



December 9, 2014

Today, the University of Rochester submitted a proposal to the Rochester Board of Education for the University to serve as the Educational Partnership Organization (EPO) for East High School, effective July 1, 2015. This proposal is currently under review by the Board of Education, with a December 31, 2014 deadline for submission to the New York State Department of Education.

The University submitted this proposal at the request of the Rochester Board of Education. It is our understanding that unless an EPO agreement can be achieved this month, East High School likely will be closed by the State Department of Education.

The University's proposal reflects the research and hard work of a dedicated team of professionals from the University working in collaboration with a leadership design team comprised of educational leaders and teachers from East High School, the central administration of the Rochester City School District, and representatives from each of the four collective bargaining units that serve East High.

The proposal is based on extensive input from community stakeholders over the last six months. All of East's students participated in discussing their vision for the school during social studies classes led by a team of 24 East student leaders, and many parents and community members contributed through community meetings. East High personnel participated in several ways, including 57 serving on planning committees and taskforces on a range of issues. Representatives of many community organizations served on committees and taskforces or provided substantive assistance. We are deeply grateful for the contributions of so many people committed to the success of East High School.

The proposal reflects our sincere belief that there must be fundamental changes at East High School, and urgently, so that student performance can improve. East High School is in imminent danger of being closed, and this proposal reflects what we believe is required to make the necessary shift in the school culture, the academic program, and supports for East High School to succeed.

The proposed plan to save East High will require more resources than are currently provided through the City School District budget.

The proposed plan also requires the agreement of the four collective bargaining units serving East High School. Negotiations are progressing, with three of the four labor unions having already approved or scheduled a vote for approval of updated agreements.

Attached is a summary of key elements of the proposal. The complete proposal is available at <http://www.warner.rochester.edu/researchprojects/projects/EastHigh>.

Key Elements of the Plan for East High School

Structure and Organization

- **Comprehensive, community school.** East High School will be a comprehensive school with a robust set of services to support its diverse students. Entrance will be by student choice, giving priority to students living in proximity to East and the neighborhoods surrounding the school. East will offer a strong academic program and a full complement of athletic and extra-curricular activities that support and engage students.
- **School organization.** East will be organized into two separate schools and add 6th grade. The Lower School will include grades 6-8, and the Upper School will be grades 9-12. Though part of the Upper School, a separate Freshman Academy will house first-time 9th graders. Adding 6th grade will provide students a jumpstart on developing the foundational skills and attitudes necessary for success in high school and will position students to earn more high school credits before entering 9th grade.
- **School size.** East High School will eventually have fewer students than it currently serves, reducing the student body over time from 1750 to 1350. This will be accomplished by having smaller entering cohorts and the voluntary transfer of students. No current East students will be required to transfer.
- **Extended school day.** Students will experience extended learning time every day through a longer 7.5-hour school day. Students in Grades 6-9 will have increased instructional time devoted to math and literacy, supported by a high-quality and culturally-relevant curriculum. Students in grades 10-12 will have additional opportunities to focus on college and career preparation, as well as on course recovery and small group remediation where needed.
- **Staggered start times.** The Lower School and the Upper School will have different start times, with the Lower School students arriving earlier and being transported on yellow school buses, rather than city buses.

“All In” Culture, Engagement, and Supports

- **“All in... all the time.”** The people working at East will be “all in... all the time,” meaning that they will direct their full professional efforts to helping to create a positive and successful educational experience for East’s students. East’s teachers and school leaders will engage in teaching and learning as a collaborative experience. Every day, they will work together planning lessons, assessing student progress, and sharing their practice. They will be proactive in their advocacy for and service to students. The schedules and compensation of people working at East will be adjusted to facilitate this increased engagement with students and professional learning.

- **School family groups.** Each grade will be organized into small “family groups” (about 10 students each) that meet daily with a mentor (faculty, staff, or administrator) to work on student interests and needs, such as leadership development, attendance, study skills, academic performance, community service projects, restorative justice practice, and other issues designed to support students’ development and achievement. School family time will be augmented by community advocate support to engage students and their parents and families on a daily basis.
- **Engaged, active students.** The East plan places students squarely at the center of the schooling experience. Students will learn to take charge of their learning and gradually to take leadership roles both within the school and community. Students will be prepared through both school family group work and student-driven pedagogy in all classes to be active citizens in their community.
- **Expanded social and emotional support.** The proposal articulates and promotes a vision for social and emotional health that supports a safe and healthy school environment for teachers, students, and their families, using a restorative justice approach with the systematic support of counselors, social workers, and comprehensive health services.
- **Deep recognition of families as true partners.** East High will use an intentional model of engagement and relationship building that focuses on the strengths of students and families, creating meaningful opportunities for shared decision-making with youth, families, and other partners in the Rochester community. East High will be open evenings and weekends to serve as a focal point for the community and to provide academic and other support services to families.
- **Better support for English language learners.** East will offer a full continuum of programs for English language learners, including integrated supports throughout the school program, as well as an enhanced dual language program for students whose home language is Spanish. Professional learning for content teachers will strive to better serve English language learning students, and efforts will be made to attract school personnel who can speak languages other than English.
- **Professional learning.** Transformation of the East culture will require ongoing, embedded, and intensive professional learning for all school staff, and will include extensive summer work that will continue through the academic year. It will also require a commitment to common planning time for curriculum design, assessment and data analysis to inform instruction, planning, and professional learning.

Academic Preparation for Career and College

- **Early success.** The Lower School program is designed to develop academic and social foundations, with increased instructional time in math and literacy, a school-wide

approach to leadership development and restorative justice, and a full range of athletic, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities designed to engage students. All students entering the Lower School will participate in a summer preparation program as a prerequisite of entry.

- **Special focus on 9th Grade.** Research shows that the first year in high school is pivotal to ongoing academic achievement. An excessive number of 9th graders at East have been failing and repeating, some multiple times. With that in mind, first-time freshmen will attend the **Freshman Academy** and have their own wing of the building, their own lunch, and physical education, with special supports for students struggling academically; continued extended time devoted to math and literacy; and opportunities to complete as many as four high school credits.

Students who are not on track at the end of 9th grade will not repeat a year in the Freshman Academy. Rather, they will have alternative pathways to success through campus-based and off-site choices that result in credit recovery and realignment with graduation plans and that provide the full range of academic and social-emotional support the students will require.

- **Engaging and rigorous curriculum.** The curriculum at East has been selected based on research, with extensive input from East teachers and University of Rochester faculty, building on successes in Rochester and across the country. We expect the curriculum and teaching practices to be culturally relevant and rigorous and to use universal design principles to engage students in active learning, including problem-based learning that is connected with community issues. Specific, detailed curriculum recommendations are outlined in the proposal.

At the Upper School, a comprehensive program will offer a full range of classes leading to the Regents diploma, including career and technical pathways, as well as a range of AP and early-college classes.

- **Expanded and vibrant Career and Technical Education program.** In-house programs will include Health Related Careers, featuring a partnership with UR Medicine; Culinary Arts, including a partnership with Wegmans; Information Technology; and Advanced Manufacturing, including the manufacturing of optical components. East also has a program in Clinical Optics that will be part of the Health Related Careers Program and will offer robust career pathways in teaching and business professions. Additionally, East's students will have access to the full range of BOCES programs currently available in Monroe County.
- **Unique approach to credit recovery.** For those students who are not on track to graduate, there will be a variety of options, including two off-site programs, a later start time, special compressed standards-based classes, online credit recovery, and evening classes that provide flexibility and focus, allowing students to better balance work or meet family demands and to recover missed credits toward graduation.

Results Driven

- **Improving Attendance.** East High's current attendance rate is not conducive to credit completion and graduation. An initial focus is to increase the attendance rate for middle school students to 92% in Year 1, 93% in Year 2, and 94% in Year 3. Attendance rates will be closely monitored, with supports in place and a range of interventions designed to motivate students and improve attendance.
- **Improving graduation rates.** The proposal outlines targets for increased graduation rates for all students, improving over time. Students who enter East as 6th graders in the first year under the new plan are expected to reach the NYS standard of 80% graduation rate.