



RCSD Pre-K Recommendations for 2020-2021 Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What went behind the decision to add RCSD Pre-K centers?

A. As the District examines long-term fiscal stability and looks ahead to what is needed to have a balanced 2020-2021 budget, declining enrollment must be addressed. Data trends show that the District is losing students at a rate of 600-700 students per year. The majority of these students are enrolling in charter schools. The District has an opportunity to expand its Pre-K offerings to help ensure as many children as possible benefit from its nationally recognized Pre-K program.

Q. How will adding RCSD Pre-K help the District's long-term fiscal stability?

A. There are long-term and long-standing enrollment challenges in the RCSD, with a steady decline in student enrollment for the past 10 years. This plan is a creative way to reverse that trend. Students who attend a CBO for Pre-K primarily enroll in charter schools at Kindergarten. Students who attend an RCSD Pre-K in most cases remain with the RCSD.

Q. Will it cost the District more to operate the two Pre-K centers than it spends with CBOs?

A. The RCSD is looking to add 500 students to its Pre-K. Currently, the District spends \$4.5 million dollars (\$9,000/student) to send 500 students to CBOs, which does not include costs for professional development of staff, curriculum materials, student recruitment and registration, coaches, social workers, and music program, attendance incentives, as well as assessment, screening, and attendance contracts. These areas result in extra funding that the District provides to CBOs, which amounts to approximately \$2.24 million dollars per year. Additional details are below:

- Curriculum materials (classroom libraries, lending libraries, backpacks, and take-home books) ~ \$120,000
- Assessment, screening, and attendance contracts ~ \$435,000
- Attendance incentives ~ \$300,000
- Professional development ~ \$65,000
- Coaches, social workers, and music program ~ \$900,000
- Recruitment and registration ~ \$285,000
- Staff attendance services ~ \$140,000

The cost to operate the two new Pre-K centers will be approximately \$5.2 million dollars. The total cost to serve 500 students at CBOs is \$4.5 million dollars + approximately \$560,000 (1/4 of the expense outlined above), which equals \$5.06 million dollars. This total does not even factor in the expenses for administrative costs and overhead, such as grant writing, grant reporting, NYS reporting requirements, and finance management, all of which are provided by the RCSD at no additional cost to the CBOs. When you factor in the opportunity to maintain our students in the RCSD throughout their educational career, which addresses our declining enrollment, the advantages of serving our students in RCSD Pre-K far outweigh any dollar amount.

Q. Are we saving any money by closing these two schools and opening them as Pre-K centers?

A. Yes, we are saving \$4.1 million dollars by closing the current academic programs at Lincoln Park School No. 44 and Early Childhood School of Rochester No. 57.

Q. Is the District proposing to cut all ties with Community-Based Organizations?

A. That statement is 100% false. The RCSD values its partnerships with CBOs, who do an amazing job helping the District deliver its Pre-K program in the District. The District's goal is to add capacity to help ensure as many children as possible benefit from the best programs available while also creating a fiscally sustainable future for the District.

Currently, the District serves 39% of our Pre-K students while CBOs serve 61% of our Pre-K students. In actuality, the District should be serving the majority of its Pre-K students. This proposal would allow the District to serve 55% of our Pre-K students while CBOs would serve 45% of our Pre-K students in 2020-2021.

Q. How will the District determine which seats to move from CBOs to RCSD?

A. The District uses data every year to evaluate the CBO programs; those that do not perform well are the programs we would first consider eliminating. The following criteria would be used for evaluating CBOs:

- **Serious Violations from the NYS Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)** – OCFS is a NYS regulatory agency that oversees childcare centers and approves them for licensing. The District continually evaluates all serious OCFS violations. A number of serious violations is one way an agency partner would be considered for reassignment of Pre-K seats. Examples of serious violations include leaving children without competent supervision, not cooperating with local Child Protective Services for purposes of an investigation, and abuse or maltreatment of a child.
- **NYSED Health & Safety Checklist** – Each year, the District is required to conduct an on-site evaluation using the NYSED Health and Safety Checklist to ensure that all healthy and safety requirements are being met.
- **Teacher Certification** – Academic progress of students is very important, and CBOs are required to employ certified teachers or employees who are on a five-year plan to earn their NYS teacher certification.
- **Zone Impact** – Zones will be considered when designating seats to ensure the impact is minimal. The plan is to have a Pre-K educational center in each of the three zones – South, Northwest, and Northeast.

Q. How will this change affect transportation services for Pre-K students?

A. The District will continue to provide free monthly RTS bus passes to families attending RCSD Pre-K. Most CBOs also provide free monthly RTS bus passes while others offer transportation via bus or van through contracts with outside organizations.

Q. Will the new RCSD Pre-K centers serve both Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4?

A. Yes, both proposed centers will serve Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 students, just as the Rochester Early Childhood Education Center (RECEC) program does currently.

Q. Will the new RCSD Pre-K centers offer wraparound services?

A. The District is in the planning stages to offer an extended-day enrichment program. This extended-day program would operate through 6:00 pm. Enrichment opportunities would incorporate activities that help to develop language, social, and self-help skills, reading and writing readiness activities, outdoor play (weather permitting), as well as arts and music programs.

Q. Why choose Rochester Pre-K?

A. The District's Pre-K program is consistently ranked among the highest in the nation, for nearly 20 consecutive years, dating back to 2001. Those findings are backed by independent evaluations and assessments, such as the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3), which is an assessment of the learning environment and student interaction. Based on ECERS-3 data, when comparing RCSD Pre-K performance to CBO Pre-K performance, the RCSD fared higher in almost every category.

Q. Why does the School Board have to vote on this plan in February? Why can't this wait until a later date?

A. The New York State Education Department has a March 1st deadline for all NYS school districts to submit board-approved changes to any schools for the following school year. This includes new schools, closing schools, and/or schools with grade-level configuration changes. In addition, the RCSD projected 2020-21 budget deficit demands that we take definitive measures to reduce our expenses and increase our revenues. This plan is one step towards achieving this goal.

Q. What if I have additional questions?

A. Additional questions can be submitted to Onevoice@rcsdk12.org.