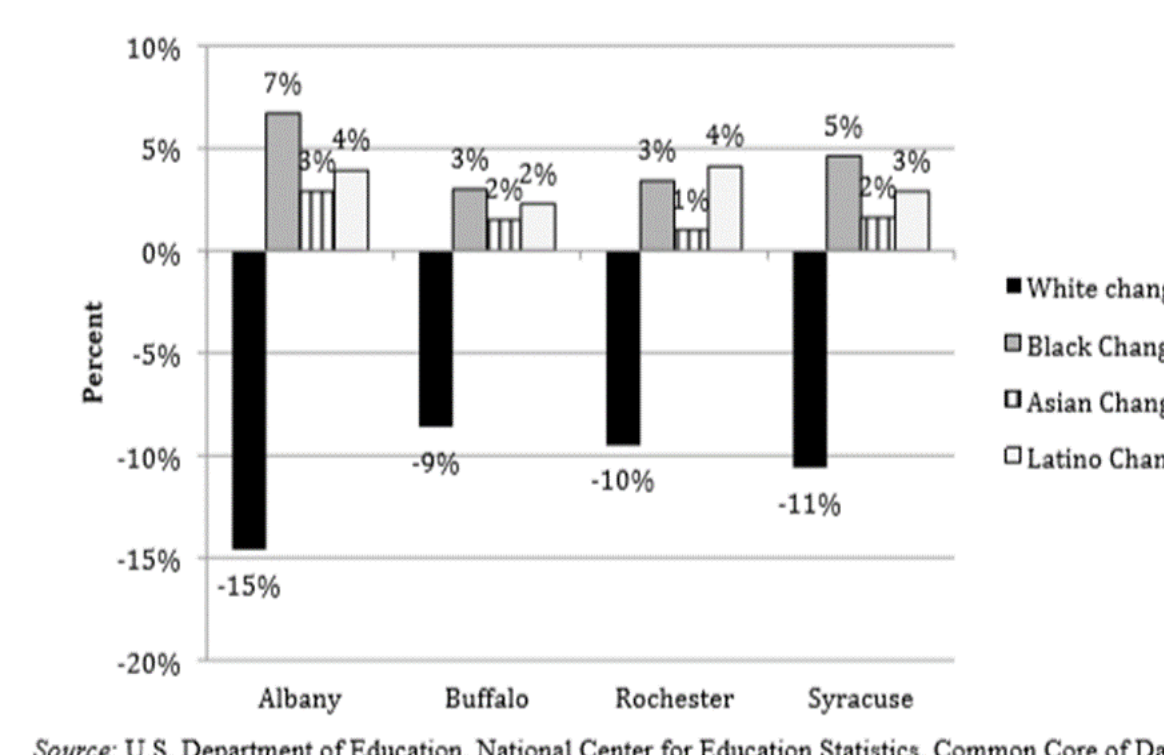


Figure 3. Change in racial make-up of the classroom from 1989-2010 in Upstate NY, Kucsera et al.

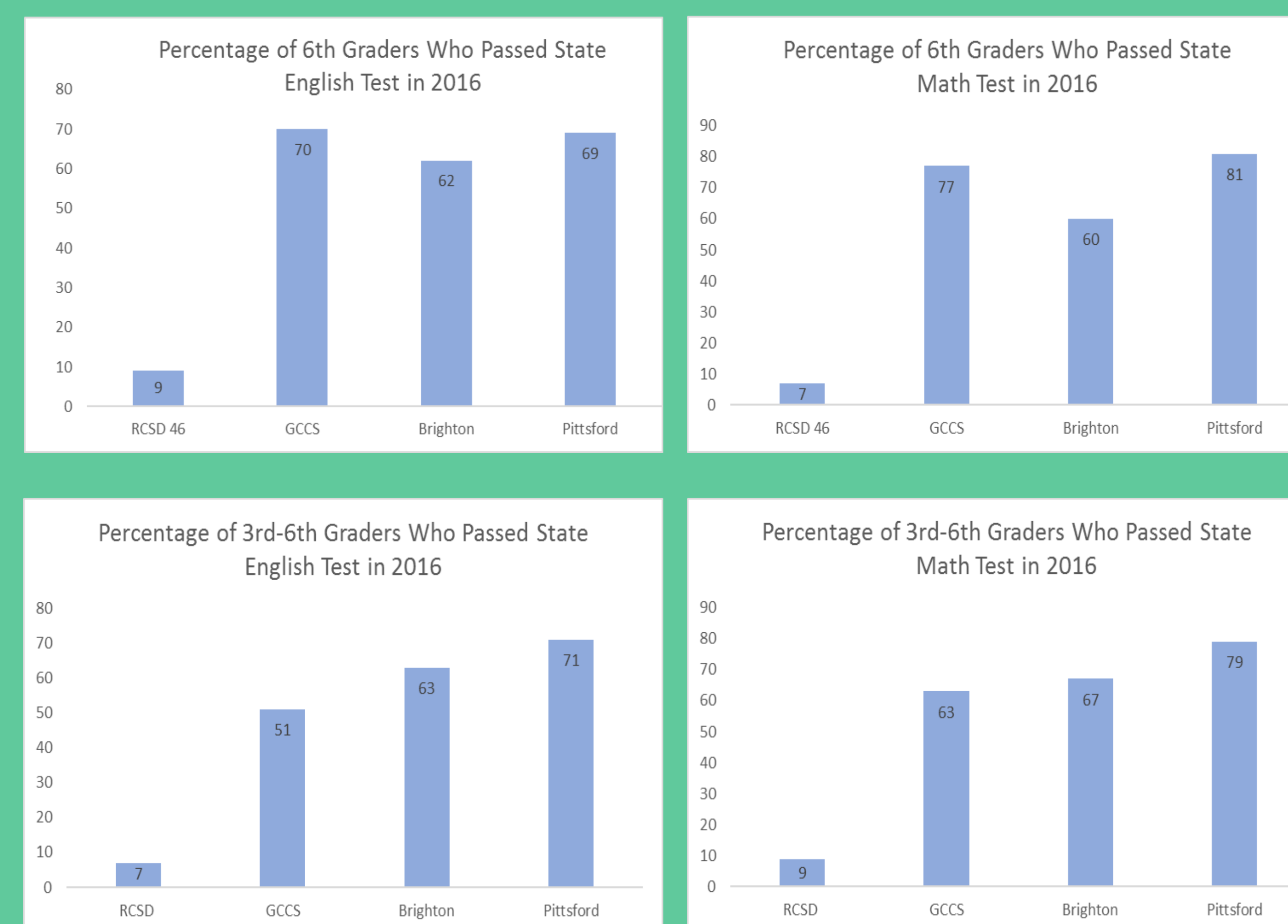


Figure 2: Performance on state test scores compared across schools in the region.

## OBSERVATIONS:

- Socio-economically diverse schools are beneficial to students from all backgrounds.
- They provide children from low SES families with peer role-models that they might not otherwise be exposed to as well as a framework for approaching school that is often entirely new.
- These schools also benefit children from middle-class and more affluent families by teaching them to think in different ways and to look at problems from other angles.
- Genesee Community Charter School is a socio-economically integrated elementary school located in Rochester that provides all its students with an excellent education. Students who attend GCCS have the opportunity to be successful, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. The diverse classroom makeup allows for this educational success. (Fig. 1.2)
- Socioeconomic integration is the model with a long term proven track record for improving performance of an urban school system.

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