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RCSD New Schools Evaluation: Year One Implementation

Board of Education, Excellence in Student Achievement Committee
November 7, 2011



Purpose of the Evaluation

- ▶ Tool for reflection for school and district leadership to assist with school improvement
 - ▶ Each school received private, more detailed report; this is the overall, public report
- ▶ Spark questions and encourage dialogue and problem-solving
- ▶ Share successes and challenges with larger community
- ▶ Focused on Early College International, Integrated Arts, Robert Brown, STEM and Vanguard. Not evaluation of Portfolio Plan.
- ▶ What is success? No established bar.

Key Findings: Foundation Built & Work to Do

- ▶ Some higher outcomes than district as a whole
 - ▶ Attendance
 - ▶ GPA (4 schools with 9th grade)
 - ▶ Share of students earning 5+ high school credits (4 schools)
- ▶ Mixed performance on state tests
 - ▶ Of 12 comparisons (new schools vs. district), 6 above district, 6 at or below district
- ▶ Committed, energized staffs
- ▶ Good working relationships with outside partners
- ▶ Work to do in increasing academic rigor, student engagement

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Methodology

- ▶ Mixed-method: Quantitative and qualitative
- ▶ Data analysis of student characteristics (poverty, disability status, etc.), academic performance in prior year and first-year outcomes including attendance, suspension, GPA, test scores
- ▶ Staff and student surveys and focus groups
- ▶ Principal interviews and site visits over 2 days at each school, visits to almost 30 classes
- ▶ Weaknesses: No parents responded to online survey, site visits occurred near end of school year

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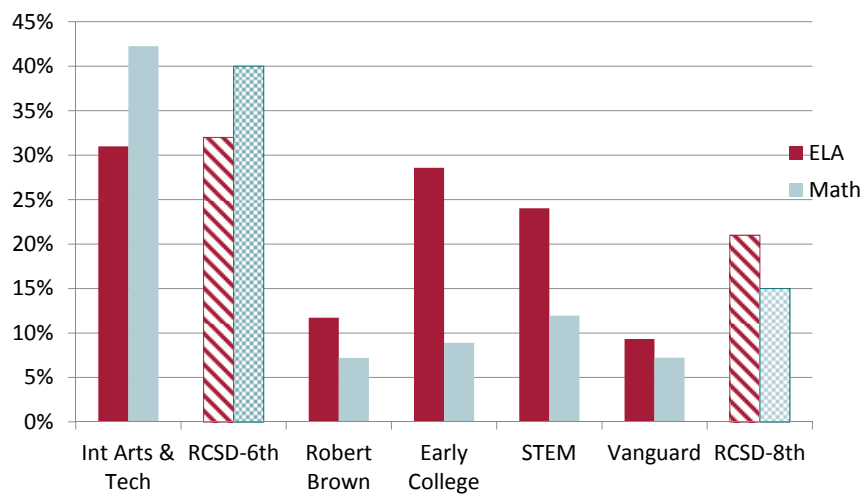
Profile of Entering Students: Not Cherry Picked

- ▶ Based on data from 2009-10, when new school students attended all different schools
- ▶ Students were generally similar to overall district population (Early College somewhat higher on some measures)
- ▶ 90% poor, 67% African-American, 22% Hispanic, 15% with disabilities, 12% English language learners
- ▶ 91% average attendance, 17% suspended at least once (both slightly higher than district)
- ▶ Similar test scores
- ▶ Higher proportion of students coming from phase out schools at Vanguard (48%); from charters at Early College (27%)

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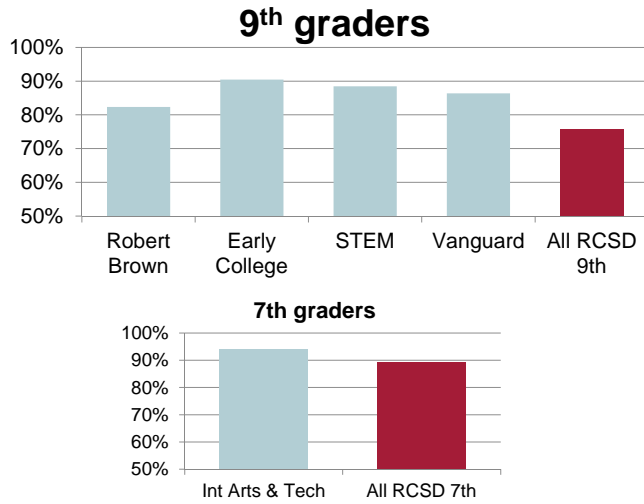
New York State Exams, Entering Class



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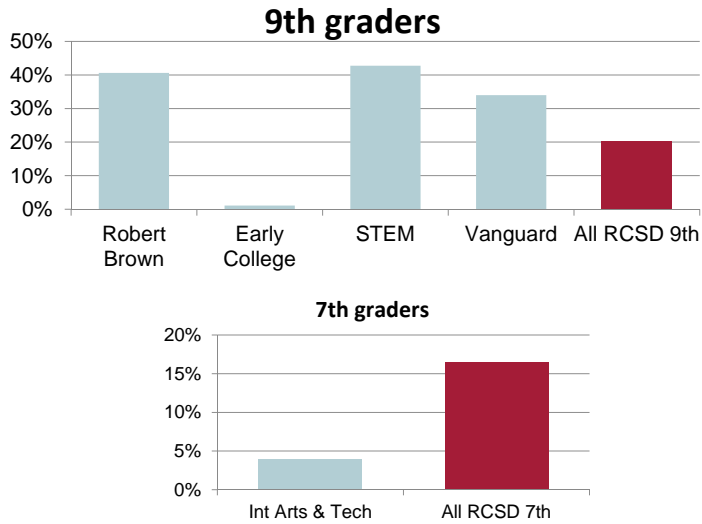
Year 1: Attendance Higher than District



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Year 1: Suspension Rates Vary

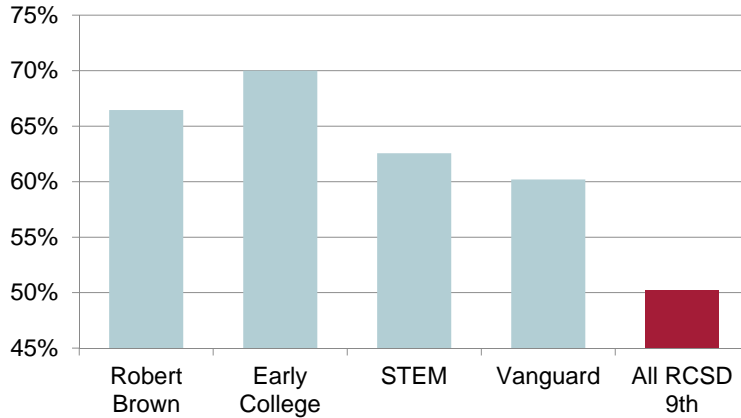


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Year 1: Helping Students Earn Credits

Students with 5+ Credits, 2010-11

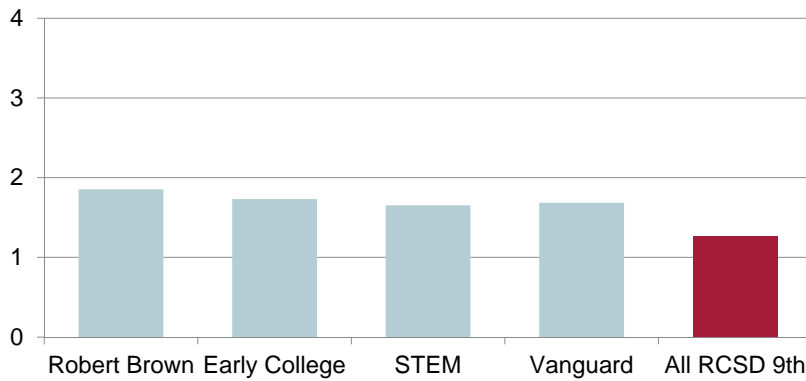


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Year 1: GPAs Slightly Exceed District; Still Low

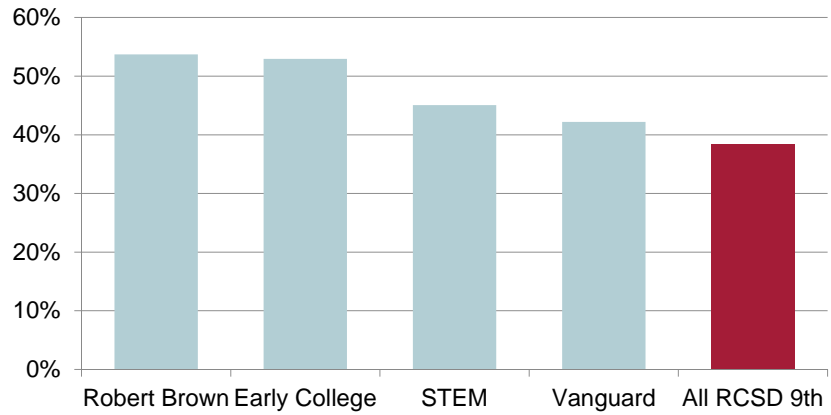
Average GPA, 9th grade, 2010-11



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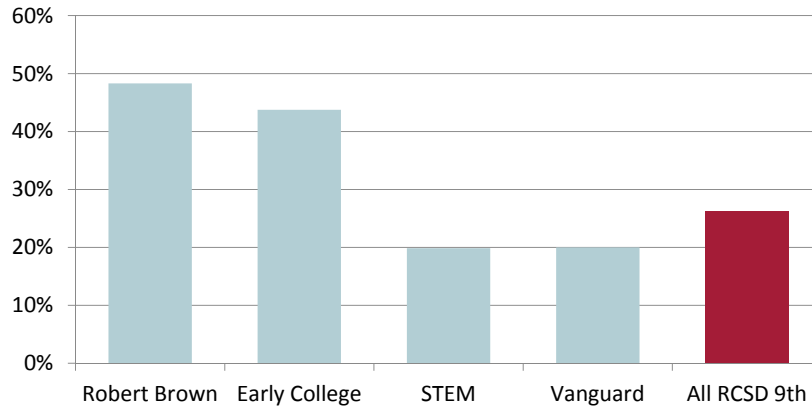
NYS Regents Integrated Algebra: Higher than District; Still Low.



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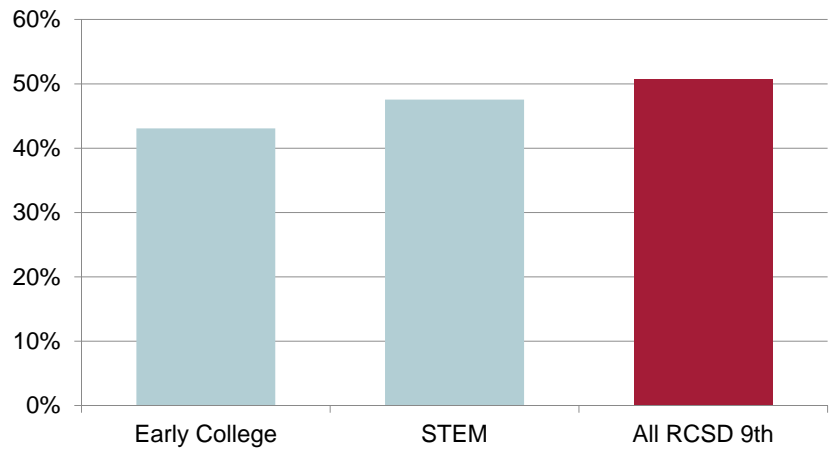
NYS Regents US History: Two Exceed, Two Below District



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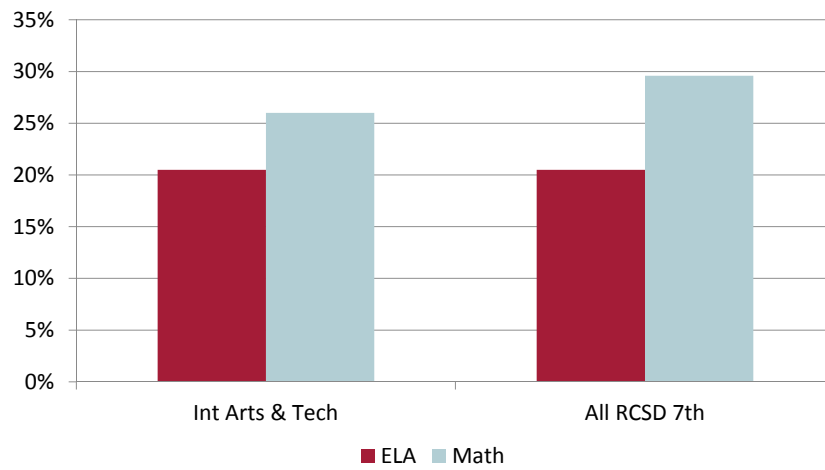
NYS Regents Living Environment: Below District



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NYS ELA and Math – 7th Grade At or Below District; low



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Academic Rigor: A Mixed Picture

- ▶ **Survey results indicate most students and staff members believe new schools have high expectations**
 - ▶ 82% students/92% teachers: *Teachers believe all students can learn difficult work.* (Student % ranges 68-94%)
 - ▶ 90% students/94% teachers: *Teachers push us to do our best.*
 - ▶ Students on college expectations: 81% *adults talk about college*, 74% *positive they will attend*, 56% *most of their peers will attend.*
 - ▶ 55% teachers not satisfied with achievement; many express need to focus on raising rigor.
- ▶ **Classroom visits show a range of expectations/level of content**
 - ▶ Challenging work, requiring high-level skills
 - ▶ Classes where students were allowed not to work, answers were given, or work was low-level

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Common Structures: Using Time Thoughtfully

- ▶ Longer class periods, ranging from 60 to 80 minute periods
- ▶ Accelerated learning, turning yearlong courses into semester courses
- ▶ Common planning time for all staff
- ▶ Increased use of technology in instruction
- ▶ Academic intervention
 - ▶ Before, after school, Saturdays
 - ▶ At least two schools built in periods where students were grouped flexibly based on need and offered re-teaching, differentiated instruction and other interventions

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Student Engagement in Learning: Also Mixed

- ▶ **Key survey findings:**
 - ▶ 81% students/66% teachers said students work hard
 - ▶ 66% students interested in learning; 75% teachers agreed
 - ▶ 77% students said teachers teach in interesting ways (66-92%)
 - ▶ 60% reported often feeling bored in class (37-74%)
 - ▶ 57% of both said students come to class prepared
- ▶ **Class visits in each school fell on a spectrum:**
 - ▶ Highly engaged: All/most students actively participating; “buzz”
 - ▶ Little engagement: Most students socializing, teasing, texting
 - ▶ Mixed: Most classes had at least some students working, some socializing or disrupting, and others compliant

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Personalization: Students Feel Cared For

- ▶ **Schools have all created aspects of a positive school culture:**
 - ▶ Committed, energized, hopeful staff
 - ▶ Over 80% of students said teachers care for and treat students respectfully, and seem to enjoy teaching in the school.
 - ▶ Roughly 60% of students feel proud of their school, say they enjoy being in school.
 - ▶ An orderly, clean, cheerful physical space
- ▶ **However, discipline/behavior problems remain in some schools:**
 - ▶ High suspension rates at STEM, Robert Brown, Vanguard
 - ▶ 61% of teachers said they are satisfied with student behavior
 - ▶ Students cite student behavior as needing to improve

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How did they achieve success/progress?

- ▶ **Common structures include:**
 - ▶ Uniforms
 - ▶ Small, connected groups through afterschool clubs, advisory period, service projects, trips
 - ▶ Efforts to “catch kids being good” rewarding them with ice cream socials, pizza parties for participation, efforts
 - ▶ Establishment of consistent behavior standards and consequences; in one school, a student pledge
 - ▶ Collection of cell phones, personal devices
 - ▶ Emerging focus on student ambassadors, leadership roles

Partnerships: Added Value

- ▶ **Each school seemed to have a good, working relationship with at least one outside partner that provided something of value to the school**
 - ▶ 72% of teachers said their school’s partner added a lot of value
- ▶ **Partner roles included:**
 - ▶ Providing a school model (Expeditionary Learning, College Board)
 - ▶ Curriculum development
 - ▶ Professional development
 - ▶ Academic or extracurricular activities for students

District Support for the Schools

- ▶ Generally viewed as positive; some logistic headaches
- ▶ Some concerns about students who did not choose the school being placed there
- ▶ Biggest fear seems to be that the district will change/close the school without giving it enough time and support to succeed

School-level Improvement Opportunities

- ▶ Guard against allowing the positive feel of the schools to obscure the **need to increase academic rigor**
- ▶ Now that are beyond Year 1 logistic hurdles, **focus on student engagement**, dig into questions about how to draw students in more
- ▶ Consider new ways to offer **effective academic intervention**, perhaps during the school day (Robert Brown)
- ▶ Continue to work on **establishing/enforcing clear standards for behavior**; in schools that don't, consider collecting cell phones

District's Challenge

- ▶ Careful, proactive monitoring and support
- ▶ Honest, respectful conversations about strengths and challenges
- ▶ Sustained attention as schools expand and face new challenges
- ▶ Balanced with giving schools enough space and time to experiment, refine and perfect their models