

Early Successes

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- Average ACT score increases nearly one point

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1) Interest-Based Bargaining Leads to Contract Success with Unions

The Rockford School Board and Rockford Education Association ratified a two-year contract in August. The agreement was the result of a collaborative bargaining process, a first for the district, focused on problem-solving rather than taking positions. The approval—and the peaceful run-up—was in stark contrast to a strike in 2012.

The agreement is just the beginning: The union and the district committed to meet quarterly on issues too big to resolve within the tight timeline of the negotiation, such as: hiring and incentives for hard-to-fill jobs, the structure for staffing classes, framework for compensation, differentials, retirement incentives, and time and opportunities to work collaboratively. Union and district leaders have presented together to the local newspaper's Editorial Board, have written joint news releases and co-authored guest columns for the newspaper. A School Board member described the process as something the district saw too rarely: honest and open communication about challenges, prioritizing problems and committing to collaborative solutions. Facilitators from the Illinois Education Association and Consortium for Educational Change were instrumental in the success of the process.

THEIR VIEW

Teachers, educators adopt a win-win strategy

On Super Bowl Sunday, as a major snowstorm tightened its grip on Rockford, a small group of educators and community members holed up at the headquarters of the Rockford Education Association on Rote Road.

The team — made up of Rockford Public Schools teachers, administrators, School Board members and two facilitators — had



DAWN GRANATH

The public saw the rewards of this collaborative approach last week. A



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have to go back further than last December. When each of us began our respective

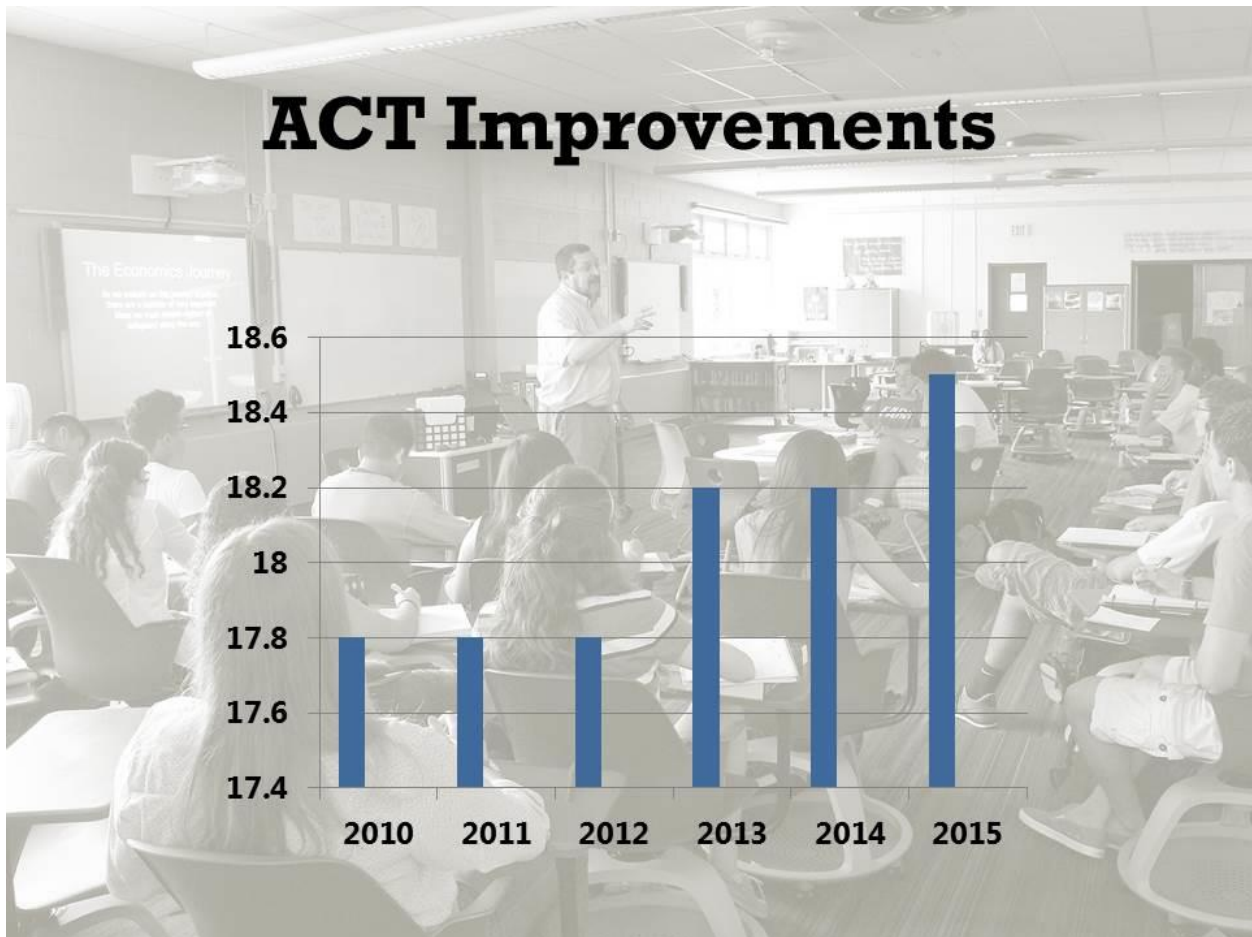
have committed to continue working, using the same interest-based process to identify issues, find common ground and develop shared solutions, with quarterly meetings to monitor progress and prevent stalling out.

It's the gift that keeps on giving, yet we received another gift through this process. In traditional bargaining, even if you end up with a fair contract

2) Average ACT Score Increases Nearly One Point

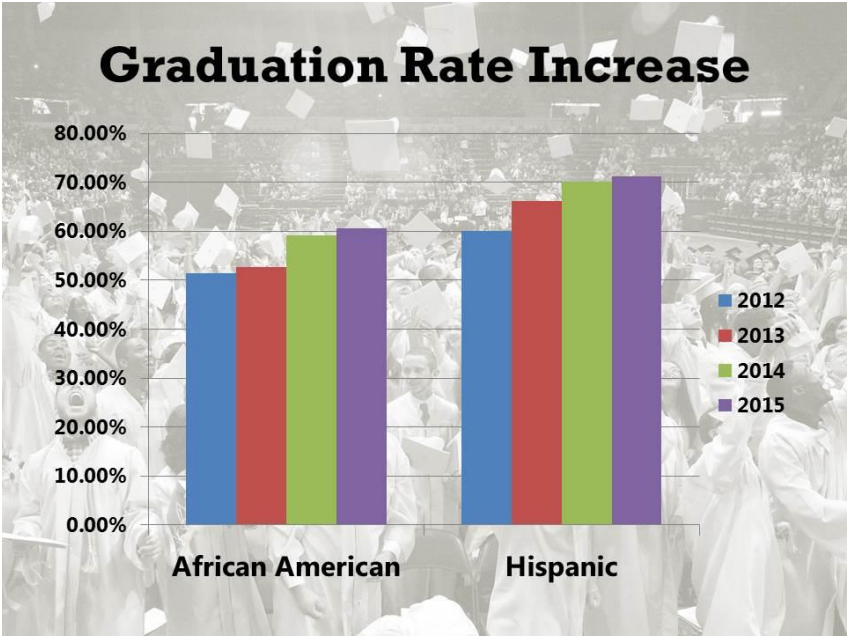
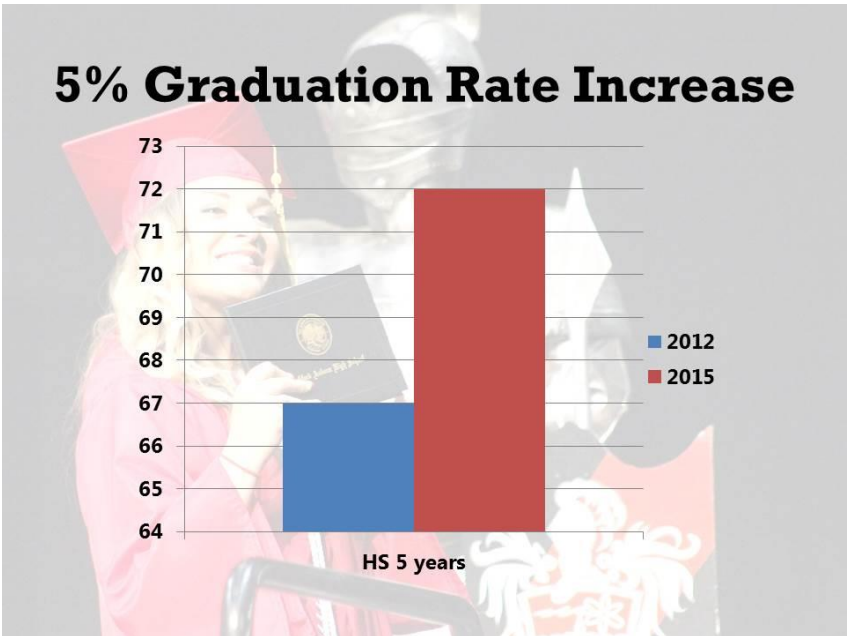
In 2010, our average ACT score was 17.8, and the state average was 20.7. In 2015 we have raised our average ACT score almost a point, to 18.5.

That isn't where we need it to be, but we are encouraged because we did it by increasing rigor. More students are taking Advanced Placement tests – a 61 percent increase since 2010. And more students are enrolled in ACT Prep classes. From 2013 to 2014 alone, we saw nearly triple the students enrolled and significant growth in the completion rate (38 percent versus 69 percent). That's critical, as our data shows that a student who attends six ACT prep sessions scores an average of 2 points higher on his or her composite ACT score.



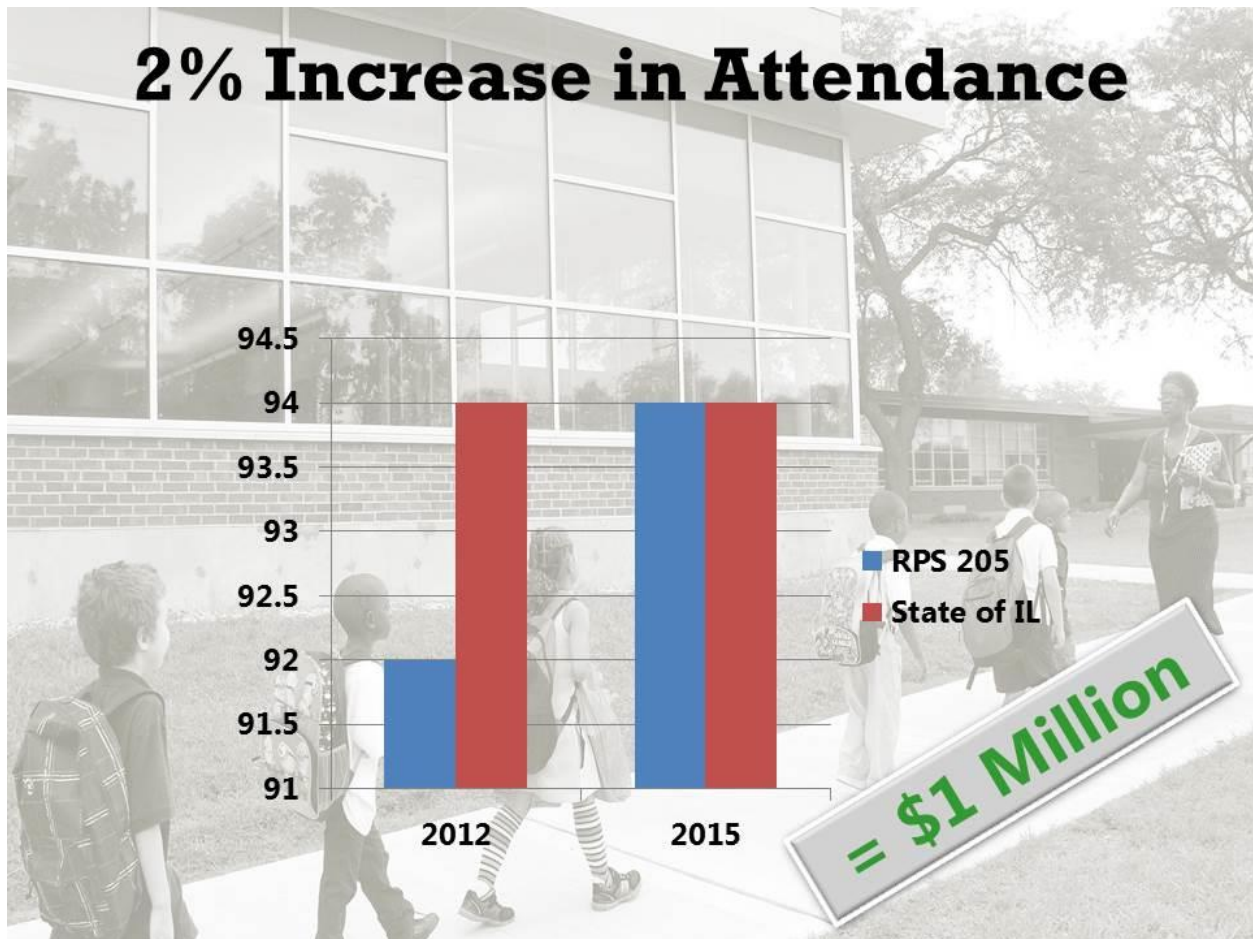
3) Five-Year Graduation Rate Increases 5 Points

The five-year graduation rate for Rockford Public Schools students increased from 67 percent in 2012 to 72 percent in 2015. The graduation rate among Hispanic students, especially, has steadily grown over the past five years. In 2011, 66.1 percent of Hispanic students graduated within four years; in 2015, the rate was 71.3 percent.



4) Attendance Increases to 94 Percent, Yields Additional \$1M in State Funding

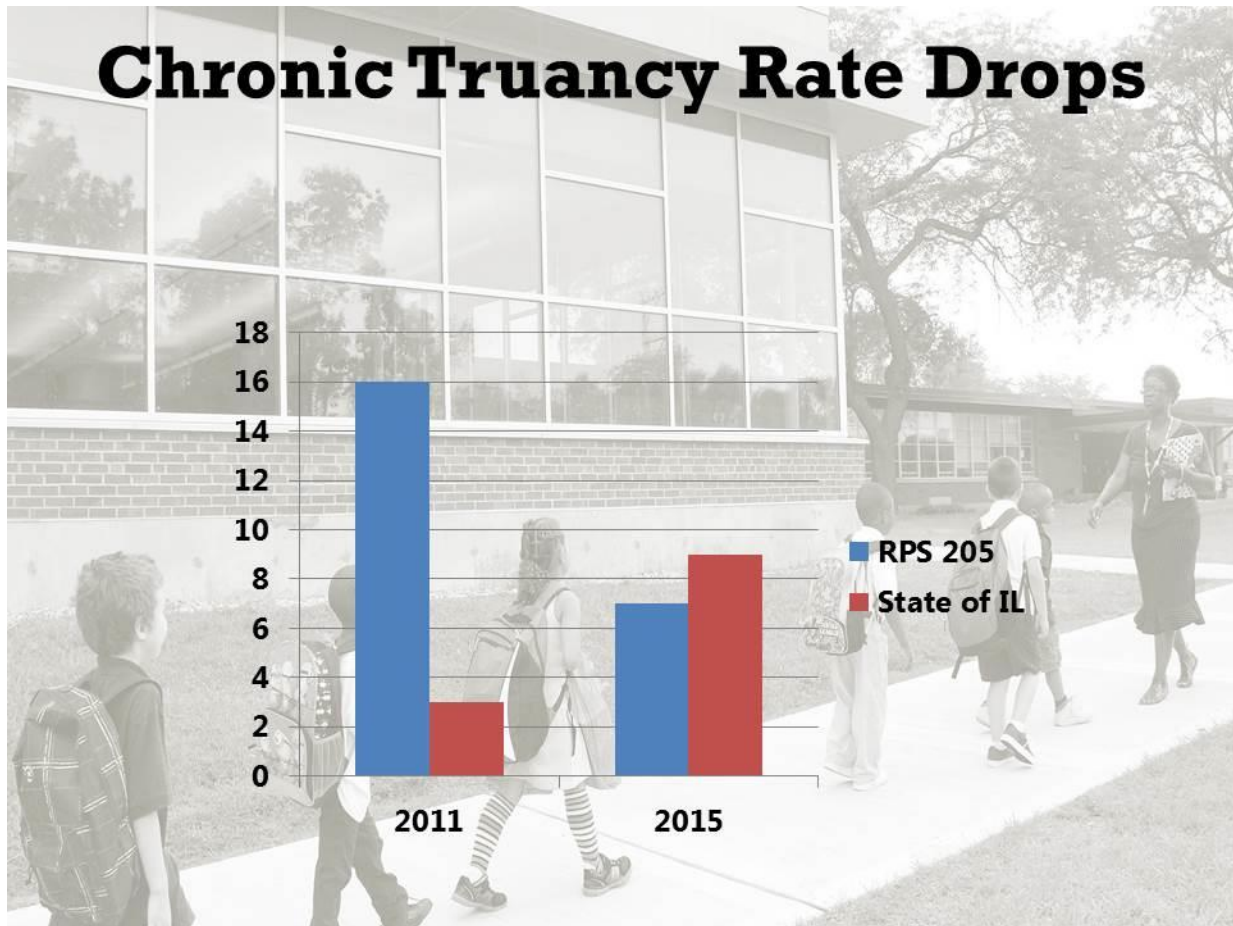
For the second year in a row, student attendance is at 94 percent. Not only is the figure on par with the state average, it has meant an additional \$1 million in general state aid.



5) Chronic Truancy Rate Better than State Average

The chronic truancy rate for the Rockford Public Schools was 7 percent in 2015 –a full two points below the Illinois average of 9 percent. It's also the first time RPS 205 has done better than the state average since the data has been recorded at the state level.

(In 2014, the district was even with the state at 9 percent.) We believe having students in class and on time is a significant success, and is a signal of increased student engagement.



6) Rockford Recognized as Model Community by Ford Next Generation Learning

In October, Rockford became the nation's third Ford Next Generation Learning Model Community, joining Nashville and Pinellas County, Fla. Rockford had achieved the lesser Learning Community designation only a year before that. The community fast-tracked its



way to Model Community by fidelity to the career academy model:

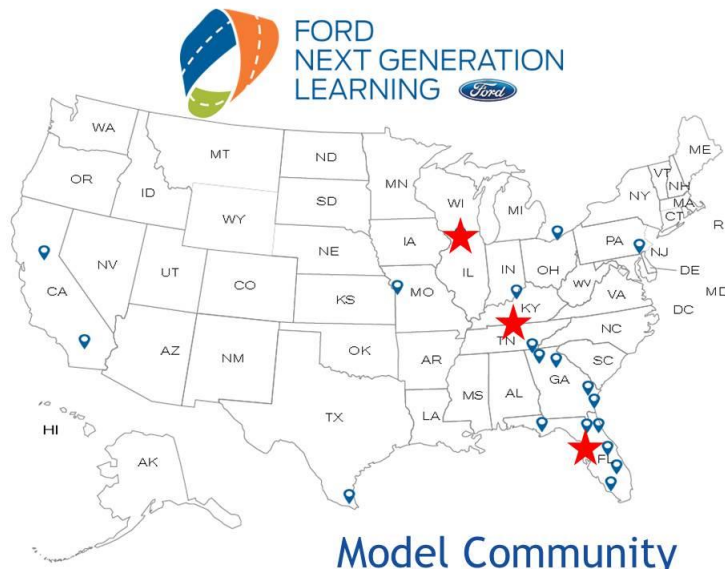
- transforming teaching and learning;
- transforming the secondary school experience;
- transforming business and civic engagement.

Rockford now serves as a model and mentor to other communities that want to implement academies. Two days before the Model Community announcement, the district hosted 40 attendees from five communities and three states for Alignment Institute Midwest Region, a hands-on workshop covering topics such as master scheduling, benchmarks, marketing and professional development.

The visiting communities were impressed with the level of community support and business engagement. As John Ekberg of Circle Boring was quoted in the 2014 Ford NGL Annual Report:

“Rockford’s high school academies help students

visualize their career goals and the steps to get there.” Alignment Rockford, a non-profit organization to support the Rockford Public Schools, has been invaluable in piloting and designing solutions and coordinating community resources.



7) Consistent Improvement Process Across District, from Top to Bottom

School leadership teams from all 47 Rockford schools have been trained and are being supported in the SMART continuous improvement process. The SMART process also is used for including student growth in teacher evaluations. As a result, a single, coherent planning process knits together schools across the district while simultaneously aligning work from the classroom level through professional learning communities to school leadership teams -- all the way up to the district's Strategic Plan. Previously, Rockford was a system of schools. Through the use of a single process -- its concepts and vocabulary -- Rockford is evolving into a true school system. It means that teachers and administrators throughout the district speak a common language.

DISTRICT 205 SMART GOAL FOR STUDENT GROWTH (Option A)				
Name: _____	Evaluator: _____			Date: _____
<i>Strategic & specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented & time bound learning goal</i>	Standards and objectives	<i>Multiple and varied ways used to determine where students are and whether or not they are improving</i>	<i>The attainable growth students are expected to achieve by the end of the instructional period. Considers the starting level of achievement and a determination of an ending goal for the level to be reached</i>	Actual Outcomes
SMART GOAL	INDICATOR(S)	MEASURES	TARGETS	RESULTS

DISTRICT 205 SMART GOAL FOR STUDENT GROWTH (Option B)				
Name: _____	Evaluator: _____			Date: _____
<i>Strategic & specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented & time bound learning goal</i>	Standards and objectives	<i>Multiple and varied ways used to determine where students are and whether or not they are improving</i>	<i>The attainable growth students are expected to achieve by the end of the instructional period. Considers the starting level of achievement and a determination of an ending goal for the level to be reached</i>	Actual Outcomes
SMART GOAL	INDICATOR(S)	MEASURES	TARGETS	RESULTS

8) Teacher Evaluation Process Strengthened

Three joint teacher and administrator committees worked in parallel to improve the teacher evaluation process, to design and implement the inclusion of student growth in teacher evaluation, and to create a peer assistance and review program. Attempting change in the teacher evaluation process can be anxiety-provoking and fractious. But by working together through these joint committees, Rockford has taken a great leap forward in having an evaluation system teachers—and the community—can trust. At the same time, the new process has maximized the impact of evaluation for improving teacher performance and student learning. In particular, the peer assistance and review program provides intensive teacher-to-teacher help to the teachers who most need it (those who have received a negative performance evaluation).



9) Community Commits to \$250 Million in Facilities Improvements

The Rockford community has reconnected around the need to improve public school facilities. In 2012, voters approved a \$139 million bond referendum by a margin of 65 percent to 35 percent. In 2014, voters again endorsed a building plan, passing a referendum supporting construction of one or more schools. That time, the margin of approval was even higher – 74 percent to 26 percent. The district’s 10-year facilities plan includes building two new schools and 13 additions. Every school will be touched. The improvements reflect a collaborative approach with teachers, too. The teachers’ union was included every step of the way as we discussed how resources would be allocated. The administration held meetings with teachers in every school. Conversations continue about furniture purchases and technology use. The union has a “building champion” in each school--an individual responsible for facilitating information.



10) Surveys Reflect Changing Attitudes of Staff, Community about Schools

An economic development group in Rockford regularly surveys its members about business climate and quality of life. In 2011, only 3 percent of those surveyed had positive feelings about education. Just three years later – in 2014 – that number had increased to 25 percent. We would like everyone in our community to share the positive feelings of those respondents, but we are pleased RPS 205 changed the tenor of the conversation. Attitudes continue to improve. We are especially pleased with the results of the latest survey of teachers in the Rockford Public Schools. As part of the Strategic Plan, the district’s approximately 2,000 teachers were surveyed in mid-October about trust and relationships. The survey response was high – nearly 65 percent of teachers weighed in.

