READY Parent ACTION Academy

ABOUT US

READY (Rochester Education and Development for Youth) exists to ensure all schools thrive. As a 501(c)(3) organization, we are committed to increasing access to high-quality education for Rochester's K-12 public school students through community-driven approaches and strategies. Beyond supporting the design and development of schools, we are cultivating a strong ecosystem—where families are informed and engaged, educators reflect the diversity of the community, and policies create the conditions for success. By aligning resources and partnerships, we are working to expand, launch, and sustain quality schools.

EMPOWERING PARENTS AS AGENTS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Parent engagement is a critical building block for quality schools, as research demonstrates that when parents are actively involved in education, student achievement improves, and schools function more effectively. Programs like the Parent ACTION Academy empower parents to leverage their lived experiences as valuable assets in designing solutions. Studies show that when parents understand how education systems work, their advocacy efforts can lead to systemic changes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The Academy provides parents with the knowledge and tools to engage in decision-making, grounded in research that links parent involvement to better educational outcomes. By exposing them to policy and advocacy spaces, the program ensures parents can take on leadership roles, which is essential for fostering a school system that is responsive to the needs of its community (Epstein, 2011).

The **Parent ACTION Academy** invites parents with school-age children in Rochester public schools to participate in an eight-month fellowship designed to empower them as advocates and leaders in education. Participants will gain a deep understanding of how the education system functions—from the school level to city, state, and school board decision-making—and how effective advocacy can disrupt the status quo and push for systemic change.

Throughout the program, participants will engage with leaders who have navigated various pathways to effect change both inside and outside the system. This journey will allow parents to explore paths that align with their own needs, values, and strengths, while preparing them for ongoing involvement in education reform beyond the fellowship. Experiential learning is a core component of the Academy. Fellows will attend local and state legislative sessions, with clear objectives and guidance. These experiences will be followed by facilitated reflections, helping participants translate their observations into actionable strategies for engagement.

Footnotes

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement.* Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools. This report emphasizes the positive link between parent involvement and student academic success, demonstrating that parents who understand education systems are more effective advocates for change.

Epstein, J. L. (2011). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Epstein's framework highlights the importance of parent leadership in school decision-making and how engaged families can improve the quality of education through partnership.

READY

OBJECTIVES

Participants in the READY Parent ACTION Academy will engage in a comprehensive learning experience designed to meet the following key objectives:

- **Gaining skills in interpreting publicly available school and district performance data.**
- **Developing an understanding of the historical and current state of education in Rochester.**
- **Learning about the structure of the public education system, including school funding, budgeting processes, and the role of the NYS Education Department (NYSED).**
- **Exploring the role of policy and elected officials in driving legislative change.**
- **Harnessing the power of personal narratives and storytelling to strengthen advocacy efforts.**
- **Learning how to organize and effectively influence decision-makers within the local education system.**