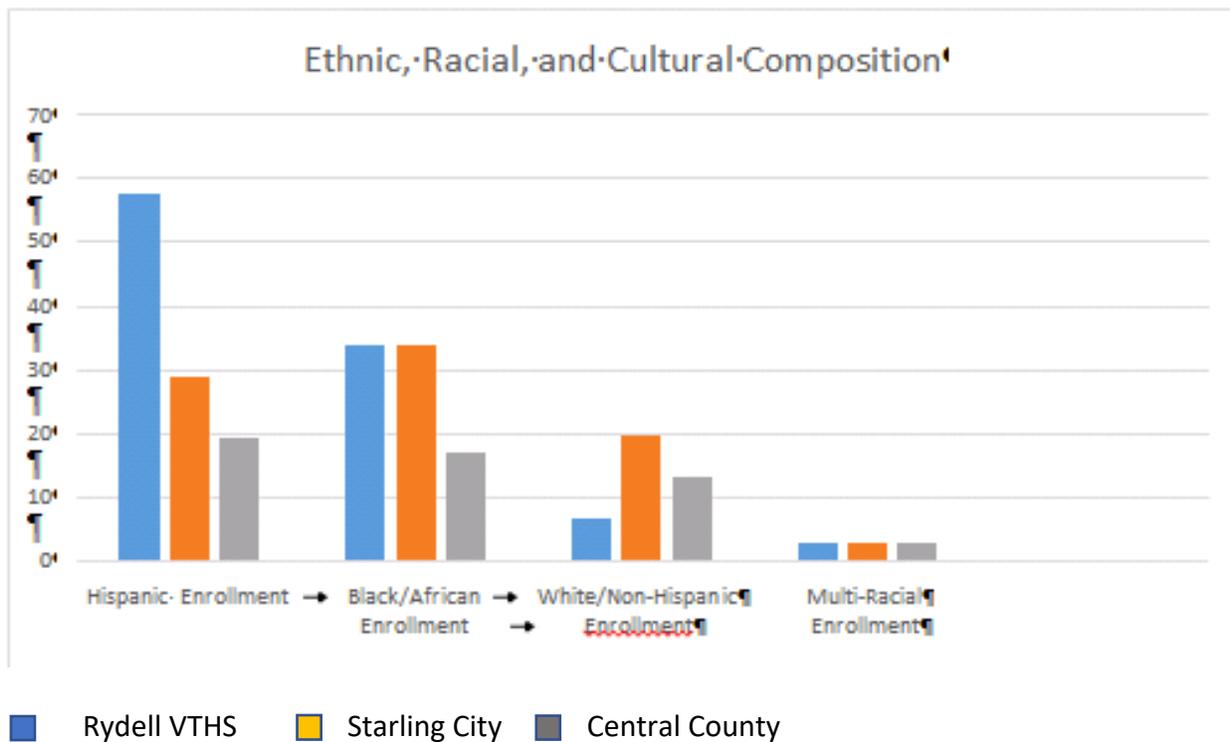


Rydell Vocational Technical High School (Rydell VTHS) is in a residential area of Starling City, Massachusetts. The building, which is in the process of completing extensive renovations, is situated on ten acres of land. The building houses sixteen shop programs, academic programs, more than three dozen classrooms, two computer labs, one of which resides within the library media center (LMC), a Family Engagement Center, an administrative suite and a guidance suite, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, a restaurant, and an in-school suspension room. The outer grounds include a baseball field, soccer/football field, softball field, a walking track, a field house and parking areas.

Although Rydell VTHS is physically located in the town of Starling City, the school is just over the border of Central City. The city of Starling City offers many community resources to the student body, most of whom live in Central City. Southern Massachusetts State University is within walking distance, while Metropolis University and the University of Central City are all within five miles of Rydell VTHS.

Rydell VTHS serves students from the following sending towns: Starling City, Central City, Metropolis, Gotham, Coast City, National City, and Havenrock. Ninety percent of the students attending Rydell VTHS are residents of Starling City. 69.8% of the students that attend Rydell VTHS live at or below the poverty level. The ethnic, racial, and cultural breakdown of Rydell VTHS, the city of Central City, and Central County is illustrated in the graph below.



Census figures (2015) for Central County show a population of 27,100 with a median household income of \$42,831 and a per capita income of \$23,213. Median wages are the second lowest in the state and about 15% of the population live below the poverty level. Approximately 50% of

our student population qualifies for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Historically, Central Country is one of the poorest in Massachusetts and that trend continues.

Rydell VTHS has a Family Engagement Team. This team is made up of the school social worker, members of administration, special education teachers, a bilingual guidance counselor, parents, students, as well as multilingual interpreters. This group is charged with establishing a positive relationship with the families of their students, as well as the community. They do this through a series of special events. They address homelessness with their students and connect with agencies which benefit all their students.

Rydell VTHS has effectively reduced the student pregnancy rate through a targeted health curriculum, mechanical babies (to simulate the role of a newborn), as well as working with parents to raise expectations for their children. Rydell VTHS trains all staff to recognize and assist their students who are dealing with housing issues. The staff has been trained to watch for, and take steps to assist their students who are struggling economically.

Rydell VTHS has worked to build their afterschool activities. The school offers opportunities for their students. They do this with the help of free bus passes (public transportation), and offer clubs such as Anime and National Honor Society. The athletic program includes some interscholastic sports.

Rydell VTHS offers a FAFSA and college application assistance nights. These are open to parents/guardians of students in grades 10, 11, 12. The school has members of the bilingual staff on hand at evening events to assist families with language issues. The guidance staff utilizes South Starling Community College, as well as other local institutes, as avenues for their students' post graduate plans. The class of 2016 had 104 students graduate. Of the 104, 16% became employed in their trades area, 10% entered the armed forces, and 63% enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions

Rydell VTHS guidance staff attends K-8 schools in all the sending schools to inform the students and their families about the opportunities that Rydell VTHS will afford them. The guidance staff then reviews the application process with the families and students, assisting them with the process.

Rydell VTHS has a Family Engagement Center. The room was established to be a place where parents can utilize desktops to type documents and use email. In this room, information can be available to the families of the students. The room can be utilized as a quiet spot where a parent or guardian can read or write. At the time of our visit, we were informed that the room has yet to be used for the purposes intended.

The greater community is very supportive of the school as indicated by their willingness to continually pass the budget in support of the school. Local partnerships abound through the many community members who are on Program Advisory Committees, participate in the Interview Day, offer Work Based Learning sites and a myriad of mentorships and community

service opportunities for Rydell VTHS students. As last count, there were over several hundred business and community sites that offered work based learning opportunities. One example of a loyal and fully committed local partnership is with Havenrock Hospital who integrates several dozen Health Sciences students every year into clinical rotations.

The school has developed a school wide community service day where all students and staff participate. Some of the services include: working at a soup kitchen, food drive, clean up trash, animal shelter, gardening, and working in an elementary school. In addition, the school holds events throughout the year such as a breast cancer walk, Light up Rydell VTHS, car seat donations, criminal justice camp, and a state police torch run.

Starling City, as many of the towns that comprise Central County, continues to suffer economically from the loss of their mill/factory-based manufacturing sector. There are many vacant mill sites; only a few have been repurposed to house small businesses. The unemployment rate in Central County is triple the Massachusetts average. The Starling City Chamber of Commerce has recently received a federal economic block grant which is being used to create a marketing campaign that is aimed at attracting small business start-ups, especially in the technology sector. Several small retail businesses have opened on Main Street within the past year, which have attracted shoppers back to the downtown area. The Chamber of Commerce is hopeful that the combination of affordable, available business space, geographic location, and proximity to institutions of higher education will be market draw for entrepreneurs and investors.