Sunday Register Star
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LOCAL & STATE

Record warmth in Rockford area

Friday and Saturday’s temperatures broke long- standing records for Feb. 17 and Feb. 18. 06

Taking speed limit from 70 to 75 mph

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Numerous gun bills in Springfield

Dozens of firearm-related bills have been introduced by state lawmakers this year, including on lifting the ban on suppressors. 04

SPORTS

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Hononegah won its fourth sectional swimming title in five years. 04

Race in the Rock River Valley

More: Read our past coverage from this series on issues regarding race in Rock River Valley at rrstar.com/race. 02

STATE CHAMPS

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The DISCIPLINE DISPARITY

Black students overrepresented in school suspensions, expulsions

By Corina Curry  Staff writer

Brandi Brown remembers the first time a teacher complained to her about her son’s behavior. He was 6.

The teacher pulled Brown aside to tell her that her son was being stubborn, and it was causing a problem.

The Rockford mother of three visited her son’s classroom that week to find students talking out of turn, putting up from their desks without permission and not paying attention.

She couldn’t help but wonder whether the teacher planned to talk with all the parents or whether it was just her and her black son.

Across the country, in Illinois and throughout the Rock River Valley, students of color are disciplined at a much higher rate than white students, in

SEE DISCIPLINE, A4

NORMA MCCORVEY 1947-2017

Roel v. Wade plaintiff dead at 69

Challenged U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark decision that legalized abortion but who later became an outspoken opponent of the procedure, died Saturday. She was 69.

McCorvey died at an assisted living center in Katy, Texas, said journalist Joshua Prager, who is working on a book about McCorvey and was with her and her family when she died.

He said she died of heart failure and was serene and still for some time.

McCorvey was 22, unmarried, unemployed and pregnant for the third time in 1969 when she sought to have an abortion in Texas, where the procedure was illegal except to save a woman’s life.

The subsequent lawsuit, known as Roe v. Wade, led to the Supreme Court’s 1973 ruling that established abortion rights, though by that time, McCorvey had given birth and given her daughter up for adoption.

Decades later, McCorvey underwent a conversion, becoming an evangelical Christian and joining the anti-abortion movement. A short time later, she underwent another religious conversion and became a Roman Catholic.

SEE MCCORVEY, A17

ROCKFORD

Aldermen have downtown hotel reservations

By Jeff Kelley  Staff writer

ROCKFORD — Aldermen appear poised to reject the latest proposal to turn the 13-story former Amrock factory into a four-star hotel and conference center in downtown Rockford.

Plans call for an upscale HiltonEmbassy Suites and Conference Center with stunning views of the Rock River, downtown Rockford and Davis Park.

The project has not materialized even though the Rockford City Council has approved two previous versions of the development agreement requiring significant public investment in infrastructure and a parking deck, but Alderman Tom McNamara, D-1, said the most recent amendment goes too far, eliminating a parking deck from the plans and instead asking the city to pay upfront for the $13.1 million conference center.

“It looks way different,” said McNamara, a Democratic candidate for mayor. “Keep having, ‘It’s the same thing as before, you are just shifting money from one thing to another.’ But you are shifting money from a public asset to a parking deck to a private business.”

McNamara said she cannot support the proposal in its current form.

The risk to the city is too great and although it would generate jobs, McNamara said they aren’t the higher-paying jobs he wants to see come to Rockford.

Negotiations among Mayor Larry Morrissey with Gorman & Company CEO Gary Gorman, the new development agreement with the aldermen during a special Planning

SEE HOTEL, A2

LOCAL & STATE

NOTE TO READERS

In order to bring you complete coverage and results from the state wrestling tournament in Champaign, the Register Star went to press later than usual Saturday night.

As a result, if you have the paper delivered to your home it may have arrived later than usual.

We appreciate your patience and thank you for reading the Register Star.

TODAY MON TUE

67°/45° 63°/52° 63°/45°

Complete forecast, A2

Celebrate engineers who dream big

OPINION, A13

Black students overrepresented in school suspensions, expulsions

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TODAY MON TUE

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OPINION, A13
cases by a ratio as high as 4-to-1. A Rockford Register Star analysis of suspension and expulsion data from Rockford Public Schools, the region’s largest and most diverse school system, revealed a pronounced racial disparity.

The Register Star submitted a Freedom of Information Act request last year for accounting of all in-school, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions by race for the past five years. The document contained nearly 146,000 individual disciplin ary actions. Black students accounted for the majority of all discipline actions.

To Margaret Stapleton, community justice director for the Chicago-based Senator George M. Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the data is “a canary in a coal mine.”

“This data paints a picture,” Stapleton said. “The data is telling us something.

“Handcuffs in Hallways: The Discipline Starvation in Chicago Public Schools,” a special report released Feb. 3 by the Shriver Center, takes a hard look at the lack of training, oversight and accountability among police officers working in Chicago schools and the resulting poor outcomes for students, especially students of color.

“Making off opportunities for kids and spilling their educational treasures is a problem that comes back to haunt us all,” she said. “People need to feel comes from throwing a kid out of the classroom instead of throwing them out of the lifeboat.”

Widespread disparity

During the 2011-2012 school year — from Indiana University’s Equity Project to the Civil Rights Project at UCLA — have called attention to widespread racial disparities in student discipline.

In 2010, a two-pronged federal initiative on student discipline was established to ship away at the nation’s school-to-prison pipeline while keeping children safe. The issue also helped inspire the expansion of the Brother’s Keeper task force to help kids and young men turn their lives around.

Discipline

All disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions data compiled by the Office for Civil Rights, are included in the document.

About this report

The Discipline Parity, part of the Rockford Register Star’s Race in the Rock River Valley series, looks at the extent of racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions among students in Rockford, across the region, in Illinois and nationally.

Research for this story involved a significant data dive. Reporter Corina Curry submitted a Freedom of Information Request to Rockford Public Schools for five years of suspension and expulsion data. The request asked for all in-school and out-of-school suspensions by race, gender and age.

Analysis of that data along with already existing data for select years for schools across the Rock River Valley, Illinois and the United States showed a pronounced racial disparity among discipline actions.

Black students accounted for the majority of all discipline all five years.

The data also showed that Rockford Public Schools has seen a dramatic decrease in out-of-school suspensions for all students in the past seven years.

The Star’s reporting on the Discipline Parity Disparity suggests that while we might believe much can be done to change outcomes for students of color, finding educators on implicit biases and how discipline is issued, along with raising community awareness and bringing more diversity to the teaching profession.

In Rockford, administrators are celebrating a nearly 60 percent decrease in out-of-school suspensions from 2009 to 2016. That’s a difference of more than 11,000 suspensions. More students are being kept in school, where they keep learning and progressing toward graduation.

The downside is that the racial disparity remains even as the number of suspensions in Rockford drops. Black students continue to receive roughly 60 percent of all suspensions even though they make up 70 percent of the district’s student body.

Questions of bias

During the 2011-2012 school year, there were 25,886 white public school students in the United States, 7.8 million black students and 11.5 million Hispanics, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics.

Together, those three groups made up 97 percent of all public school students in the country — 45.1 million of the 47.5 million kindergarten through 12th-grade students attending more than 56,300 schools.

The racial makeup of the nation’s public school students looked like this: A little more than half were white, about 16 percent were black, and about 22 percent were Hispanic.

The racial makeup of schools’ disciplinary actions of those students looked radically different.

Of the nation’s 25.8 million white students, 35,765 white students misbehaved in school that year, exceeding that amount for the Office for Civil Rights. For the nation’s 7.8 million black students, expulsions topped at 35,494 — nearly the same amount for fewer than a third of the students.

Schools need to do a better job making students want to come to school, keeping them safe and engaged, and creating a culture that supports behavior that support learning, Stapleton said.

“We all need to be really aware that we all have biases. We have stereotypes, and we respond to them,” Stapleton said. “People should be very vigilant that they’re not treating children based on implicit biases.”

Some feel like targets

Across the country, in Illinois and in the Rock River Valley, no other group of students is disciplined as frequently for the same misdeeds as black males.

Twenty percent of all black students in the U.S. received an out-of-school suspension compared with 6 percent of all white students. In Illinois, the disparity was 10 percent for black students and 5 percent for white students.

In Rockford, black boys received 38 percent of all in-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in 2016. That was more than all other races combined — a little more than 20 percent — and all students across all races — 31 percent.

The number was no surprise to Dion Simpson, 45, of Rockford.

He grew up in Rockford Public Schools. He admitted he “was no angel,” but he doesn’t feel he was as bad as some teachers made him out to be.

“I was 0-1 in middle school,” Simpson said. “There were definitely times that I felt that I was being pushed going young black man instead of a child because they didn’t want anyone other than myself doing anything other students weren’t doing but when I did it, the reaction was magnified. It was more punitive. For some reason when you’re a young black man, it’s more likely for the time it got to me.”

Simpson, a former president of the Rockford chapter of the NAACP and a current member of the Legacy Academy Excellence of Championship Charter School in Rockford, helping high school students prepare for college while filling in where needed in the classroom. He attended Rock Valley College, historically black Fayetteville State University in North Carolina, and Judson University. He has a master’s degree.

“People would have done better if I didn’t have that experience,” he said. “I think that every high school student should feel welcome at school, to feel pressure, to feel loved, to feel like people don’t like you, that’s bad school work.

“Some students feel invis-ible. Some feel like targets.”

Pattern of punishment

Stapleton isn’t alone in her concern about the role bias could be playing in the disciplining of students.

“The numbers would have you believe that African-American children are more misbehaved in school, but they are inherently more disruptive and discipline minded than any other group of children,” said state Rep. Lilia Wallace, D-Rockford.

“Discipline is a tool used to push the limits. They don’t always listen to author- ity. That is uniform across all races… What’s unfortunate is we’re not looking at a particu- larly black boys, and there is a pattern of that race being punished in a harsher manner than other groups.”

Wallace was a strong sup- porter of a state law enacted in 2015 aimed at providing for a racial neutrality in the school-to-prison pipeline. The law doesn’t specifically address racial inequalities.
disparities in student discipline, it forces districts to focus on behavioral issues and limit disciplinary actions that remove children from schools.

Wallace thinks educators could learn from implicit bias training and supportive environments where bias is discussed openly. “When you’re young, there’s a complete historical context associated with this and that’s that black men are most often portrayed as culprits — even if you’re just processing and aggressive,” she said. “If that’s the information you have about that group, that’s in your subconscious and you may view behavior differently.”

Having implicit biases isn’t wrong, Wallace said, but ignoring them or saying they don’t exist can have detrimental consequences. “When you’re at the prison population, what do you see?” Wilson asked. “When you go to jails and see kids that have been in jail, it’s overwhelming. You don’t want to see kids in jail, but you have to recognize that something is wrong.”

According to the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform, black males made up 27.7 percent of the state’s population and 17.0 percent of the state’s prison population in 2013. Whites made up 63.5 percent of the state’s population that year while representing 20.1 percent of the prison population.

Clash of cultures

The rules of appropriate behavior for RPS students — and what happens to students if they do not obey — are outlined in copious detail in the annually updated Student Code of Conduct.

According to the 52-page document, disciplinary actions stem from referrals. Teachers with the bulk of referrals, but the discipline itself — an in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension — is decided by building principals and assistant principals.

Only in the case of expulsions are referrals made by someone who does not know who the student is. No student communications for expulsions are voted on by the Rockford School Board. Students’ race, age and gender are not submitted as part of the recommendation.

Brandi Brown carries a copy of the code of conduct in her tote bag. At the mother of three black children attending Rockford Public Schools, Brown said she feels obligated to advocate not only for her children’s educational opportunities for her children but against potentially unfair treatment.

So far, it’s worked. Her oldest son, a high school senior, is set to graduate this spring. The Rockford Register Star is sure he would be out on the track to do so, but for her constant vigilance.

“I think many times black and Hispanic children are invisible,” Brown said. “Their teachers may not be aware of it. Their counselors don’t look like them. Their teaching assistants don’t look like them. They don’t even get to assimilate to a school culture that is not black or Hispanic culture,” she added. “I think that’s where conflicts take place.”

A lack of understanding

Black males face a serious minority among the minority.

More than 10 years ago, Teaches social studies at Kennedy Mill Elementary School. In 2012, there were 5.4 million teachers working in the nation’s public schools — 82 percent were white, while 7 percent were black or Hispanic, 2 percent were Asian, and 1 percent represented two or more races. Seventy-six percent were women.

During the 2011-2012 school year, Rockford Public Schools had 17,871 teachers. Eighty-six percent of them were white. Five percent were black, 11 percent were Hispanic.

Rockford’s students are about 80 percent white, 10 percent black and 10 percent Hispanic.

Moore believes the district would grow greater success in reducing student discipline if his students take his advice which is: “No matter how much cultural competency training you have, when you only have one or two minorities in the building, no one knows how to recognize when something is cultural or defiant,” he said.

Moore said he’d also like to see the district build better relationships with the families it serves, to focus less on punishment and more on why children are acting out.

“There’s a lack of understanding about where the behavior comes from, why students behave that way and why they think it’s OK,” Moore said.

Leading indicators

There was a time, not long ago, when Rockford principal was the only African American principal at Rockford Public Schools.

She had heard the horror stories of long bus rides, kids being left in the same family going to school across town from each other and rumors about the students being unsafe.

“Today, the Gulford High School graduate is a proud RPS student,” her family enrolled three kids in 2012 and has no regrets.

“My oldest told me, ‘Yeah, I thought about leaving, but they counseling, they said,’ Moore said.

Now that we’re here and we see the district build better relationships — what I call the lagging indicator — it’s great,” she added.

“People should take advantage and be proud of what we’re doing,” Moore said. “We’re building a strong learning environment here.”

Broken families

Angela Hite-Carter is the director of executive director at Student Services and Alternative Learning. Her job is to make sure that building principals and assis- tant principals understand
Now, he’s often the one person who stands between a struggling student and disciplinary action at Jefferson High School.

Johnson is a SILE, or Social Intervention Learning Environment, teacher. He spends his day with any- where from 12 to 15 students — all day, every day.

The program has changed. Some go back to their class- es or a group two of working out their issues with Johnson. Some are suspended and come back. A day in Johnson’s classroom is required to return to school.

“In a high school setting, teachers get their students for 50 minutes. That’s it,” Johnson said. “I have them all day. There’s really good chance for me to do one-on-one time with them.

“That’s what I do. I focus on relationship building. We talk about what’s going wrong, why they’re there with me, what’s going on in their life.”

Johnson has had kids tell him they flipped out because they spent the night taking care of their little brothers and sisters while their parents worked, and they came to school exhausted and unprepared.

He had students show him pictures of their fathers. The photos are mug shots. He got emotional when he thinks about the ones who made it. The ones he’s watched graduates. The ones everybody had written off.

“I hope students find commonalities and learn how to better talk to and understand each other, the better off we all are.” — Corina Curry: 815-987-1177; curryc@rrstar.com; @corinacurry

Cultural competency

Last fall, Matthew Zediker, interim chief human resources officer for Rockford Public Schools,

“Every human being is entitled to self-respect and dignity. You are no less entitled to respect and dignity than a man, woman or child. But it is not your fault that you were born poor.” — James Baldwin

http://rrstar.com

Dennis Johnson was a little brother and a sister. They were on drugs. They’re on drugs.

They’re hitting the bottle. They’re on drugs. They’re becoming parents, and they’re not ready. These children are in these envi- ronments, and it’s not conducive for them. Their needs are not being met.”

According to Voices for Illinois Children’s annual Illinois Kids Count report from 2009, poverty rates among children in Winnebago County are on the rise.

In 1999, 13.3 percent of children in Winnebago County lived in poverty, according to the report. In 2003, that rate had increased to 22.7 percent. Poverty level is defined as a family of three earning less than $18,750 a year. The state of Illinois’ poverty rate is 15.2 percent.

Growing up in poverty can have adverse effects on a child’s school readiness, physical health and social-emotional development, as well as social and economic outcomes in adulthood, the report states.

Building relationships

Dennis Johnson was a history teacher.

Rockford suspensions
decline

Rockford Public Schools saw decreases in both the number of out-of-school suspensions and the number of students receiving out-of-school suspensions in the past six years.

In 2010, 33,335 students — or 20 percent of the student population — received out-of-school suspensions.

In 2016, 24,490 students — or 15 percent of the student population — received out-of-school suspensions.

Students

Boys

Girls

RACE

Hispanic

American Indian

Asian

Black

White

Two or more races

Total

2010

33,335

19,766

12,569

1,465

3,324

13

60

59,683

2016

24,490

15,365

8,497

801

3,537

13

60

49,932

Pct. change

-26.1%

-27.5%

-34.6%

-6.6%

-27.1%

0%

0%

Students

Boys

Girls

RACE

Hispanic

American Indian

Asian

Black

White

Two or more races

Total

2010

19,766

1,465

12,569

19,766

15,365

24,490

2010

801

13

60

801

60

861

2016

3,537

13

60

3,537

60

49,932

Pct. change

-54.2%

-93.8%

-84.3%

-50.6%

-63.7%

100%

100%

Pct. change

-26.1%

-27.5%

-34.6%

-6.6%

-27.1%

0%

0%

Source: Rockford Public Schools

GATEHOUSE MEDIA
In 1993, the Rockford Public School District was found guilty of widespread, intentional discrimination against minority students. Its punishment was a litany of court orders and years of oversight.

Twenty-four years and $252 million later we’re...

Segregated again. But equal?

By Corina Curry | Staff writer

ROCKFORD — Xica Davis-Flannigan never thought her daughters would attend schools that are less integrated than the ones she attended 20 years ago.

As a black girl growing up in Rockford during the People Who Care desegregation lawsuit, Davis-Flannigan attended schools that she and her parents chose for her, schools she describes as racially mixed.

Today, choosing schools is a thing of the past, and the schools Davis-Flannigan’s daughters can attend — based on geographic boundaries called “zones” — tend to test poorly and are filled with black and Hispanic children.

“You have your zone, and you can’t See SEGREGATED, A8

By Deb Riechmann

WASHINGTON — Dozens of convicts serving time in U.S. prisons for terrorism-related offenses are due to be released in the next several years, raising the question whether that’s something Americans should fear.

There’s no easy answer.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States has worked aggressively to foil attacks and has imprisoned hundreds of people who joined or helped militant groups. Experts say less attention has been paid to what happens once those prisoners complete their sentences.

Among the incarcerated, according to the Bureau of Prisons, are 180 linked to international terrorism and 93 tied to domestic terrorism. A Congressional Research Service report said 50 “homegrown violent jihadists” were to be released between last January and the end of 2026.

And more are arriving in prison. Former FBI Director James Comey, who was fired by President Donald Trump in May, had told Congress that...
High schools across the country and state have made measurable progress over the past 20 years. In the state of Illinois, high schools have met or exceeded the state standards for the past two years. In Belvidere, the school district is one of the highest performing districts in the state. In Rockford, 19.2 percent of students met or exceeded the state standards. In Rockford, 19.2 percent of students met or exceeded the state standards.
ROCKFORD — Kennedy Middle School has the unique distinction of being both the poorest-performing school and one of the most improved in the Rockford school district.

Two school years ago, 97 percent of students were not meeting or exceeding standards on statewide tests.

Since receiving a $5.6 million grant last year — in part because it was in the bottom 5 percent of all schools in Illinois — Rockford Public Schools leaders are proudly sharing today that Kennedy students showed more academic growth in the 2016-2017 school year than most students in the country.

According to student academic progress scores, which are different from state test scores, students in all three grade levels at Kennedy scored in the 99th percentile in the country for reading growth.

“Students had tremendous growth,” Susan Fumo, the district’s executive director of school improvement, wrote in an email. “This test is taken by millions of students all over the country.”

“If you’re meeting the growth needs of a child, that’s really encouraging,” Rockford Superintendent Ehren Jarrett said. “In terms of students impacted, Kennedy in terms of growth this year — kids at Kennedy did better than the average kid in the district.

“That’s where we have to plant our flag.”

Technology investment

The state School Improvement Grant has paid for additional training for teachers and equipment.

The 576 students at Kennedy used to share six technology carts that would travel from classroom to classroom throughout the day. Today, every classroom has its own cart, and every cart is equipped with a laptop for every child in every classroom.

“We’re 1-to-1,” Kennedy math teacher Billi Sparacino said as her students sat in small groups behind her working on math problems.

“Students are so technology driven these days,” Sparacino said. Having the technology at hand allows her to reach her students where they are and teach them in ways that appeal to them.

“This is the first year I’ve noticed students wanting to come to class,” Sparacino said. “They’re not going, ‘Ugh, I have to go to math.’ That is a huge shift in our school.”

To Sparacino, it means that all of the additional professional development she’s been undergoing the past year is working.

Teacher investment

Professional development is a big part of the grant, Kennedy Principal Kenneth Richardson said.

The teachers have been getting additional coaching, training and mentoring in all areas of teaching from cultural competency and classroom management to assessment and curriculum alignment.

Principal Kenneth Richardson said.

The teachers have been getting additional coaching, training and mentoring in all areas of teaching from cultural competency and classroom management to assessment and curriculum alignment.

Part of the beauty of the grant, Richardson said, is it’s designed to include the entire school. Every teacher at Kennedy has received the same additional resources and support as Sparacino, and every teacher has put it in the work.

“The focus of this grant is helping the teachers,” Richardson said. “When the money goes away, the ideas that the things we have implemented in the five years will continue.”

District officials already are exploring ways to duplicate Kennedy’s success at other schools, Jarrett said.

“What we’re doing at Kennedy is possible because of the additional dollars,” he said. “What are other ways we can get additional dollars? One idea is to adopt site-based budgeting so principals have more control over the spending in their buildings. Education funding reform, Title 1 funding reform, can mean millions more in funding.”

Corina Curry: 815-987-1371; ccurry@rrstar.com; @corinacurry
Despite evidence that black educators help keep low-income black students in school, the shortage of minority teachers in Rockford is getting worse

By Corina Curry
Staff writer

ROCKFORD — In 2009, Rockford native James Ford was a history teacher at his hometown Guilford High School.

By the fall of 2010, he was a teacher at Garinger High School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Four years later, he was named North Carolina Teacher of the Year.

Young, talented and Ford

black — and now part of the complicated and often-difficult discussions about the lack of black teachers in Rockford Public Schools — Ford is seen by some as one of those who got away.

Charlotte’s warmer weather was a draw, Ford said, but there were other reasons, namely Rockford’s struggling economy and racial climate, that helped shape his decision to leave.

In 2009, Ford was one of about 90 black teachers working at Rockford Public Schools — 5 percent of roughly 1,850 teachers employed by RPS. The district had about 27,200 students that year, and nearly 30 percent of them, about 8,050, were black.

“I had two young children. I thought, ‘Will they be able to see people who look like them prospering and in positions of influence if we stay?’” said Ford, 37. “The answer was no. ... I looked around and I saw this lack of economic opportunity and ability to grow for me and for my kids.”

Today, the percentage of black teachers in Rockford Public Schools is even lower than it was when Ford was in the district. According to state data, black teachers accounted for about 4 percent of the district’s teaching staff last year.

Lack of diversity poses challenges in any workplace. The debate over the lack of black teachers in public schools across the country — particularly those in urban settings with large numbers of black students — is an issue of intense debate. Is it a definite “yes,” or the mere absence of “no”? Can it be revoked? Do power dynamics come into play? And legally, the definition varies state by state.

“Half the states don’t even have a definition of consent,” says Erin Murphy, a professor at New York University School of Law who’s involved in a project to rewrite a model penal code on sex assault.

“One person’s idea of consent is that no means no,” she says. “Another person’s idea of consent is someone saying, ‘Yes, I want to do this.’ And in between, of course, is an enormous spectrum of behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, that people engage in to communicate desire or lack of desire.”

“It’s pretty telling,” Murphy adds. “That the criteria for what most people look to understand the nature of a sexual encounter — this idea of consent — is one that we don’t even have a consensus definition of in our society.”

Many victim advocates argue that a power imbalance plays a role. In nearly every instance, the allegations in recent weeks came from women who were in far less powerful positions than those they accused of the crime, for example, the rape allegations that have surfaced against music mogul Russell Simmons, which he denies.

“You have to look at the power dynamics, the coercion, the manipulation,” says Jeanie Kurka Keilmeier, a longtime advocate in the area of sexual assault: “The threatening and grooming that perpetrators use to create confusion and compliance and fear in the minds of the victims. Just going along with something does not mean consent.”

See CONSENT, A6

DIGITAL EXTRA

POPE FROWNS ON MEDIA

Pope Francis is criticizing journalists who dredge up old scandals and sensationalize the news, saying it’s a “very serious sin” that hurts all involved.

rrstar.com/e-edition
Black students and black teachers

The percentage of black students is much higher than the percentage of black teachers on the local, state and national level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Black students</th>
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<td>5.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics; Illinois Report Card

A flaring hinge in the hallway at East High School invites students to a meeting to learn more about a career in education. District and school leaders are encouraging students to consider getting a degree in education and entering Rockford schools to teach. The district has arranged for scholarships for 20 students each year to attend Rockford University.

When asked whether the students were interested in continuing on the district’s path, all but two students raised their hands.

Several students said they had already decided teaching is the right career for them. And they want to start that career in Rockford Public Schools.

Students volunteer to tutor and read to younger children at elementary schools. There is a joy and satisfaction, they said, in helping others learn.

“I went to Johnson (Elementary) for a day,” Noland said. “And they really enjoyed that. They basically got to be teachers for a day. They did recess duty and lunch duty.”

The trip to Johnson was organized by Rockford East Junior Chris Hodge.

“I walked in and saw the little kids looking at me, looking at my hair,” Hodge said. “I thought, ‘Wow, maybe everybody was like ‘Oh my God, I want to read with him. I want to read with him.’”

Hodge is one of a handful of black students at East High.

A new study from the Institute of Labor Economics found that even if the district had relationships with historically black institutions, recruiters couldn’t come home empty-handed.

“Rockford Superintendent Randy Zediker stressed the importance of hiring minority teachers at a recent Rockford School Board meeting.

“One of the challenges we’re facing is the interaction between every state in the country and certainly throughout the entire state of Illinois, particularly in a teaching environment that does not reflect the popula- tion of the students and the system,” Jarrett said. “In the state of Illinois, about 75 percent of teacher applicants that come from Illinois colleges are Caucasian females.

If Rockford’s teaching staff looks like its student body, minority students and teachers for a day.

A warm heart

Allen Noland’s introduction to Education class at East High was a mix of boys and girls, whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians.

When asked whether the students were interested in continuing on the district’s path, all but two students raised their hands.

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