

## Speakers Public Comment Business Meeting April 2, 2020

Name	Affiliation	Topic	Comment
Hussein Amin – RIA Grade 9 - From Turkey	Student	RIA	I heard that Superintendent Dade wants to get rid of grades K-5 and also get rid of 26 teachers at RIA. I am writing to you because RIA is a special school that helps every student learn English and be successful in their education. I want you to know we need RIA because it helps many students learn to speak, read, and write English and also if they don't understand, we have teachers who can translate for them and help them. Some examples of how RIA has helped me and my family are taking care of my family and helping us with what we need, such as making appointments or helping to translate letters we get in the mail. RIA teachers try their best to give us what we need, and it's not just only my family, they also help other families too. And if they can't afford it, they try to give you something else because RIA doesn't keep its families and students hanging; they always have the encouragement, they always find a way. I hope you will not cut K-5 and get rid of our teachers because teachers are the important ones to us. I hope you don't separate our RIA family because without family it will be difficult to rise together and help each other, especially our younger siblings. I do not want the RIA family to be separated because we need our families and loved ones. I hope you see now that it is important to keep grades K-12 at RIA because together we are family and no family can be successful when they are separated from each other. Please vote NO on May 7th!
Dawa Bomjon – RIA Grade 10 - From Nepal	Student	RIA	I heard that Superintendent Dade wants to cut grades K-5 from RIA. I also heard that with the new budget we will lose 26 of our RIA teachers. I am writing to you because RIA is a very supportive school. I want you to know we need RIA because we are family. RIA is a very safe school for all students, and RIA's

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			<p>teachers provide the students with the support that they need in order to learn English and be successful. Some examples of how RIA has helped me and my family are when I first came to RIA I was very scared, I thought my teachers would not like me or talk to me and I would not be able to make friends because I did not know very much English. But my teachers were really wonderful. I did not feel uncomfortable talking in the little English that I knew. My parents were really happy when I shared that my teachers are really good and I feel safe in my school. Some of my friends go to other schools, and they do not have a good experience like we have at RIA. I hope you will not cut K-5 from RIA, and I hope that you do not cut our 26 teachers. I do not want my brothers and sisters to go to other schools, they deserve the safety and support that RIA gives. I hope you see now that it is so important to keep grades K-12 and our teachers at RIA because all students like me need a school like RIA. We are a RIA family. Please vote NO on May 7th!</p>
<p>Sudip Magar – RIA Grade 10 - From Nepal</p>	<p>Student</p>	<p>RIA</p>	<p>I heard that Superintendent Dade wants to cut the grades K-5. I am writing to you because I think this is the horrible thing to do. I want you to know we need RIA because my family and I need RIA so that we can continue to learn new things. RIA is not like other schools where people do not like each other. Even though there are many different religions and cultures, we are all family at RIA. We respect each other. This school is the best school that I have ever attended, and this school is our home, we are a RIA family. We do things together; we help each other whenever someone needs help. RIA has helped me and my family in many ways, one example is during this difficult time of COVID-19, my teachers, language coaches and principal have translated important</p>

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			<p>information so that we can be safe and prepared. My teacher is always checking to make sure that we have everything we need during this time away from school.</p> <p>I have experienced another city school, and it did not work out for me. The students there were not friendly or welcoming and I did not feel supported. Students used bad language around me and that made it difficult to learn new things. There was a lot of fighting and I did not feel safe. I am so lucky that I was able to come back to RIA, now I can keep learning. RIA is the way. I hope you are not going to cut the grades k-5 because if you cut them then I worry those students will have the same bad experience that I had when they go to another school. I hope you see now that it is important to keep grades K-12 at RIA because our small sisters and brothers need good teachers to learn in a safe and supportive school. Please vote NO on May 7th!</p>
Abdullahi Said	Student	RIA	<p>I heard that Superintendent Dade wants to get rid of RIA K-5 and make it a 6-12 School without a transition program for newcomer students. I am writing to you because to me RIA is not just School. At RIA, we are a family and everybody plays a role. I want you to know we need RIA because they help people like me, refugees, who come from war-torn countries with little to no English. When you first come to America, it's a feeling you cannot describe. Nothing is familiar, you don't understand what people are saying, but when you come to RIA, you will feel love and cared for. You get the help you need. Some examples of how RIA has helped me and my family are they helped me through a rough time. I didn't know the language, I was struggling to tell people what I wanted to say, but they listened. They helped when I needed them most. At one point, I transtioned out</p>

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			<p>of RIA to another RCSD school. When I went to another school I felt like I was not getting the education I needed. I Felt like I was never going to learn. Because nobody really cared that I didn't understand what they were teaching, all they cared about is I was busy doing something in the class. People were not very welcoming, some people made fun of where I was from, they asked me if I ever ate food before because I came from Somalia. At RIA, nobody cares how you look, how you dress, or how you think. They respect you for who you are and I feel like every school should be like that. I asked to come back to RIA and it was the best decision. I was able to learn and the staff and teachers saw something in me. They taught me how to be a leader, use my voice, and stand up for what I believe in. I hope you will reconsider this proposal. At RIA, student's feel safe and are able to learn without fear of judgement or ridicule. Families are able to be kept together under one roof and parents have comfort knowing their children are all together after coming from the areas and countries we come from where that was not always the case. I do not want to have to go to another school like I did before and face those challenges once again. I hope you see now that it is important to keep grades K-12 at RIA because RIA is a family.</p> <p>Please vote NO on May 7th!</p> <p>Sincerely, Abdullahi Said</p>
Mikel VanAuken Student at RIA	Student	RIA	<p>Dear RCSD Board of Education,</p> <p>I heard that Superintendent Dade wants to cut grades k-5 from RIA to help with the budget problem. I am writing to you because I do not think this is a good</p>

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			<p>idea. I want you to know we need RIA because it helps children who do not speak English. Some examples of how RIA has helped me and my family are it helped me learn English, helped me make friends, helped me not to be scared to go to school, helped my parents know how to teach me and made us like a big family. I hope you will reconsider cutting grades K-5. I do not want to see RIA change from K-12. I hope you see now that it is important to keep grades K-12 at RIA because it helps so many children just like me.</p> <p>Please vote NO on May 7th!</p>
BETHANY CARRION	Parent	RCSD 2020-21 Budget	<p>HELLO THIS BETHANY CARRION AGAIN DIDNT WANT TO OVERLOAD YALL ON TUESDAY..SO HERE IS THE REST. MY SONS EDUCATION IS PRICELESS.. NO ONE CAN PUT A TAG ON HIS SUCCESS. THE STRUGGLES ME AN JOSIAH ENDURED IS BECAUSE RCSD PUT A PRICE TAG ON HIM..THAT IS UNTIL SEPT 2016..THE SUSPENTIONS , LACK OF SERVICES, LACK OF COMPASSION, AN LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE DISTRIC LEVEL ALL THE WAY DOWN WAS UNACCEPTABLE. I KNOW THIS FIRST HAND AS IVE BEEN IN THE RCSD FOR 15YRS SINCE JOSIAH WAS 3. I WAS PULLING MY KIDS OUT OF THE DISTRICT AUG 2016. PARENT ENGAGEMENT AN DAN FONTANEZ KNEW AN SAW FIRST HAND HOW FED UP I WAS..I WAS ASKED BY BOTH TO PLEASE GIVE RCSD ONE MORE CHANCE..AN I DID.. IT WAS THE ABSOLUTE BEST THING I COULD HAVE DONE..BOTH MY KIDS ARE NOW SINCE SEPT 2016 HIGH HONOR STUDENTS AND MY JACOB EVEN RECIEVED THE PRESIDENTIAL AWARD..HOLLLLA..WHEN I SAY I HAVE THE DATA AND PROGRESS TO PROVE KISHA MORGAN DID HER JOB AN DID IT WELL..THE DATA SPEAKS PURE FACTS TO MY KIDS SUCCESS ..WHICH IS HOW AN WHY MY JOSIAH IS A SENIOR GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020..HOLLLA..SO</p>

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			<p>CLOSING THE BUDGET GAP “On the backs of students with disabilities” IS UNACCEPTABLE PERIOD.. Special Education had been historically underfunded and students were not receiving services . WE FINALLY CHANGED THAT - AND NOW YALL WANT TO DEMOTE KISHA AND ALL HER HARD WORK..NOPE NOT TODAY SATAN NOT TODAY...VICTORY IS MINE VICTORY IS MINE VICTORY TODAY IS MINE..PLUS I GOT A 9TH GRADER SHE HAS TO GRADUATE.. HOLLLLLLAAAAAA..AN GOD BLESS</p>
Paul and Kim VanAuken	Parents	RIA	<p>Good morning Board members,</p> <p>We are parents of a RIA student and are very concerned over the recent proposal by Superintendent Dade to remove K-5 grades from RIA. We feel this decision would not be in the best interest of any newcomer student!</p> <p>Our son Mikel was adopted from an orphanage in Bulgaria. He spent the majority of his 11 years there being abused and neglected. He remained home with us for a few weeks to get him adjusted then we started him at our districts school. He spoke no English and was illiterate in Bulgarian . Although we told them 6 months prior to his arrival that he would be coming they failed miserably the 2 months he spent there. The only ENL students they were use to were Spanish speaking ones whom lived with their birth families and were literate in their language. Their answers school for only 2 hours a day and a 15:1 classroom because they had no knowledge of how else to help Mikel. Mikel had no diagnosis. We immediately told them no to that setting. We were at a loss of what to do for our sons education when a dear friend told us about RIA.</p> <p>At that point we set up an appointment with principal Mary Andrecolich Montesano Diaz. We were in tears when the meeting started as we explained</p>

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			<p>our situation. She made us feel so much better, as though we would be part of a family, as she explained how RIA worked and what we could expect. Our school district agreed and Mikel started at RIA that September.</p> <p>Mikel's success at RIA is due to the commitment the teachers and administration put into their students. They dealt with his emotional needs as well as his education. It all went hand in hand. Mikel was seen as a normal student not an abused child that did not speak English. When he did not want to enter the classroom due to fear they walked him through it, when his pace was slower than others due to him being illiterate in his native tongue they were patient, when he was working through his abuse with counselors they cared for him. They never gave up on our son! He was more than an ENL student to them he was a newcomer, he was and still is family.</p> <p>Which brings us now to this year. Mikel will be graduating with a regents diploma in June because RIA is exactly what it should be a perfect school for newcomer students grades K to 12. Please continue to give this educational opportunity to the students and their families! RIA is not only a school it is a family. Thank you</p>
Cheryl Moeller	Parent	RIA	<p>I am a foster mother of unaccompanied refugee minors and I have had 1-3 foster sons at RIA every year since 2012.</p> <p>During this time I have seen the addition of the lower grades to the program and have marveled at the ELL education and the continuity of care this has afforded refugees as they have become members of the Rochester community.</p>

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			<p>From the point of view of a parent, keeping all the children together (especially where there is interpretation support) helps parents stay in touch and participate in their children's education.</p> <p>One reason RIA has become one of the best schools in the district is because of the participation and support of parents.</p> <p>In my opinion, separating younger children from older siblings will dilute the effectiveness and success that RIA has had delivering high quality graduates to the community.</p> <p>Please reconsider keeping RIA K – 12. Thank you.</p>
Chris Widmaier	Community	RCSD 2020-21 Budget	<p>There has to be another way. I understand that you are in a challenging position as balancing the RCSD budget is a lose-lose situation. Students in the city of Rochester deserve an excellent education and the current funding formula, combined with the pervasive culture of mediocrity at all levels of our school district make that almost impossible. I am writing today to request that you do the following:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Reject the budget that makes cuts to programs and staff that effectively serve the most vulnerable students. RIA needs to stay intact. The young mothers program needs to be maintained. Social workers and special education teachers need to stay in the schools. Look for more creative options to balance the budget. The bus contracts are disgusting. The level of service that is provided is mediocre and accepted as such at great expense to our community. The construction budget is important but again being shoveled out to companies that are doing substandard work. Look for new and innovative ways to lead our district through a mindset of</p>



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			<p>excellence and collaboration. We need your leadership. Our community deserves excellence from our leaders. I have faith that things can change if you as our leaders can work with all stakeholders as partners rather than adversaries. While I am no longer a district employee I am deeply invested in the success of our community and the schools. I will keep doing what I can to drive our educational system towards excellence and I am always open to conversations and offer my support in any way that it is requested. Thank you for all that you do to lead our schools and our community.</p>
Michael Weichenthal	Community	RCSD 2020-21 Budget	<p>I hope you are happy , you got the rest of NY State to pay for your budget problems, that were created by your own ignorance and recklessness. I hope you look at management, administration and the superintendent of schools for dismissal because it is their fault with not spending within their budgets. There should be a lot of people fired over this but it should not be the teachers. It amazes me how you can be rewarded for your ignorance and waste of taxpayer money. This money that you are receiving will undoubtedly go to lining the pockets of management. What a waste of good money from the NY State taxpayer to correct a problem created by ignorant and irresponsible people . Despicable</p>
Sharon Brown	Community	Restoring the Chief of Student services position	<p>Good evening, I first met Mrs. Ruth Turner about a year and a half ago. My nephew was killed shortly after coming home after school. At about 11 Pm that night Mrs. Turner</p>

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			<p>came to the hospital and provided much needed support and grief counseling and represented the district so wrll. I was so impressed by her care and empathy for my family. She continued over the next couple of months to support our family by ensuring mental health supports were in place and that my other nieces and nephew were supported when they returned to school.</p> <p>I later became a part of her district community engagement team for School climate. She pours all her energy to improve things for our students. She is relentless and determined to help Black and Brown children succeed. I need and our community needs more Mrs. Mrs. Turner. Please reconsider your decision for the sake of our students.</p>
Charles Kantor	Community	RIA	<p>My name is Charles Kantor and I am a retired clinical psychologist in the Rochester area. After working as a psychotherapist and mental health administrator for over 40 years, I retired in the fall of 2016. As I put together my post retirement life, I got introduced to Rochester International Academy (RIA) about 4 years ago when Mary Andrecolich-Montesano, the principal of RIA , asked our interfaith group, The Commission on Jewish Muslim Understanding to contribute to the school’s annual Thanksgiving dinner. She came to our group and described the mission of the school and we enthusiastically bought the turkeys for the dinner and have done so for the last several years. I decided at that time to call to volunteer at the school. Mary had encouraged all of us to come visit and noted that these kids many of whom were just acquiring some English were also kids who had faced trauma as refugees very early in their lives. She knew that any contact with folks from the Rochester culture was good for these kids sense of involvement and belonging, but she also knew that when</p>

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			<p>these kids had been split up into their neighborhood schools, they were likely to be marginalized and their self esteem, already compromised by trauma, damaged further. For the last three years, I have volunteered to read to first and second graders and to help out the teachers in other ways as well. I have worked mainly with Ms. Elizabeth Eddy, first grade, and Ms. Patricia Sheehan second grade, and cannot praise them enough for their competence, sensitivity, and empathy. I also regard these children as enthusiastic learners. My usual time to start with the kids coincided with the end of recess time. One day, many of the kids were drawing, playing games, and a few playing tag, but over in one corner, two first graders were teaching one of the float teachers. This teacher was multi-lingual but he was now the student as his first graders taught him Arabic. On another day, three girls during this same recess period asked me if I could help them with division. They had not really started learning that yet, but were curious, just wanted to learn, and during play time! That is the atmosphere at RIA. I have seen kids struggle with English but continue to work hard to learn. This has paid off in clear progress during the school year. I have seen kids in class representing 7 countries and 5 languages other than English, learn together, sing together, dance together, and make friends together. They clearly represent the best of us.</p> <p>Breaking up this early transition program would not only be a disservice to the children, parents, and teachers of RIA, but also to the Rochester community. Please keep RIA in tact. Support this gem of a program!</p>
Bonnie J. Rubenstein	Community	RIA	I am writing to you as a member of the RIA Community Advisory Board and also as a professor and chair of the Counseling & Human Development Program at

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			<p>the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester. In my role at Warner, I have (in coordination with Ruth Turner) placed many practicum and internship graduate counseling students in clinical placements at RIA.</p> <p>As a professor, I have written and presented extensively on the correlation between social-emotional learning and academic achievement and on the impact of grief and loss on children. This connection is well documented in the literature over the past decade. Students newly arrived in this country face not just the trauma of their move but also the daunting challenge of their limited English language skills. The K-12 transition program presently at RIA provides a trauma-free, safe environment which allows students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.</p> <p>As a community board member, I have witnessed first-hand the positive results of RIA's holistic approach to helping our children. Although an International High School is an amazing idea, it should not replace our RIA transitional program.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration in this salient matter.</p>
Rabbi Alan J Katz	Community	RIA	<p>I am writing this as a concerned member of the community who has served here for 34 years. Over that period I have worked with many Interfaith organizations as well as many educational institutions. When I first encountered Principal Mary Andrecolich-Montesano and the Rochester International Academy I was immediately impressed. Over the years we have sent visitors from other countries, both educators and people who work with immigrants and refugees all</p>

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			<p>over the world. They have nothing but glowing appreciatiion of the magnificent work being done to educate these children.</p> <p>Visiting the classrooms has demoonstrated the magic that can be done for all ages to educate them and aculturate them. Recognizing their backgrounds with respect and appreciation lets them feel more secure in this new environment. I hope that the school board will see the benefit this school brings to the students, their families and the greater community. It would be a shame to lose such a successful program.</p>
Mike Coniff	Community	RIA	<p>Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board:</p> <p>Please consider this letter of concern by our organization over the disbanding of some class levels from Rochester International Academy. RIA has been an effective program that has drawn attention from other educational programs around the Country and has helped our refugee students succeed.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the program is important from two aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It provides refugee families with one central location for their children. Remember that we are talking about families from other cultures who are totally unfamiliar with our educational system and therefore parents are unable to react and be involved. RIA takes this into consideration and is specially adapted to involve parents whenever appropriate and possible.</li> <li>2. Refugee families tend to be large and it is especially helpful to younger siblings to have older brothers and sisters in the same environment for mutual support, guidance and compassion. The older siblings are able to serve as guardians as well as an intermediary with family parents through</li> </ol>

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			<p>the education experience. Having one location and environment to operate under (RIA) makes this experience far better, both for the family and for staff.</p> <p>I encourage you not to reshuffle any part of RIA. Let's not try to fix something that is not broken. Any short term cost savings perceived will be larger expenses being fixed later.</p>
George S. Kornfeld	Community	RIA	<p>I am a community member who is concerned about the closing of RIA. I know that making cuts is very difficult and I know that you are trying to balance the needs of all students. Please consider the work that RIA has done to integrate immigrants and educate them in a supportive and nurturing environment.</p>
Arshad Rahman	Community	RIA	<p>Dear Mr. White,</p> <p>My name is Arshad Rahman. I am currently a Professor of Pediatrics and Pharmacology &amp; Physiology at the University of Rochester Medical Center. I am also the Chairperson of the Commission on Jewish Muslim Understanding (CJMU) of Rochester. I am writing this letter on behalf of CJMU to express support for the continuation of the K-5 grades at the Rochester International Academy (RIA). CJMU is an interfaith group that has existed for ~20 years with a strong commitment to developing a deeper understanding of our respective religions, along with our histories, interests, and the many cultures in which Jews and Muslims coexist now and in the past. Together, we are committed to a future of peace built upon the strong moral values that our religious traditions decree for the well-being of <u>all</u> people. Indeed, our unyielding dedication to personal and</p>

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			<p>collective well-being calls us to speak out on issues that are an affront to the fundamental values, laws, and morals that we share as Americans.</p> <p>CJMU has been a strong supporter of the RIA and recognizes the important work it has been doing to provide a place of learning, comfort, and acceptance for refugee children, many of whom have experienced unspeakable trauma at a very early stage in their lives. RIA not only provides a supportive environment and resources for their transition, learning, and growth, but also keeps them from being marginalized and falling through the cracks, especially in places with little understanding of cultural sensitivity and acceptance. For the past several years, CJMU has been assisting RIA through volunteer activities and providing turkeys for the school’s annual Thanksgiving dinner. CJMU’s partnership with RIA began about 4 years ago when Mary Andrecolich-Montesano, the principal of RIA, visited and spoke with CJMU about the mission of the school and the programs it offers to refugee children. Mary’s sincerity, passion, and empathy for these children struck a chord with the CJMU members. Subsequently, our members began volunteering at RIA and CJMU pledged to provide turkeys for Thanksgiving dinner each year. Our members describe their experience of volunteering at RIA as both “fulfilling” and “inspiring”. Considering the life-changing impact of the RIA on these vulnerable children, the need to continue this program cannot be emphasized enough. The RIA represents the true spirit of Rochester’s generosity and acceptance, and no reason can justify halting this program. CJMU requests the Board of Rochester City School District (RCSD) to make every effort to ensure the continuation of the early transition program. Interrupting the program would not only be a disservice to the children, parents, and teachers of RIA, but it is also</p>
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			contrary to Rochester’s long-standing tradition of embracing, protecting, and supporting those seeking a new home and yearning to breathe free. My best regards
Mary Jane Curry	Community	RIA	<p>I appreciate this opportunity to provide my thoughts on the proposed reduction in scope of the services of Rochester International Academy. I have been proud to serve on the Advisory Board of this program since its inception in 2011. Some of my research has focused on refugee student education, which equips me to support the highly successful approach that RIA takes toward serving refugee and migrant populations. In fact, RIA has become a national model because it works to support some of our most vulnerable students.</p> <p>Refugee students often arrive in Rochester with severe and often undiagnosed health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, those who have spent their young lives in refugee camps have often been denied access to formal education structures and may not be literate in their home/local language or in any language. Therefore, they need to learn not only English and academic content but also how to engage with the customs of western schooling—and deal with poverty and health issues.</p> <p>The dedication and support of RIA’s staff to students and their families cannot be underestimated. They go above and beyond to create a safe and welcoming community for refugee students and their families, supporting their return to health and their integration into the community. As a result, RIA has an</p>



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			<p>impressive rate of graduation and sending its students on to higher education, both at two- and -four year institutions.</p> <p>The students who would be removed from the lower grades of RIA's services are not to be put in the same category as other immigrant English language learners—they need more specific tailored services that take into account the adversity they have experienced. Although the RCSD has an experienced and dedicated group of teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), I know from experience through a 5-year U.S. Department of Education grant on teacher preparation that I held from 2012-2017, that most of these ESOL teachers have not received specific training in working with refugee students. Moreover, the state's requirements for students to be moved into mainstream content classes mean that these students are more likely to drop out than even other ELLs, which is already a group at risk., because mainstream teachers have even less preparation to serve refugee students.</p> <p>In sum, I make a heartfelt plea for RIA to be preserved as the successful program it has become in the past decade.</p>
Andriana Ongoiba	Community	RIA	<p>I am writing on behalf of Refugees Helping Refugees in support of Rochester International Academy (RIA) and its entire transitional K-12 educational program.</p> <p>Refugees Helping Refugees (RHR) is a not-for profit, community-based organization dedicated to the growth, self-determination, and self-reliance of refugee communities in Rochester and Monroe County, NY. We provide comprehensive social services including English classes, case management,</p>

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			<p>health education, and work experience training to refugees of all backgrounds. By providing these services and engaging in the community, we aim to create an inclusive environment, where refugees are heard and respected and can live full lives. Through active participation, members of the refugee community develop essential skills, build confidence, and gain independence. RHR is the only refugee-led refugee serving organization in our region: a majority of our board and staff are of refugee background, and our commitment to refugee leadership is a core principle that informs everything we do.</p> <p>RHR shares a close relationship with RIA in that we work with the same families. Many of our clients at RHR are the parents of students at RIA. While we assist with the parents, RIA provides support for the kids. We place our full trust in RIA and are reassured knowing that RIA gives its full attention to all refugee youths. In one past summer, RHR ran its Youth Program at RIA, where it was able to provide all the resources necessary for the program.</p> <p>Through our interactions with RIA, we have found that the students enjoy the multicultural aspect of the school and have found cultural affirmation there. One student for example, was appreciative of the inclusion of African drumming in the program. Another student was pleased to learn that she could keep her Muslim faith as well as her college education and that she could be more than what her culture expected her to be. While RIA strives to provide English instruction to all English language learners, it also always take into account the diversity of its student body and each student’s unique cultural background.</p>
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			<p>Another aspect that should be noted about RIA is the quality of the faculty and staff. We have found that an impressive number of students felt that RIA was their home. Many felt that the principal deeply cared for them and prioritized their well-being, and saw the teachers there like their second parents. This is likely due to the fact that many of the staff at RIA are of refugee or immigrant background. They understand on a personal level the challenges and emotions their students experience as they're adjusting to their new life in an entirely different country and culture. For the students, seeing someone who is similar to them in a position of success is both reassuring and inspiring. Students can comfortably approach their teachers for help and realize that they can achieve success like their teachers as well.</p> <p>RIA has a given track record of success, and we believe that this is due its strong foundation and mission to work with all refugees right when they arrive. The school makes sure that not a single refugee youth feels alone in their struggles. Each student has both their instructors and peers who share similar experiences and are ready to help. With a model program already set in place, RIA should remain and continue to operate in its entirety for the sake of the currently attending students and future incoming students. RHR stands with RIA in that no cuts should be made whatsoever to its K-12 transitional program.</p>
Jim Morris	Community	RIA	A few weeks ago Catholic Family Center and other community partners reached out to you to implore the district not to close The Rochester International Academy (RIA). At the time the board stated that this was not in the plans. It is

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			<p>with great disappointment that we have now heard that those plans have changed.</p> <p>We at Catholic Family Center have long worked closely with the Rochester City School District in pursuit of creating the best possible educational experience for refugees and other New Americans entering our community. For myself, I remember the days before RIA became a reality and so can attest to the tremendous difference I have seen in the experience of refugee kids and parents between those days and now. Simply put, RIA has been a miracle. A shining example of what dedicated educators and visionary administrators could accomplish together with community advocates. Its success cannot be argued. It is a star within the district and model for the state and the country. It is inconceivable that this well-established success would be sacrificed to budget improvements.</p> <p>We implore the Board to keep their previous promise and leave RIA intact so that all New American children K – 12 have the opportunity to flourish and grow in the school district. The transitional approach and model created under the leadership of Mary Andrecolich-Montesano (Diaz) is proven and should not be dismantled. Let us continue to keep our promise to this community and give this critical educational support to some of our most vulnerable students in the Rochester community.</p>
Ellen Smith	Community	RIA	Keeping Our Promise Rochester is a program of 200 dedicated volunteers who have been working since April 2014 helping to resettle Afghan, Iraqi and Kurdish

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			<p>wartime allied families who arrive to Rochester under the Special Immigrant Visa Program, as administered under the Defense Authorization Act. These families (called “SIVs”) offered faithful and valuable services as interpreters and support personnel for our U.S. military in a war zone. Each family has been targeted by the Taliban or ISIL for a gruesome death. Each family has experienced some war-time trauma, which then permitted them to come to the safety of our country. The process to get here takes at least 4 years.</p> <p>Rochester is one of 25 cities chosen by the U.S. State Dept. for SIV resettlement. Rochester is only one of three cities in the state of New York for SIV resettlement. The other two cities are Buffalo and Albany. We currently resettle 28% of the New York SIV population here in Rochester.</p> <p>Our organization promotes Rochester in large part because of RIA. We know that the staff of RIA has the understanding, patience, and diligence to help these children. None of these children speak English. They do not share the same alphabet. Each has experienced war-time trauma. RIA is a game-changer in educating these children, and helping families as a whole successfully integrate into the Rochester community.</p> <p>I am in constant contact with SIV families from around the U.S., and I frequently listen to stories of families struggling in other cities. Many ask – beg – to move to Rochester. I see how well the families do here. Part of their healing process, and coping with post traumatic stress, is knowing that their children will be OK, and that they are safe. This is what RIA gives to our families. We even have RIA featured in our video clip for resettlement. (go to: <a href="http://www.keepingourpromise.org">www.keepingourpromise.org</a> and on the opening page scroll down to to the video: SIV_Intro_Rochester).</p>
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			Rochester has chosen to welcome refugee and SIV families into this community, and RIA is an essential part in their successful resettlement. RIA is a model that should be emulated in this community, and not closed to the detriment of our SIVs and refugees who we, as a community, have chosen to welcome to Rochester.
Allison Howard	Community	RIA	<p>My name is Allison Howard and I am a community member as well as partner with RIA as a medical social worker at The Center for Refugee Health doctor's office. As a partner for the past 5 years, I have developed a close relationship with administrators, staff members, and students/families within the Rochester International Academy (RIA) family and can personally and professionally attest to the devastation that would be caused by eliminating this school for one of the most vulnerable populations within our Rochester community. Our clinic sees all new refugees (the entire family network) who come into the country and the majority of our school-aged children live in Rochester attend RIA. These children are coming from war-torn countries and refugee camps and arrive in the US with uncertainty, limited resources, language barriers, mental health conditions (including PTSD, anxiety, depression, and adjustment disorders) and low education literacy. RIA is a source of stability and comfort for our children and does not only provide a comprehensive education, but supportive staff/community environment where children grow and thrive not only academically but also psychologically.</p> <p>Many of the students that attend RIA and are also patients in the clinic are extremely well adjusted and have high attendance rates and involvement in school culture/life. RIA school environment and culture goes above and beyond</p>

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			<p>to not only meet the needs of the students within the walls of the classroom, but also connects with families and provides them with an abundance of support (including food resources, medical supports, counseling, etc) outside of school as well. There are school advocates/staff members who speaks multiple languages who have made special trips to family's homes for meetings, who have brought students to medical appointments (and helped with language/interpretation), and connected with families in an intimate way because they have knowledge and familiarity with the culture. Additionally, the school has exceptional resources for English as New Learners and young students who are learning English for the first time. Many students who have transitioned out of RIA have also struggled immensely with the transition and have experienced bullying and persecution and seek assistance/support with wanting to return back to RIA. For students who are new to the country and experiencing so much transition and barriers, it is essential that they feel safe and comfortable at school. Having students surround them that share the same culture and have similar struggles is integral to feeling comfortable and safe and thus allowing them to learn.</p> <p>We are all aware that the RCSD is experiencing a huge budget crisis and there are changes and program cuts that need to be made; however, eliminating RIA or reducing the capacity is not the solution for our most vulnerable students. Thank you for your time and consideration,</p>
Sue Orrico-Saitta	Staff	Young Mothers Program	<p>I began teaching at the Young Mothers Program (YMP) in September of 1996 at the request of Mary Charipar who was the Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the time. She suggested that I go to YMP as I was a new mom</p>

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			<p>and would do well to relate with the students. I would like to give an overview of my 20 plus years at at YMP. Historically, the YMP began with a small staff in a bowling alley in 1969, as the need in the community grew to continuously educate this population of young women the YMP moved again to the basement of a church and finally in 1990 it was relocated to 30 Hart Street where it can still be found today. YMP has a foundation of community resources that have supported the RCSD and the students that the district serves. I would like to identify some of these resources:</p> <p>RAMP- Rochester Adolescent Maternity Program in conjunction with Strong Memorial &amp; Highland hospitals YWCA-Pregnant &amp; Parenting Teens WIC- Women Infant &amp; Children St. John Fisher College Nazareth College-school of nursing University of Rochester Junior Achievement Rochester Public Library Dairy Council of Rochester which is under Cornell University The American Red Cross Alternatives for Battered Women Milita House Downtown United Presbyterian Church</p>
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			<p>When I began at YMP the program educated only pregnant and parenting teens. Many of the students came to the program through referrals from their home schools for health and safety reasons, community advocates such as RAMP, family members, the church community of Rochester and friends that had been previous students. Word of mouth. This program is know throughout the Rochester Area and Monroe County.</p> <p>As a teacher at this program, and speaking for other coworkers, these young women were in our hearts, our heads, and became discussion in our families. We have help these ladies continue their education during their pregnancy, and in some very sad cases miscarriages, stillborns, and even death of their children through SIDS-sudden infant death syndrome. Many of these young mothers had the support of their families but others did not and YMP became their family. A safe haven, a place to discuss their futures, their classes, their needs, and even the freedom to make bathroom visits without being questioned as is normal in a comprehensive home school. They were provided a support system, understanding people to talk with and encourage them to continue their education not only for themselves but for the future of their child. Before Universal PreK was a program provided to families, we had students reading to the children in the daycare that was housed at Hart Street. The importance of how to hold your baby with the book and read to them...even reading to their unborn child during their pregnancy. Through the Rochester Public Library program each student made books for their child and were gifted with new board books for their future child. Educating both the mom and the child are strongly supported as the child most likely would become a RCSD student and in many cases both mom and child were students of the RCSD simultaneously. The</p>
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			<p>young ladies developed female friends as silly as this may seem many of the students confided they never had female friends. The new moms would take their children out together to our parks, the zoo, and even our libraries. During my tenure at YMP we went through a variety of changes. In 2003, Superintendent Dr.Clifford Janey wanted to close the program. The entire school was packed up and teachers displaced in June of that year only to be reinstated to the budget that same year in August. Under Superintendent's Rivera and Vargas who were members of the Rochester community we had support. When Dr. Rivera was working to develop the Rochester Children's Zone we requested to participate in the Zone —advocating for our students and the opportunities that it may avail to them, he came and talked with the students for their suggestions. Dr. Vargas come to school and held a town hall meeting with students and faculty to discuss concerns regarding the program. Superintendent Brizard came to visit the school his very first day of his tenure at the RCSD. We have/had the support of RCSD school board Commissioners such as: Darrel Porter, Willa Powell, Jim Bowers, Bolgen Vargas and Cynthia Elliott. Sadly, to date Superintendent Dade has not visited the Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy (YMIHA) and with his recommended budget cuts in December 2019 removed the administrator at the school.</p> <p>In the early 2000s there was a name change to the YMP under the direction of C. Michael Robinson when he was assistant superintendent. We were given the direction to determine a new name for the program, but it <i>must</i> contain the words Young Mothers because we were known to the district and the Rochester community. We became Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy (YMIHA).</p>
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			<p>Adding Interim Health students brought diversity to the program- now including male students. This new title brought new needs such as; male bathroom facilities. Including Interim Health Academy (IHA) students gave male and female students a new secure school free from bullying and provided supportive adults and social interaction where many students had been labeled “school phobic” before and were non attenders. YMIHA also gave these students a sense of family as it had been for the YM for so many years. Some of the young ladies fell into both categories of the school- several girls (I say this as the girls were young) who came to the Rochester community as refugees and were sexually abused by elder men within their culture. These girls were both pregnant and victims; victims of rape. They were ashamed, confused and worried as to what would become of them, their future and their child’s future. Including pregnancy, educational support and confidentiality was available to the girls at YMIHA. The IHA component of the program addresses a large number of health and mental health needs of the students that participate in the program. It mandates these students leave their home and mingle in society which would not occur if they were educated under the umbrella of Home Hospital teachers leaving them isolated in there homes.</p> <p>Many of the students that have attended the YMP and YMIHA had had the opportunity to continue their education, graduate and not become a dropout statistic. YMIHA is trying to increase the graduation rate of RCSD. We have former students that are current teachers in the RCSD. We also have a former young mother who is a practicing medical doctor. We are able to have success stories because education was always inclusive to support the needs of the students.</p>
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			Please re-evaluate the necessary budget cut and continue the strong positive educational opportunities for students at the YMIHA and consequently the RCSD. Thank you
Tucker Ruderman	Staff	RCSD 2020-21 Budget	As an RCSD elementary teacher and a city resident, I am distressed at the possibility of deep cuts of special education teachers, general education teachers and critical support staff such as social workers in the proposed budget discussions. As we seek as a community to remedy the devastating effects of economic violence, structural racism and generational injustice, we must recognize that attempting to slash our way clear will only deepen the damage to our most vulnerable families and their children. I urge you to seek creative solutions to the funding crisis that do not worsen the problem. This, after all, is your charge: to lead the District in the best interest of children, families and the community to which they belong.
Robert Hoose	Staff	RCSD 2020-21 Budget	Please reconsider your draft budget. Our students and staff have already had a difficult year with the mid-year layoffs and this proposed budget will cause more harm. When Superintendent Dade came to our district he said that he wanted to change the narrative of the Rochester City School district. Cutting teachers, and severely reducing arts programs is not a new narrative. This is a recurrent part of the narrative of the Rochester City School District. It is a cycle that happens too frequently in our district and it is incredibly destructive. When Superintendent Dade found out that the district was in financial trouble he stressed that he wanted to keep the impact as far from the classroom as possible. Cutting teachers is not making cuts

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			<p>far from the classroom. It is the classroom. Please consider finding the money to keep teachers and staff that work directly with students by reducing expenditures in other areas. Part of the rationale for the reductions has been falling student enrollment. This would leave empty space within our schools. One thing that could be considered to save money is decentralizing the functions provided at central office and placing those functions in space available at schools. Many superintendent's have offices that are physically connected to the schools where their students learn. I think that it would be amazing to have students see the work that the superintendent and central office provides for them in their schools and for the superintendent and board to be present in the daily learning of students. Our students are our top priority. Providing them with consistency in classroom teacher presence and access to arts in school are critical to their success. Superintendent Dade has called our district a family. Please find a better way to meet our fiscal needs than sacrificing family members.</p>
Nicole Flores	Staff	RIA	<p><a href="#">N. Flores Speaker Comments.pdf</a></p>
Lauren Bloch	Staff	RIA	<p>To the RCSD Board of Education, for consideration at the 4/2 Budget Hearing: As we have learned from good old Maslow, if a child's most fundamental needs are not met, they are not able to meet their full potential. Neuroscience also shows that a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for learning. Studies have shown that "sense of belonging is one of the most important activators of a child's engagement in learning. Everything about activating a child's cognitive skills begins with activating their social connectedness" (Dr. Pamela Cantor,</p>

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			<p>2019). At RIA, this is what we do. We are a family. At RIA, every staff member goes above and beyond to ensure that our students’ and their families’ basic physiological needs are being met and that students feel safe, nurtured, and have a strong sense of belonging. After all of the traumas students have faced in their home countries, compounded by the resettlement process and the connected stressors of isolation, poverty, and acculturation THEY NEED the social and emotional learning and support that RIA provides. The newcomer program at RIA was designed to provide sheltered instruction and English language support to students with interrupted or limited formal education (SLIFE) <b>and</b> to teach the hidden curriculum of <i>how</i> to navigate the U.S. school system and everyday life in a new country. After studying the principles of Social Emotional Learning and trauma-informed practices, through the Refugee Educator Foundations course at the Carey Institute for Global Good, and discussing and evaluating several model programs--I can say that the program at RIA is unparalleled in meeting students’ physical, emotional, mental, environmental, social, intellectual, spiritual, and even financial and occupational needs. This is why RIA has been nationally recognized as a School of Opportunity Gold medal winner and featured by the United Nations for giving refugee students a chance at a better future. Simply put, there is no other school or program in our district that can give the K-12 refugee and newcomer students of Rochester equal opportunities to learn, engage, and thrive, and therefore (as stated in the RCSD mission), “provide all students equitable access to a high quality education and graduate students who are prepared to become productive members of society.” Do not take away this bright spot in our district and community by cutting grades K-5 and capping numbers for grades 6-12, which will close RIA’s doors to the</p>
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			newcomer students that it was designed to welcome into the RCSD family. #necessaryK12
Laura G Berghash	Staff	RIA	<p>To the Rochester City School District Board of Education,</p> <p>I am writing this letter to you today to shine light on the importance of Rochester International Academy to its' families, staff, but most importantly its students. This is why it would not benefit this population to remove grades K-5 from RIA. This school has provided both my brother, me, and my family many opportunities that have benefitted our success. Five years ago, a week from today, my brother came home to America as a 60 pound 14 year old boy who knew no English and was illiterate in his native language, Bulgarian. Though my parents contacted our local school district time and time again and gave them resource after resource they stood unknowing what to do. Their suggestion was to have Mikel (my brother) wait until the fall to start school. When my parents stood up for what was right they offered him 2 hours of school each day. Again, when my parents stood up for what was right for Mikel's education, they put him in a 15:1 classroom without any testing prior. This district cannot be to blame because they didn't know what to do. That's when a family friend told us about RIA. Life would never be the same after this. After much contact with the amazing administration and counseling staff at RIA (Mary Diaz, Mark Davis, and Jennifer Grimes) our home district finally agreed to send Mikel to RIA for the past 4 years so that he could earn a regents diploma and graduate high school. Though, when Mikel first began at RIA we did not know if this would be possible.</p>

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			<p>As stated above, Mikel did not know English and was illiterate in Bulgarian when we came to this country. When he began at RIA in Fall 2015 he had very few English language skills. His first ESOL teacher, Christina Pelletier will tell you of his inability to even take a test in the classroom due to his PTSD from his native country and the lack of education he had received there. By the end of his first year, he was staying in the classroom and he could have conversations using his English. In the past four years at RIA I have watched my brother learn the English language, gain confidence in his ability to speak, read, and write it, make friendships, gain trust for teachers, and feel supported. In addition, RIA has provided my parents with much needed support during trying times. For example, due to the emotional physical, and sexual abuse he endured while in his Bulgarian orphanage it has been difficult for Mikel to trust others. The teachers and staff at RIA provide Mikel with academic and emotional support on a daily basis. Many times, Mikel has gone during lunch to talk with John Haag (his former math teacher) because he feels supported and important when in his classroom. We all know that unfortunately its not in every school that students make these connections with their teachers. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to watch Mikel video chat his teachers (due to the school closure and distance learning we are all experiencing), he was joyful and trusted them enough to share how he was feeling. In June, Mikel will graduate with a regents diploma and it could not have been possible without the existence of a school that specializes in newcomer ENL students, RIA.</p> <p>RIA has also benefitted my education. I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher, but after Mikel came home I decided to pursue ESOL education. I</p>
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			<p>attended Roberts Wesleyan College where I obtained my B.S. in ESOL education. During my time in college I completed both 50 observation hours and student teaching at RIA. I learned about how to connect with students from very diverse cultures, how to connect them with each other, how to honor a student's roots in every lesson plan, how to create a meaningful lesson plan, how to differentiate a lesson plan for students who's reading level varied from a Kindergarten to Middle School level, and so much more! Under the leadership of my master teacher's Lisa Watson and Christina Pelletier, I learned much more at RIA than I ever could have learned from another school. RIA is specially designed for newcomer students who could not be successful in other classrooms. This specially designed instruction sprinkled with a lot of love and emotional support does NOT happen in other schools. I teach in a rural district as a third grade teacher with the ENL cluster in my classroom. The skills I learned through my time at RIA and Mikel's time at RIA, I use on a daily basis to support the needs of my students. Therefore, I am confident that without RIA I, but especially my brother would not have been successful.</p> <p>Please take this story and these words into deep consideration as you make your decisions regarding Rochester International Academy. I know that I speak on behalf of many students and families when I say that children may not reach their potential, nor be supported if it were not for what happens on a daily basis inside the four walls of Rochester International Academy.</p>
Christina Pelletier	Staff	RIA	<p>Good evening board members and Superintendent Dade. My name is Christina Pelletier, and I am an ESOL teacher at the Rochester International Academy. I wish I could be present to speak in person at tonight's meeting, like so many of</p>

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			<p>us were on February 27th. It was at that meeting where President Van White said, and I quote, “There is no, absolutely no initiative, policy, or intention to remove or close down RIA, alright?... I am here to tell you, and Terry is here to tell you that there is no intention.” The majority of RIA staff members then waived their right to speak after he further commented, “If you think you are going to convince us not to close down RIA, you are wasting your time as you are speaking to the choir. There is no intention to do that tonight or in the future.”</p> <p>And yet, here we are. Only five weeks later, with the intention of cutting grades K through 5 and severely limiting enrollment for grades 6-12 next year. I am imploring you to vote no against this proposal, which directly affects some of our district’s most vulnerable students - the refugee population. In the words of one of RIA’s graduating seniors, taking RIA students from their home is like taking babies from their mothers. The negative impacts that cutting grades K-5 would have on these newcomer students would be catastrophic, and even more so in these troubling times of pandemic school closures. Our community needs RIA as a transitional program for newly arrived students to the United States. The proposed enrollment of only 160 students for grades 6-12 does not allow for a true transitional program. The enrollment would be full by September. To give you an example of why additional enrollment spots should be included in your proposal, in September I began my year with just 5 newcomer students in my ESOL class. By the time school closed three weeks ago, I had 22 newcomer students, which is a 17-student increase in just 6 months. Under your proposal, where would newcomer students who arrive in December go? Where would they get the true support and resources that they need?</p>
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			<p>After listening to your interview, Mr. Dade, with WXXI News on March 30, you seem to be of the mindset that the “full immersion” of ELL students will be most effective. I ask you, Mr. Dade, why do you think RIA exists? The RCSD tried full immersion in years past, when RIA was known as Jefferson High School, and ELL students were fully immersed with American born English speaking students. Did full immersion work in that situation? Did ELL students have all of their needs met? You said in your interview that it is not acceptable to say other schools are not equipped to deal with refugee students. You’re right, that is unacceptable. But unfortunately, it is a hard truth to accept and it is the absolute reality of our district at this current moment. How do you plan to prepare schools for this drastic change when all schools are currently closed? How do you plan to prepare schools for this drastic change while you are facing a multi-million dollar budget deficit? In a perfect world, every single school should be fully prepared to accept refugee students. However, that is not our reality. I will tell you one school that is fully prepared to accept these vulnerable students right now, with no additional change or action necessary - the Rochester International Academy. Board members, I once again implore you to vote no against this devastating proposal. Thank you for your time.</p>
Jennifer Dale-Sheehan	Staff	RIA	<p>My name is Jennifer Dale-Sheehan and I am a teacher at the Rochester International Academy. I am currently the second grade teacher and before that I was the teacher for newcomers in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade.</p> <p>The elementary program at RIA is absolutely necessary and I speak from experience. Having been a classroom teacher in area Monroe county schools for</p>

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			<p>over 20 years, I can tell you that English Language Learners get lost in the shuffle unless they are in a program like the one RIA offers. When a teacher has a class of 25 students, and that includes 1 or 2 ELL's, you direct your teaching to the majority of the class, that being the English speaking students. As a gen ed teacher, you assume the ESOL teacher is "taking care" of the ELL's. You will check in, partner them with a "nice" kid, but for the most part, you just hope they learn something. I'm not saying all teachers would do this, but class sizes are big and teaching is demanding, you direct your teaching where it will do the most good. RIA is amazing because all the students are English Language Learners and the elementary teachers tailor their instruction to meet the needs of all the students, individualizing instruction on a case-by-case basis. Before I worked at RIA, I had no idea what a SIFE was, a student with interrupted formal education. If I had gotten a SIFE before I taught at RIA, I'm not sure what I would have done, probably nothing academically challenging or academically respectful. Now, I meet the needs of the student and I understand what a SIFE is and what they need. Just to paint a clear picture, having a student with no formal education can mean so many things. For example, a student just walks out of the classroom, or rolls around on the floor, or crawls into the teachers lap, because they don't know. Being at RIA, we start with compassion and love, because we know that refugees and immigrants have very different experiences. The students at RIA have seen things that children should not see; they have endured more than most adults. That's why RIA is special. The teachers understand that, they teach knowing that some students have seen horrible things, like family members killed. Another thing to consider is academic vocabulary. If any of you were to speak to some of our English Language</p>
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			<p>Learners, you would think they were proficient in English, so why are they still at RIA? Well, academic vocabulary takes 3-5 years to obtain proficiency. My first year at RIA I had students in my math class that I could have wonderful conversations with and I was so confused as to why they couldn't grasp the math concepts I was teaching; it was because social vocabulary advances at a faster rate than academic vocabulary. English Language Learners need the more methodical, thought out pace that RIA offers, the scaffolding that we can do because all the students need that pacing. We teach using the SIOP lesson plan that Mary Andrecolich Montesano Diaz requires of her teachers, we break down all the vocabulary into parts students can understand. I can call upon language coaches to help when a concept is abstract, like peace or love. I can email a high school teacher and ask for students to come to my room and work 1:1 with my newest students.</p> <p>I understand the idea that all teachers should teach all students, but why would you do that when there is something that is already working and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable students? Keep the K-5 at RIA. We are meeting the needs of students that would otherwise be forgotten or swept to the side. We meet their needs daily.</p>
Tina Bianchi	Staff	RIA	<p>Good evening Board Members and all those watching from home.</p> <p>I would like to begin my comments by thanking those of you who "get it." I want to thank those of you who have spoken out about the importance of Rochester International Academy. This letter is not really directed towards you; it is directed towards those who need a reminder about trust.</p>

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			<p>Trust. The dictionary will tell you that trust is a “firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.”</p> <p>At a BOE meeting just a few short weeks ago, President White looked at our principal and our brave students and said, “There is no, absolutely no initiative, policy or intention to remove or close down RIA, alright...I am here to tell you and Terry is here to tell you there is no intention....If you think you are going to convince us to not close down RIA you are wasting your time as you are speaking to the choir – there is no intention to do that not tonight or in the future.”</p> <p>Now, here we are, in the midst of a global pandemic, having to explain to our students why they can’t trust the words of those who have been elected or hired to make the best decisions to educate every student who walks through our doors.</p> <p>Success must be measured beyond dollars spent or dollars saved. I felt encouraged by our new Superintendent when he came on board preaching the 3 rocks: unsurpassed collaboration, changing the narrative, and laserlike focus on teaching and learning. These 3 rocks were seen as vital to our success as a whole; to changing the face of our district and moving us forward as a family--in it together for the long haul. While it is important to remember that Superintendent Dade inherited the budget problem, it is counterintuitive to this educator to solve one fiasco by creating another, worse fiasco. Cuts to the K-5 grade levels and restrictions that would limit or eliminate the ability to take newcomers would greatly diminish the likelihood of success for some of our most vulnerable learners. These cuts distract us from our important work and do nothing to demonstrate those three rocks in action. 10 years ago, our district</p>
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			<p>didn't have a dedicated location to serve the needs of newcomers. It didn't have the resources to communicate with families who speak many languages and to support students with needs that reach far beyond academics. As a new member of our school family and of our community, I would implore the Superintendent, and the Board members who may have forgotten, to do some more research into what newcomers need to be successful. What they need to feel safe and cared for. What basic needs must be met BEFORE the learning can take place. And please, listen to how RIA has met these needs, as I am sure you will hear from many of my colleagues and students. While many members of this Board have recently shown the community that emotional pleas are useless, I felt strongly about submitting these emotionally-charged comments. I will save my research and data for my next letter. I would like to trust that if you are not moved by the love RIA staff and students have for one another, perhaps you will be moved by facts that will show you why we are #NECESSARY.</p>
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Emma Brinkman	Staff	RIA	<p>I am writing with deep concerns over the proposed plan to shut down the K-5 program at Rochester International Academy, the wonderful school at which I have had the tremendous privilege and honor to teach for the last 4 years. As an elementary ENL teacher, I have worked with hundreds of students in the welcoming, nurturing environment that is RIA. Many of our students come to us with little to no prior formal education, and after a few years, our students are reading, writing, and speaking with courage. For these students, RIA is not only a safe space to learn and grow, it is an environment that takes many steps to ensure that immigrant and refugee students new to the U.S. are given the resources needed to thrive throughout their long transition to living in a new country.</p> <p>Teachers at RIA utilize trauma-informed instructional protocols to support ELLs, many of whom have experienced deep trauma prior to coming to the United States. Furthermore, research shows that refugee and immigrant students living in poverty continue to experience traumatic events as they begin to acculturate to life in the U.S., such as poverty, language barriers, racism, xenophobia, and job insecurity. At RIA, we recognize these circumstances and provide support in the form of community outreach through our invaluable language coaches, clothing and other household items from our clothing closet, direct support to families from our social worker, special events such as RIA Thanksgiving, and communication to our families in their native languages.</p> <p>In order to create a positive learning environment for our students struggling to adjust to life in a new country, we incorporate social-emotional learning and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that bring students' cultures and communal values into the classroom. In my classroom, and in many others throughout the school, we hold Peace Circles and practice mindfulness; teaching students brain-based science that helps them regulate emotions, ready their brains for learning, and connect more deeply with peers.</p> <hr/>
April 2, 2020			<p>It would be a <i>deep</i> travesty to cut the K-5 program from Rochester International Academy, and I beg you to seriously reconsider this proposal, which would be absolutely devastating to our students and their families. RIA is not only a school, it is a family. By removing the younger students and staff who serve these students from our family, you would be destroying the integrity of a wonderful school environment that provides a liminal space for ELL students to excel in this country. RIA is a shining star in the RCSD. I believe that the unique role we are playing at RIA <i>cannot</i> be met by teachers and staff at other schools that are already overstretched and struggling to meet the needs of other RCSD students living in adverse conditions. Just come to RIA, see the smiling faces of our students, the welcoming, international environment, and please reverse the course of this destructive plan.</p>



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Joanna Schuler	Staff	2020-2021 Purposed Budget and LEAD	<p>I am contacting the Rochester City School District Board of Education in regards to the purposed budget for the academic school year 2020-2021. I understand the Rochester City School District is facing a difficult time in its history. Over the years, the Speech-Language Department has developed programs in order to reach the needs of all the RCSD students. The department has developed LEAD, STEPS, Interact and Foundations. All of these programs are crucial to the development of RCSD students in their academic careers. The Language Enrichment All Day (LEAD) is a K-2 program to assist students who display a moderate to severe language disorder. Each LEAD classroom is comprised of a general education teacher and speech-language pathologist. The speech-language pathologist is present in the classroom all day working with not only the students with a moderate to severe language disorder, but the general education students as well. The speech-language pathologist provides intensive language remediation, and is embedded in all academic content areas. The student's IEP goals are language and curriculum based for reading, math, writing, speaking and listening and/or social-emotional. The LEAD program incorporates evidence-based practice materials embedded into the curriculum. This program provides the opportunity for students to achieve the following skills: organization and formulation of verbal thoughts, following directions, phonological awareness, concept development, comprehension, grammar, critical thinking skills, answering questions, narrative skills, describing, social skills, problem solving and vocabulary. All of these skills are imperative for a child to be successful in his or her academic career. The LEAD program allows for significant progress not only with the student's language skills but also with the student's</p>
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			<p>carry over skills and generalization of their IEP goals. Below is data to display the effectiveness and success of the program over the years.</p> <p><b><u>Data for 14/15-16/17 and 15/16-17/18 LEAD Classes:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 67% of LEAD students by the end of 2nd grade are no longer required to receive any additional speech/language services on their IEPs</li><li>- Data includes general education placement and change of program (for example, ICOT class or consultant services)</li></ul> <p><b><u>Growth</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 76% of LEAD students went from Severe/Moderate to Mild/WNL (Within Normal Limits)</li><li>• 76% of LEAD students completed the program with scores of Mild to WNL</li></ul> <p><b><u>Data for 16/17-18/19 LEAD Classes:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 56% of LEAD students by the end of 2nd grade no longer require any additional speech/language services on their IEPs</li><li>- Data includes general education placement and change of program (for example, ICOT class or consultant services)</li></ul>
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			<p><b><u>Growth</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 67% of LEAD students went from Severe/Moderate to Mild/WNL (Within Normal Limits)</li><li>• 78% of LEAD students completed the program with scores with Mild to WNL</li></ul> <p>This data demonstrates how most students enter third grade without any need for speech/language services. The students display significant growth in their speech and language skills within three years. The LEAD program allows students to receive language therapy throughout his or her academic day. Compare to traditional speech and language treatment a student is pulled out for speech/language therapy two to three times a week for thirty minutes each session. This can cause interruption to his or her academic day and learning. In addition, the student is missing specific academic instruction. The LEAD program allows students to stay in the classroom all day while receiving language therapy and academic instruction simultaneously. The LEAD program guides students on a path to make the most of his or her abilities and skills.</p> <p>Research shows treating language delays early on can prevent potential problems with reading, writing, learning, social interaction and behavior. This program provides students with the confidence, growth mindset and risk taking with their academics and learning. I am pleading with the Board not to remove the LEAD program from this upcoming academic school year 2020 – 2021 and to have it available at one school for each grade level (k-2). Thank you for your time, service and consideration.</p>
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Regina Maier	Staff	Budget Concerns	<p>Dear Board of Education and Superintendent Dade,</p> <p>I am writing today to express my sincere concerns regarding the devastating cuts to the Rochester International Academy for this upcoming school year. RIA's program was initially started to give Newcomer refugee and immigrant students a learning experience that is unique to their needs as they begin their education upon coming to America. Our vast school district has many schools that focus on specific and unique facets of education, some on special education, arts integration, some on speech therapy, others on bilingual education for our Spanish speaking students, and some on Expeditionary Learning, to name a few. One thing that was clearly missing was a program that focused completely on teaching our newcomer, non Spanish speaking, ELL students based on their specific needs.</p> <p>This was why RIA was created. The journey to America is a trying and hard fought battle that our students' families have endured to give their children access to a safe, equal, and superior education. The difference between our ELL students and our Bilingual students is that American Education is prepared for Spanish speaking students, materials are often already translated in Spanish for students and their families, by law. Our bilingual learners are set up for success based on this simple fact. For students who's first language is not English or Spanish there are added challenges when coming to school in America. RIA is a program that focuses on this population of students that are often left behind; it is a program that ensures our ELL students are fully immersed in language acquisition during every part of their day, including during their time in elective classes. What is most special about our program at RIA is that our ELL students</p>
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			<p>not only get a uniquely tailored education that fits their specific needs, but they also have the opportunity to be in class with students who are true peers. They are able to speak their first language to other students and staff members when needed to assist in their learning. It is a program where they are getting first language support, the same as our bilingual students. If you break down this program and scatter our students throughout the district they will once again get lost in the system, as they did prior to RIA being created. They will sit in classrooms quietly, listening to teachers teach to the majority. They will only be able to receive specific ESOL support for a short pullout or push in during the school day. By closing the elementary portion of RIA you will be splitting up families over multiple schools, further lessening their support systems. Putting our students back to their home schools will eliminate their opportunities to thrive and as a result force them to resort back to living in survival mode. I understand this budget deficit is dire and that we all will have to endure some loss as a result, but please consider other areas where we may be able to restructure in order to protect this necessary program that is so important to some of our most vulnerable students.</p>
Mary Andrecolich-Montesano Diaz	Staff	RIA	<p>Dear RCSD Board Members,</p> <p>A little over 30 days ago on 2/27/20, I stood at the board podium and told all of you that the numerous speakers that were in the audience who came to speak on behalf RIA decided not to speak after hearing the statements made by President White and Superintendent Dade. President White stated, <i>“There is no, absolutely no initiative, policy or intention to remove or close down RIA,</i></p>

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			<p><i>alright....” Superintendent Dade stated, “I just want to reiterate President White’s sentiment, I hate when things that are said get taken out of context. I want to say it so abundantly clear so that it gets printed correctly, there is no proposal to close RIA for next year.” Please keep in mind that the budget situation was the same as it is now and yet we were still told there was no intent for removal or closure.</i></p> <p><i>With that being said, please imagine the shock, concern and anger that the entire RIA community is feeling right now. I believe that the excuse is going to be a play on words. Close and remove compared to reduction. However the current proposal of eliminating the K – 5 part of RIA is closing a part of RIA and reducing the numbers of students that can enroll in the 6 – 12 part of RIA is also removing the actual intent of RIA.</i></p> <p>أول وصول عند طلابنا به يشعر بما الشعور إلى بحاجة جميعاً لأنكم العربية باللغة أكتب الوقت هذا في من الجزء هذا قراءة أستطيع لا أنني سيقول كاتب أن هو سيحدث ما .أخرى بلدان من مدارسنا إلى طلابنا الإنجليزية باللغة تستمر وسوف رسالتي.</p> <p>I am sure that Ms. Ramos-Lopez (District Clerk) was not able to read the above that is written in Arabic and I am sure that she had to skip over it and had to continue with this letter in English. This is exactly what happens in our other schools at no fault of their own. Just like the teachers in the schools, Ms. Ramos-Lopez does not have the time to find an interpreter to assist with this letter which represents our students. She does not have the capacity to fully help all of you understand what was written and she is not fully prepared to differentiate</p>
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			<p>this meeting as she is bound by time and the goals of this meeting. This is exactly what the teachers in other schools face and again, at no fault of their own, as they still have full classes of students. That is exactly why RIA was created as a transitional program 10 years ago. A transitional program that has the capacity to streamline resources, differentiate materials, meet the instructional needs of students and fully prepare the staff to serve our most vulnerable students....newcomer students who speak low incident languages, most from refugee camps, all from war torn countries, most without formal education, most with zero English proficiency and all who need an extremely trauma free environment at all grade levels K through 12.</p> <p>President White, Vice-President Elliott and Commissioner Powell, all of you were on the board ten years ago and voted YES to the creation of RIA. Since that time, RIA has become the most decorated program/school in our district. We are the only school/program that has serviced students from suburban districts like Fairport, Webster and Newark and our data has shown that RIA is serving with the intent that it was created to do. I have kept my promise to “take care of our most vulnerable babies.”</p> <p>Using the CAP report to justify this proposal is also unfair to RIA. The concerns in the report represent what occurs to ENL students at other schools. I understand that under his leadership, Superintendent Dade wants all schools to be able to serve all students, in this case specifically ENL students. However, please keep in mind that the ENL student that RIA serves is a Newcomer ENL</p>
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			<p>student, there is a distinct difference and that is why they need a different setting for their first 2 years in our district.</p> <p>The reality is that other schools are not ready and they may never be ready to serve newcomer ENL students; not in the capacity that is truly needed to address the instructional needs, the linguistic needs, the social-emotional needs, acclimation needs, acculturation needs and the needs of their families. Again, that is specifically the reason RIA was created.</p> <p>Please vote no on the RIA proposal as the need is the same as it was 10 years ago for all newcomer students in grades K-12. In fact, the need is even greater in this very specific time that we are living in. The travel ban, high levels of xenophobia, COVID-19, and our current federal government leadership has created enhanced fear amongst our specific student population at this time. On behalf of my entire RIA community but most importantly, OUR students that we currently serve and should serve in the future, please vote no.</p>
Annie Tran Flesch	Staff	RIA	<p>Good evening Board Members,</p> <p>My name is Annie Tran Flesch and I am a math teacher and registrar at the Rochester International Academy. This is my tenth year in the district and my ninth year at RIA. I proudly stood in front of you all with my administrators, colleagues, and community members on February 27 with words prepared to share with you about how necessary RIA is. Board President Van White and Superintendent Dade confidently made us all believe that there was no plan in place to close RIA. A huge sigh of relief and happy tears were felt in that room</p>



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			<p>and in the community when we heard those words and song lyrics from Superintendent Dade.</p> <p>However, on March 26 you went back on your word and erupted a storm of chaos and heartache in our lives. RIA is absolutely necessary. RIA as a K-12 transitional program is essential for the district to support the unique needs of newcomer students arriving in the States. Learning a brand new language and a completely new way of life is definitely not easy. But RIA makes it easier for English Language Learners.</p> <p>We provide our students with sheltered instruction to build a safe and positive learning environment where they feel empowered to learn. We help our students build foundational skills in all content areas so that they can flourish and feel confident in their learning. We support their social and emotional needs and celebrate their diversity. In a time where this country is so divided, I am proud to be a part of a school community that stands united together.</p> <p>Acceptance, tolerance, respect, and a true sense of family can be felt in every classroom and can be heard in every hall way conversation among our students from all around the world.</p> <p>RIA is a beacon of hope in Rochester for so many students and their families. It is a program that has propelled refugees and immigrants to break the glass ceiling and to rise up confidently. We need RIA. The district needs RIA. The city of Rochester needs RIA.</p> <p>You have all supported us for nine years now. You have seen the achievements our students have made and continue to make. You witnessed the wonderful things we do in our school. Please keep the momentum going! Please do not vote to close RIA. RIA is necessary. Thank you so much for your time.</p>
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Alicia Castellon	Staff	RIA	<p>My name is Alicia Castellon and I am a kindergarten Teacher at RIA and 20 RCSD Veteran teacher. I am writing you today to impress upon you the necessity and importance of RIA. I will start by saying that I taught 11 years at General Otis #30 school. During the end of my time there, the refugee and immigrant population were beginning to arrive from countries in Africa. The ENL teacher would come to my kindergarten room with children from Burundi, ranging from 1st to 6<sup>th</sup> grade just so they could get the basics of calendar, weather, and sing songs. The students loved this time. She told them that they were coming to help kindergarten, so that they didn't feel ashamed. She knew what they needed. The general education teachers came to me for work that was more on the newcomer's grade level, not because they couldn't teach them, but what they were working on in class was so many grade levels above what the child needed. Most newcomer children need to start at the beginning of learning, with a brand new alphabet and number system. This is not what newcomers deserve. They deserve the time, attention, and patience that we provide at RIA to start their American education.</p> <p>I am a different kind of teacher now. Before I worked at RIA, I would have NEVER understood how to service a few newcomer students in my general education room of 21. It is like asking a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to suddenly teach kindergarten, or speech teacher to provide OT without the necessary training. RIA is the least restrictive environment for newcomers to start. It is a disservice to expect they will learn to the best of their ability otherwise.</p>
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			<p>RIA is needed because we have the time to make all children who are in their silent period feel comfortable enough to speak. We have training to create lessons using the SIOP model to best instruct our children. The basic teaching of students and vocabulary is second nature to teachers and learners in a general education school. At RIA we have to consider every word that comes out of our mouth and assume they may not understand it. We are able to take the time to introduce a book and all if it's basic vocabulary -like the word "tree." No, not all newcomers know the word tree, so we will explain it through pictures of trees from their countries, songs, and use their first language with the help of our interpreters. Our children are instructed using engage NY standards at their proficiency level, not the grade level we teach. We speak and teach at a different pace and we reteach if necessary. We're creating smart notebooks and google slide lesson plans for each lesson, every day that are 8-10 slides long. These lessons are catered to our children's specific needs. We create our own documents using appropriate fonts and the least amount of distraction on a page to get to the point of learning.</p> <p>I have been at RIA since the opening year and have taught, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and now kindergarten the past 4 years. It doesn't matter the number grade, the newcomer population needs the most basic academic and social skills the first few years of their education and time that a regular school cannot provide. Eliminating the elementary K-5 from RIA would mean that the basic building blocks of learning and social skills would be missing from the beginning of their education. There would be not time to acclimate, taking in to consideration their comfort level, trauma from war, fleeing their country and losing family members along the way. Teaching teeth brushing, sharing, how to sit in a chair or on the</p>
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			<p>carpet, even how to use a bathroom and blow their noses would be lost. The silent period will be much longer.</p> <p>School is closed, possibly indefinitely. Some students right now are losing their English just a few weeks out of school. Imagine the loss of English between now and when they may possibly be put in a new school without explanation, before they are ready or comfortable. A new form of PTSD or silent period may occur, along with a regression in their learning. Notice the emphasis on the word “time” throughout this letter, as it is the most important element we provide for newcomer students at RIA. Please do not make the decision to eliminate our youngest learner’s needs at RIA.</p>
Lisa Watson	Staff	RIA	<p>My name is Lisa Watson. This is my 7th year as a third and fourth grade teacher at Rochester International Academy. The staff and students at RIA have been an extension of my family for the past several years and I couldn’t be more grateful. Prior to RIA, I taught for 5 years at Nathaniel Rochester Community School with talented teachers and supportive administration. The RCSD is a second home to me, as NRCS and Wilson are my alma maters. I am a proud graduate of the city school district and absolutely love my students, as they are my own. Recently I have become disheartened over what I have always defended, stood up for, and called my family.</p> <p>Here we are, one month past when President Van White stated, “RIA is not closing.” The confirmation of that statement by Superintendent Terry Dade drew cheers from students and staff alike who attended that board meeting on February 27th.</p>

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			<p>A new proposal that states RIA K-5 is to close its doors upon the completion of this school year has been put on the table one month past the date you said in a public forum that RIA will not close.</p> <p>I can predict your rebuttal, “It’s NOT closing, it’s being reconfigured into a school.”</p> <p>Unacceptable.</p> <p>To write a proposal to remove a transition program for newcomers to America tells me that you don’t understand what RIA is for K-5, or that maybe you are ignorant to the needs of refugees. I don’t say that to be disrespectful, however, I need you to understand both points fully as you take this proposal into consideration. Only through education will ignorance be diminished in order to better serve our students.</p> <p>Rochester International Academy is a transition program for students who are newly arrived to the city of Rochester. Many of these students have limited education, no education, or interrupted education due to circumstances in their own countries beyond their control. They have been placed at RIA based upon data that shows they are not academically ready for a classroom of English Speakers.</p> <p>Let me introduce you to a student named Naomi. She arrived in Rochester from Uganda with no English and no schooling in her home country. Without prior education, she didn’t know what was acceptable in a school or classroom. She</p>
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			<p>struggled to keep her shoes on in the classroom because she never wore them in the refugee camp. Naomi would often leave the classroom without permission because she couldn't express her needs. Naomi had a host of trauma that she brought with her to America.</p> <p>With the support of the staff at RIA who has gone through specialized professional development to meet the needs of refugees, Naomi learned to keep her shoes on, gained the English language and learned societal norms that would keep her safe in her very vulnerable state.</p> <p>Naomi had a heart of gold and a passion for learning beyond words.</p> <p>Let us not be naïve enough to believe that every classroom at every elementary school in the RCSD has the capacity to reach the whole child, like Naomi.</p> <p>Now, let me introduce you to Tensaye, a student I had the privilege to work with at a prior school who arrived in Rochester NY as a 4th grader, before RIA had a 4th and 5th grade. Tensaye, similar to Naomi, came with no English and had been to school through 1st grade in Ethiopia (a very limited amount of schooling).</p> <p>Tensaye was also an eager learner. Tensaye would get pulled out of my classroom for her appropriate unit of time for part of my ELA time but needed to "fit in" to every other area the rest of the day.</p> <p>In Tensaye's class there were 3 students on behavioral support plans and a range of reading levels from 2nd grade to 5th grade.</p> <p>My heart broke for Tensaye. She was welcomed by some of the students in my classroom, but not all. She struggled. As her teacher, I struggled. I had no experience with English language learners and was managing a large class of students with varying needs and personalities. She made little gains that year and I will never forget how I didn't have the knowledge or experience to help her</p>
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			<p>acclimate to formal education as much as she deserved. I couldn't provide her the education her family came to America seeking. Tensaye was put into a classroom with minimal supports outside of the classroom teacher. That is a typical elementary classroom in the city school district.</p> <p>When I began teaching at RIA is when I learned to meet the needs of our specialized population. They are successful at RIA because of the structure of their research based English classes as well as the research based strategies that are used across the school at varying grade levels to meet the needs of our very vulnerable population. They are successful because they are in a safe learning environment with students who are experiencing the same fears and anxieties. Refugee learners cannot be compared to our students in typical classrooms. They all have needs but they are vastly different.</p> <p>Immersing the students of RIA, grades k-5, would be detrimental to their whole being.</p> <p>Superintendent Dade's philosophy is that refugees and newcomers should be fully immersed into a typical RCSD classroom. I promise you will see a decrease in academic growth from this population.</p> <p>For the emotional well-being of hundreds of refugee students I ask you vote this proposal down.</p>
Carrie Haymond	Staff	RIA	<p>The Rochester International Academy is a lesson for us all in how to see ourselves in the other. As you render the important decision for how RIA should operate in the 20-21' school year, please consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What would you want your beginning experience to be as a student in a foreign country?</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Would you seek to attend the same school as your brothers and sisters?</li><li>- Would you appreciate a cohesive delivery of instruction in every subject?</li><li>- Would you desire a principal and teachers who understood your specific needs as a newcomer to the language, culture, and systems of a new country?</li><li>- Would you want language coaches to help you comprehend instruction and assessments, and to assist you in communicating back your answers and ideas?</li><li>- Would your parents appreciate a skilled interpreter when speaking with a teacher whose language is very different from English?</li><li>- Would you desire the advocacy of a social worker, especially within a political regime that does not fully welcome your presence in the country?</li><li>- Would you want to be in a school that has a high success rate for graduation, or have the tools you need to become a valedictorian in other district schools?</li></ul> <p>As a 20 year veteran to public school teaching, I have worked in many different educational environments and witnessed the marginalization of students who are new to English. RIA's transition program, however, is a phenomenal immersion experience into a safe, loving, nurturing, and culturally relevant academic environment. How are you going to ensure that other schools are ready for these rare and beautiful seedlings? Will the soil be rich for the thriving? Can you answer the following questions BEFORE making the decision to discontinue RIA's program element and grades k-5?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Will the schools that receive RIA's ELL students ensure the cohesive delivery of a comprehensive lesson plan - one that is consistent in all</li></ul>
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			<p>subject areas across multi-grade levels? - one that accounts for crystal-clear content AND language objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Will the teachers be distinctively and culturally relevant and bring deep context, scaffolding and meaning into daily instruction?</li><li>- Will there be social workers and a multitude of language coaches to interpret and assist with parent teacher conferences and home visits?</li><li>- Will students and families new to the United States of America be seen and received with illuminating love, justice and sensitivity to their extraordinary circumstance?</li><li>- Will the schools have the technological resources and the expertise of a librarian who is a lifeline of information for this population of students?</li></ul> <p>Cutting grades k-5 and eliminating RIA’s transitional program would strip the heart of the culture and the progressive way RIA is able to serve this exceptional population. Please see yourself in the other. Please continue to support The Rochester International Academy as brightly as you have in the past, and vote “no” to the superintendent’s recommendations for the 20-21’ school year.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p>
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