



2020-2021 Funding Requests

RCSD's 2019-20 Fiscal Crisis and Current Year Deficit

As a result of an external financial audit and subsequent analysis in the fall of 2019, the District learned of a combined 2018-19 and 2019-20 budget deficit of \$64.8 million. Immediate steps were taken and \$30 million in reductions were implemented, which included unprecedented mid-year teacher layoffs – the severity of which disrupted staff, students and families.

Despite these significant mid-year cuts, the District is still faced with a \$35 million deficit for the current school year. The District requests State support to bridge this gap. The District also welcomes additional fiscal oversight through the establishment of a fiscal monitor as we work diligently to develop a plan that ensures long term fiscal stability.

RCSD's 2020-21 Funding Priorities and Projected Deficit

The Executive Budget's proposed Foundation Aid increase is \$12.8 million when the consolidated expense-based aids are backed out. Charter school tuition payments alone are projected to increase by \$11.5 million for the District next year. The State must accelerate the phase-in of Foundation Aid and ensure that poverty and other unique needs are adequately factored into the formula. Furthermore, charter school expansion in saturated school districts such as RCSD should be limited and supplemental charter school tuition payments must be increased and accelerated to provide current year reimbursement.

The Governor's proposal to roll several expense-based funding streams into Foundation Aid would negatively impact the ability of the District to manage revenue streams. These categories should remain linked to actual expenditures. Furthermore, the proposed cap on Transportation Aid could force the District to divert funding from the classroom and changes to Building Aid could be particularly damaging as the District moves forward with its Facilities Modernization Plan.

The Executive Budget's proposed \$1.2 million cut to the District's School Health Services funding must be restored and additional support should be provided. This funding has not kept pace with requirements to meet critical student health and medical needs.

Career and Technical Education funding through Special Services Aid must be expanded to increase the \$3,900 per pupil formula-based cap and aligned with current programs to provide funding for 9th grade pupils. The District has a number of highly successful programs and funding has not kept pace with the cost of maintaining them.

Based upon the Executive Budget Proposal, the District's projected deficit for 2020-21 is estimated at \$55 million. The District is carefully considering all alternatives to address this shortfall, including possible school closures, but absent significant additional support from the State the consequences will be devastating.

RCSD's Challenges, Progress and Goals

Rochester is one of the highest needs school districts in New York State. The data is staggering:

- More than 20 percent of the student population includes Students with Disabilities.
- Rochester has the highest concentration of poverty in the State, third highest in the nation.
- According to ACT Rochester, an initiative of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, more than 50 percent of children living in the City of Rochester live in poverty and, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 32 percent of the City's entire population lives in poverty.
- The District's Extraordinary Needs Percentage is 92 percent, the highest among the Big 5.
- RCSD serves 3,795 ELL pupils (12 percent of the students) and provides services to students speaking 65 languages.

Despite these challenges, the District continues to make progress toward its academic goals. The District has achieved its highest graduation rate in more than a decade. The four-year graduation rate was 63 percent in August of 2019, a 3.7 percent increase from the previous year. The following progress is also of note:

- 15.9% increase for English Language Learners, from 26.7% to 42.6%
- 5.3% increase for Students with Disabilities, from 41.7% to 47.0%
- 7.6% increase for Hispanic students, from 55.0% to 62.6%

The District is committed to the following goals:

- Achieve a 5% increase in the graduation rate between August 2019 and August 2020.
- Increase student proficiency in ELA and math by 7% by August 2020.
- Reduce the disproportionate special education classification of students of color and the disproportionate suspension of students of color by 1.5% by 2020; and increase the enrollment of students of color in advanced coursework by 5% by June 2020.
- Reduce chronic absenteeism by 5% by June 2020.
- In order to better define parent/family engagement by June 2020, we will ensure there is an active Student Leadership Group in all high schools and that all schools will meaningfully engage families in the School-Based Planning Team process, in accordance with the School-Based Planning Team manual.
- Achieve and maintain fiscal stability by implementing a plan that will put the District on secure financial footing.

RCSD needs the necessary funding to continue our progress toward these academic goals and ensure success for our children. Without adequate funding to support both the academic and social emotional needs of our students, we will struggle to provide the supports our students need to succeed and to have a chance to rise out of poverty. Education is the primary path that will allow this to happen. Our students deserve this chance.