

Speaker's Comment

Special Meeting Convening as CIGR Committee of the Whole April 21, 2020

Name	Affiliation	Topic	Comments
Adam Schmitt	Student	Interim Health Academy	<p>My name is Adam Schmitt and I am a student at Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy (YM/IHA). I am addressing the possible closure of YM/IHA. I believe that this program should not close because it is a great program. The teachers understand what we go through. The teachers honor us as strong people and give us emotional and moral support when needed. There is no bullying at YM/IHA and we are a family. A lot of us students at YM/IHA have a lot of similarities such as we understand each other. We are here for multiple reasons: (i.e family issues, bullying), a lot of us students have the same interests. "How do we understand each other?" you may ask. We respect each other and make everyone feel welcome at YM/IHA. Another thing you may ask is "How do you students have the same interests?" A lot of us love the world of the arts. (ie anything done on paper or a canvas, music and digital arts)</p> <p>I am 16 years old. I am a junior. I have been through abuse and neglect since I was 13, which landed me in foster care. My home school is Edison Career and Technology High School (Edison). I tried to vent to my (former) friends about what was happening to me and they just sat there and laughed at me. They didn't even try to help, except one person. He went through the same stuff as me but at a younger age. Now he is living with his grandparents. The reason I am at Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy is because I tried to commit suicide on Friday November 30, 2018. At the time I honestly felt that nothing was going to get better. That attempt (almost) succeeded. That landed me in a mental institution for</p>

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			<p>a month. I almost dropped out of school after I was discharged. My home school Edison heard about what had happened and sent a referral to YM/IHA. They accepted me. At first I didn't want to go there because I have done lots of moving from town to town, city to city and I had to adjust to the changes. I really didn't want to adjust to a new school at first. But when I found out that the program is accepting I went every day. At first it started out with going once or twice a week and that went to 3 times, 4 times, every day etc.</p> <p>I think that YM/IHA should not close because it is a great program. The teachers and administration have made me feel good about myself. It may not be fully cured but my dark side (depression, demons) has gone away for now. I want this program to stay open because there are students in the city that may not even realize it but they need this program. ( I can name a handful of my friends that need it, for instance.)</p> <p>I hope that you guys can come to a decision to keep YM/IHA open. Thank you for reading this email Adam Schmitt</p>
Nilda Nieves	Parent	Social Workers	<p>The Rochester City School District Superintendent’s proposed cuts to school social workers will harm the amount of student and family support provided in all schools. Rochester Early Childhood Education Center has one full time school social worker who has been helpful to many families. My child attends this program and our family has worked closely with the school social worker. <b>I am submitting this letter regarding</b></p>

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			<p><b>concern for the Superintendent's proposed cut of the full time school social worker at Rochester Early Childhood Education Center (RECEC) to half time school social worker.</b></p> <p>This will be a great loss to our program and the families she supports. When the Superintendent visited RECEC, he shared plans to replicate the program at two new preschools. It does not make sense to cut a position that has offered so much help to families.</p> <p>I am aware of the high numbers of chronic homelessness that many families have experienced and the school social worker has provided needed assistance that helped families become stable. Our school social worker provides a critical link between school, home, and the community; helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence.</p> <p>While I recognize the tough fiscal decisions the district is currently facing, the long term ramifications of allowing the needs of academically vulnerable students to go unaddressed in a budget cut is exponentially more costly to us as a society than committing to retain all current social workers in schools to meet the student needs present in our schools today. The time to invest in our children's future is now. I strongly urge these decisions to be made with the well-being of students as the highest priority. <b>Please do not make changes to our school social worker position. RECEC needs at least one full time school social worker.</b></p>
Viviana Reyes	Parent	School No. 20	<p>Hello. My name is Viviana Reyes. I am the mother of Jonathan and Jason Reyes. Both my children attend school 20 since they were in pre k. I am writing to you to let you know that I'm</p>

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			<p>against the idea of the school closing. My son Jonathan Reyes, is in 5th grade and is in a special eduacation class (12:1:1). School 20 is an important part of the children’s life. This is where they are learning and where they have created a safe and fun learning environment. To close the school is i’m going to devastate them and cause trauma in their life. Being that with the changes, they will have to get Costum to a new school, new teachers and new environment that they are not familiar with. Your not only taking away teachers jobs, your taking away students connections, friends and dreams. My kids are already nervous about the school closing. Tears run down their face. It kills me to know so many life’s will be affected if it really comes down to school 20 shutting down. Is just not right. I myself work in the educational field now for 5 years. How will this changes affect me as well? Please considered keeping school 20 open to our children and teachers, and staff. School 20 has been part of this neighborhood for soo so many years. Is an excellent school, full of love, and so many caring staff who have molded our kids into who they are today. Thank you for attention and time. Have a blessed evening.</p>
Tammy Ruiz and Mia Vargas	Parent	School No. 20	<p>I am a mother of a 3rd grader who goes to school 20. Hearing the news of possible closing has torn our families hearts into pieces!!! School 20 is all my daughter knows. The school staff every single one of them and the principle and vice principal became her family. This school has taught her so much and has done so much for her and not only her but every last student in there. The culture in that school is AMAZING the teachers are phenomenal. They listen and attend to every need of every student and parent! It’s so beautiful to walk in a</p>

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			<p>school and they literally know every name of every student and every parent. They know the children's likes and dislikes they notice everything. My daughter walked in with glasses and first thing she heard was wow Mia those are cool glasses ! I don't know if it's just me but when I was in school there was so many of us some teachers never noticed small things like that. That school isn't only a school but a family and a family who cares. No child is ever left behind they reinforce so much. The principle is such a beautiful soul she's so caring and wonderful. It's almost to the point of saying these kids need her she's the light at the end of the tunnel. The whole school is ! My daughter has learned so much academically. She's learned so much about different cultures she's taken home a lot and continues to surprise me with what she's learned! Please don't close our school our school means so much to us and our children. The school has done so much for all of our families helping us to raise and teach these children in ways we couldn't alone. Please leave school 20 alone and let this big wonderful family continue to learn and be their best ! Please Sincerely a heart broken mom and 3rd grader Tammy Ruiz and Mia Vargas</p>
CARRION AGAIN	Parent	2020-21 Budget	<p>Bethany CARRION AGAIN ..SO THE SUPERINTENDENT WORKS FOR THE BOARD THE BOARD WORKS FOR THE STUDENTS AN THE PARENTS..IM CURIOUS TO KNOW HOW THE SUPER CAN SAY HE DOESNT WANT SOMEONE IN THE CHIEFS POSITION AGAINST PARENTS STUDENTS AN THE BOARDS WISHES .BUT ADDED 4 ITT POSITION AN ADDED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE..REMIND ME WHO WORKS FOR WHO..I GUESS IM CONFUSED..HAVE A BLESSED DAY</p>

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Angelina Borrero	Staff	Special Education	<p>I just wanted to reach out as a parent of a student who attends 43 School, it saddens me to hear that the school has been chosen to close down for the upcoming school year. At what point do you upper people look a stability for these kids? Closing the schools are not going to make it any better, you're going to overpopulate classrooms and teachers are not going to be able to properly teach these kids, the way they need to be taught. As a parent I'm reaching out with concerns with a child who has an IEP and in her IEP she is to be in a special class setting, what are your plans for other kids not just my own who have an IEP but also what about all the other kids how is the teacher supposed to teach a class from it most likely going to have 30 kids or more? We've already had to cut teachers and now we're closing schools after cutting teacher which leaves a shortage and teachers and I'll less classrooms. Why don't you look at transportation as a parent who picks their kids up from school every day I've seen buses that only have me.6 kids on it where does that make sense? it doesn't at all. These kids have built relationships with these teachers just to be ripped apart from them. Just like kids nice ability at home they need some sort a stability in school. Hopefully everyone is willing to hear parents out and let us voice our opinion and how we feel about the situation. These kids are our future and we should want the best for them what needs to be looked at is why the city school district is so much in debt or why don't you guys cut from the top don't cut these teachers or close the schools. Hopefully you really take the time to read my email and hopefully someone can respond to me.</p>
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Trishia Barker	Parent	School No. 3	<p>Hi my name is Trishia Barker, I have 3 children in grades 2nd 4th and 6th grade at Nathaniel Rochester. I was pretty upset and concerned when I heard the school will be closing and turned into a middle school. My children first started at #1 school where they were forced to leave a school they grew to love. I moved them to #3 school to start over and now it's happening again how am I suppose to explain this to my kids? It's totally unfair and uncalled for. Once again they formed friendships and strong relationships with the amazing teachers there just to be thrown into another school and separated! First the district lays off a bunch of wonderful teachers from our school and that was very hard for us parents as well as the kids! Imagine the heartache the kids will feel when they have to leave a school they grew up in!! I hope you take in mind how this is going to effect teachers students and parents alike.</p>
Judith smart	Parent	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a parent (Judith smart) of Enisa Jimenez who is a 5th grader at Rise Community #106 who's teacher is Mrs. Follman and mrs Johnson of ROC City Players, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on my child and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of my child. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget. My daughter has been apart of this since last year. She was in Shrek Jr, 101 Dalmatians, Frozen Jr and she was supposed to be in the production of Willie Wonka. She is not a child who is big on sports the one thing she loves to do is sing, dance and make people smile. Since doing these shows she has really come out of her shell and not only made a lot of friends and found something she loves</p>

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			doing, but she found to wonderful teachers who are like another mother to her. These two teachers have been reaching out to these students and doing zoom meetings once a week. They always put there students first. It would be so heartbreaking if you not only take something like this away from my daughter but for these other children who love being apart of it. Please do not do this to these children or to these wonderful teachers they have. It's already been hard enough on these students who have been out of school for the last month and have not been able to go to school to see there friends and teachers but also losing out on rehearsal time because of COVID 19. I think these kids have gone through enough this school year, between losing teachers before Xmas break and watching my daughter get off the bus screaming and crying because one of her teachers was let go, to dealing with this virus and now talking about taking away the arts department. Think of these kids and the hurt you put on them before making such a harsh decision.
Ms. Rodriguez	Parent	School No. 3	I am a parent of two children whom have both attended school at Nathaniel Rochester #3 School. Both from kindergarten, my daughter has moved on while my son remains there in the 6th grade. Throughout the years my children have made many many friends whom still holds a special spot in their hearts today. Friends to include their classmates and of course the staff whom they continue to praise! Without them the children would not be whom they are today!! As a parent I reach out to ask that you reconsider your decision in making changes that will ultimately change lives. Those lives of our children, most importantly! Thank you kindly



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Bonnie Smith	Parent	Cuts in the Arts Department	<p>I am a parent of 2 RCSD students, one who attends school 52 and one who is at SOTA. My phone number is 585-797-7112. I am involved in my work with some suburban districts and it has become very apparent how much less our kids get in terms of supports and programs, than the kids in the suburban districts do. PLEASE don't take away the person who has been responsible to promoting increased arts participation across the district, the director of arts, Dominic Pickard. PLEASE help our students get the enrichment that is afforded to so many others across Monroe County. As a parent of ROC City Players, which Dominic brought to life, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on my older child and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the life of my child to make these cuts.</p> <p>Close some schools if needed, but don't cut services, enriching programs (likr ROC City Players), and supports (like social workers). I am all for making sure all the work is evidence based/best practice and people are working as efficiently as possible, but these are some of the highest needs students in Monroe County, and they need supports, services, and enrichment to mitigate trauma and historical lack of resources. PLEASE!</p> <p>We want to stay in the city. We love our home and our location. However, I cannot continue to withstand all of the instability that has occurred over the last couple of years. We need stability and a light at the end of the tunnel. A vision of hope. PLEASE!</p>
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Amanda Westbrook	Parent	School No. 43	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Amanda Westbrook. My son Nicolas Olavarria goes to 43 school. That school has been wonderful for him. He is a special needs child and since the beginning in kindergarten they have been helping him in every grade and he's in the 4th grade now. He has an IEP and every year every teacher he has had has been extremely helpful with him. I know you are thinking about closing this school due to what you believe are performance issues but I would hope you'd take into account that there are so many children in that school that are in Special Ed and believe me when I tell you, it's not easy... please please please reconsider... i understand there are financial issues going on but if you just hold out maybe things will change... you never know... but again please reconsider on 43 school... my 9 year old has been crying almost daily after hearing the news... thank u for listening.</p> <p>Amanda Westbrook</p> <p>Proud mother of a wonderful little 9 year old that has learned so much from that school who goes by Nico...</p>
Melissa Cushman	Community	Interim Health Academy	<p>I am a Program Supervisor for Youth and Family Partnership, a program in Monroe County that works with youth ages 5 to 17 in the home. The youth in our program have unmet mental health needs and trauma as well as the majority of their parents. Our referrals come from FACT, CPS and SPOA. The youth are often truant from school for significant periods of time, sometimes an entire school year. They usually don't have IEP's or 504 plans and fall through the cracks of RCSD. They are often forgot about. The main role of YFP is to address unmet needs</p>

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			<p>that manifest in truancy, mental health arrests, behavioral issues and safety concerns. Many youth have significant anxiety and do not leave their house for anything, not even to see family or friends. Our program was able to work with their PCP to recommend home instruction for a short period of time followed by a referral to IHA. If they were in a school and not successful, we would also recommend IHA due to the small setting and small classroom size. No other RCSD school has a specialty or a small setting to work with those with school phobia and anxiety. If this school closes, where do these youth go????? We should not have to put a youth in a school that does not meet their needs because that is all we have, BUT to place them in what they NEED, not what is available. Please reconsider closing this school. Many of our youth have been successful at IHA, that had not attended school in over ONE YEAR!! Please give our youth what they individually NEED, not what we HAVE available! Feel free to reach out to me at the number or email below.</p>
Ken Riemer	Community	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am an 8 year volunteer at the School Of The Arts. In 2013 with cooperation from the Administration we started an after school photography club. It took a couple of years but we grew to 40+ students. Photography is now offered at SOTA as curriculum. SOTA has won BEST IN SHOW for 2 of the last 3 years at THROUGH THE STUDENT LENS, a photography show of 17 high schools throughout the region. We won in direct competition with suburban districts. In the last few years our students have secured college scholarships in excess of 1 million dollars.</p>

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			<p>The students at SOTA show up with an interest in Art that started in Kindergarten. It continues to develop thru the rest of grade school and middle school. That interest in Art provides many of them the motivation to come to school, to keep coming to school and eventually graduate. That interest in Art helps them to get scholarships to attend colleges and universities they would otherwise be priced out of. Studies have proven that children who study Art do better overall in other subjects such as math and science. Art makes them better students and helps them to be better people. Better students graduate.</p> <p>The graduation rate at SOTA is the highest in the district. What more proof of the direct link of Art and learning do you need ? Knowing that Art Education bears fruit, I have to ask why you are intent on cutting 14 Art Educators? The Art positions you seek to eliminate will have a negative impact on the students and the District for years to come. Bad PR will be generated as these cuts will be headline news. RCSD CRUSHES ART will be coming to news broadcasts soon. You are also creating the perfect storm to reduce enrollment by incentivizing parents to either flee the district or turn to charter schools. Housing values will plummet as parents leave for the suburbs. Lower housing values mean lower tax revenues. Reduced enrollment means reduced state aid and reimbursement. Reduced aid will mean more budget cuts. Where will it end?</p> <p>I think we all accept that education is the key to ending the cycle of poverty. Let’s keep educating and look to make cuts in areas that don’t eliminate Art teachers. We need them.</p>
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Daniel Hart	Community	RIA	Please consider revising your most recent budget proposal to cut teaching staff and social workers. It is shortsighted and will further decrease public trust in our district. It doesn't seem to make sense to make these cuts as close to the classroom as this is. Why do the cuts to RTA staff represent almost 82% of the budget reductions when teacher staffing does not occupy this much of our budget as a whole?
Carolyn Birrittella	Community	2020-21 Budget Cuts	I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a parent of a sixth grader of ROC City Players, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made in my daughter's life and I believe that making cuts to the program would be a costly mistake in the life of my child. Through her participation with ROC City Players, my daughter has become more confident and independent. She has also made great improvements with her speech. She has found a new passion that is extremely important to her. There are so many wonderful students who have come together across the district to work together to create impressive performances. These students are motivated and dedicated and have found other students who also want to be productive with their free time. Thank goodness for all of the teachers and administrators who have made this possible. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.
Sean Smith	Community	Cuts to the Arts Department	As you drive home tonight, I encourage you to drive home in silence, no radio, no music, no podcasts, simply silence. After a long day, <b>do not</b> allow yourselves to appreciate the opportunity to relax from the stressful day with the sound of

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			<p>any music in your home. Additionally, require your family to refrain as well. Once the value of this art form (music) is apparent to your health and wellbeing, stop and recognize the value it brings to a student in a classroom who has had less time in their life to understand these same health defeating, daily life stressors and how much <b>Arts during their day is vital</b>. Along with my work in RCSD, I work with the largest school districts in the country, (NYC, Miami, Philly LAUSD, Austin...) all of them. I recognize your Director of Arts, Dominic Pickard, and his ability to support, nurture and grow his programs and teachers better than many other districts. While I understand your need to make difficult decisions, his role and leadership is unique, especially given the challenges of the teaching environment. I strongly encourage you to retain your Director of Arts, Dominic Pickard.</p>
Margaret Quakenbush	Community	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am writing with strong concerns about reductions in funding in the 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department.</p> <p>As President/Executive Director of The Hochstein School, I know first-hand the positive academic and social/emotional impact that arts education makes on RCSD students. This learning is essential to the creation of successful, engaged students who not only achieve well academically but also become good citizens who contribute to their community.</p> <p>In particular, the elimination of the position of Director of Arts will dramatically affect students' access to arts programs districtwide, as well as access to additional arts learning</p>

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			<p>opportunities in the community. The current Director, Dominic Pickard, has been essential to important relationships with community arts education programs such as Hochstein – helping to build a pipeline to student scholarships in our programs as well as to the after-school music program collaborative, ROCmusic, of which Hochstein is a founding member.</p> <p>Such a reduction will only create further structural inequities for students who most need this kind of learning. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>
Shiresa Hunt	Community	2020-21 Budget	<p>I am writing this letter to inform you about the importance of the social workers in the rcsd district. I understand that your job is to make certain sacrifices and budget cuts, but I think this one is a mistake. By cutting the number of social workers you are not only putting more loads on the existing workers who won't be fired, but you are also making choices for children who have no one to go to. A lot of students seek refuge in these social workers and who knows what will happen without them.</p> <p>I graduated with the class of 2017 thanks to one very important woman who was a social worker at East High school. I was in a bad place mentally and she was someone who I could confide in and someone I could trust. She was always there for me. She helped with my schooling, making sure I stayed on top of my work and made sure I was always alright. Often on days that were not going great, I was welcome to go to her office and just get my thoughts together and there was</p>

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			<p>never any judgement. I would not have graduated if not for that woman.</p> <p>This is the case for many high schoolers today. Sometimes they just need someone or somewhere they can let off steam and the stress of high school. Some teachers can be overbearing and not supportive and many social workers are relatable. With everything that's going on now social workers and counselors are needed more than ever. Cutting a good amount of social workers and only leaving a few will have many of the ones left stressed and swamped with too many kids.</p> <p>In conclusion, this budget cut is so much more than a few people losing their jobs. Kids who are already worried about grades and graduation and home life will have no one, existing workers will be overwhelmed by a new amount of kids they will have to be responsible for. When the schools open back up there will be chaos. Please think about all these factors when you cut these wonderful people and their jobs.</p>
Alicia Vazquez	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. I am an Instrumental music teacher that has taught at various schools (School #34, School #2, School #54, Vanguard Collegiate, Wilson Foundation Academy) and I have seen the impact that the arts makes on our Rochester City School District students.</p> <p>In my instrumental music settings, I expose students to music of their culture, we play jazz music, we play latin jazz music, we dance and sing to all genres of music, we learn about the history of the music, we create rhythms which includes the use</p>



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			<p>of math skills, we write reflections on our performances (which is ELA), we perform, and mainly we build community amongst ourselves first, and extend it to the families at our events. Music is a passion and joy of mine but bringing everyone together and allowing students to be successful at something aside from basic academics is mainly why I continue to fight for the RCSD to support the Arts. Aside from daily instrumental lessons, I open up my classroom to create African drumming ensembles, bucket drumming ensembles, and also dance classes for students interested.</p> <p>I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students if they lose out on the wonderful opportunity to express and develop as individuals through Arts. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget and keep the music and arts going.</p>
Cory Lynn Riemer	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am writing to you to express my concern regarding the proposed budget cuts to Visual Arts. I have proudly served the children of this district for five years. In that time, I have seen what our small department is capable of. Our staff consistently goes above and beyond for the children of Rochester. We reach and teach every student in our schools which very few staff members do. There are currently 80 art teachers who service the entire district of approximately 25,000 young people in grades K-12. Visual Arts is not overstaffed. These proposed cuts are disproportionate to proposed cuts in other Special Areas. I ask you to please reconsider cutting 14 talented, energetic and caring art teachers.</p>

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			<p>Every year when I am hanging the Student Art Show at Central Office employees I don't even know come up to me and tell me their favorite time of the year is when the walls of Central Office are covered with student artwork. Though Superintendent Dade hasn't experienced the Student Art Show in person, I know the members of the school board have. It is both gratifying and affirming to see students with huge smiles, dressed up, and standing in front of their artwork as their families take their pictures. As an art educator I know art is a necessary element of child development. The fine motor skills we take for granted as adults are developed through art from a very young age through grade school. Children learn to express themselves and develop both visual and verbal language through art. Art allows children to develop important social skills such as sharing and demonstrating empathy. Studies show that students who participate regularly in the arts perform better in areas such as science and math. Art can even improve the physical health and the emotional control/responses of children.</p> <p>We give students a chance to express themselves. We fill the hallways with colorful artwork. We give students a safe space to be themselves. We put tools and materials into our students' hands that many do not have at home. Art is the reason some students show up to school at all. Students tell me every week that art is their favorite part of their school day.</p> <p>Superintendent Dade's first of three "Rocks" addresses the need to change the narrative for the RCSD. Making cuts to Visual Arts doesn't change the RCSD narrative, it perpetuates it. It continues the cycle of inadequacy that our students live</p>
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			<p>with each day. Cutting nearly 20% of art teachers will have devastating effects on the children of this district. Our students already receive less time in Art than their suburban counterparts.</p> <p>Once again I ask you to please reconsider cutting 14 art teacher positions.</p>
Breanna Villane	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am writing because I don't agree with the proposed cuts for 2020-2021 and I am not sure you understand the impact the Arts have on our students. Trying to really describe and show evidence of how important the arts are to students cannot be effectively done in your 2 minute time limit. I could include studies done by Harvard or Missouri public schools showing a correlation of greater arts education led to fewer disciplinary infractions and higher attendance, graduation rates, and test scores. Or site a study done in Houston to increase arts access and how it found remarkable impacts on not just academics, but the students' social and emotional beings and school culture. Our students are more than just a test score, yet we are threatening taking away access to subject areas and experiences that show them they are more. Children learn to draw before they can write, when you look at "self-care" techniques some are to create (paint, draw, doodle, color). There is so much I want to say and evidence to site yet again, I only have 2 minutes to get a very important point across. I see over 300 students several times in a week, giving them access to as many supplies, techniques and artists as I can in 35 minutes. In that 35 minutes I am building relationships, showing students there is more than one answer to a question or problem, experimenting with materials, learning our soft</p>

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			<p>skills like sharing and communicating with others, while creating an art piece that they are proud of. Students learn that they need to work through the problem and preserve. I actually had one of my 5<sup>th</sup> grader say to me “Ms. Villane you inspire me” I said “that is so sweet but how is that?” She said “you always push me to work hard and push through” I said “what word is that? It connects to our monthly value” She said “perseverance!” We empower students with a voice, give them a sense of purpose and ownership. We provide students with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that they need in the ever changing world. We want them to be college or career ready and so many industries are stating that the creative thinking skills are lacking and decreasing. Why do you think that is?</p> <p>Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget. Thank You</p>
Todd Dennis	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a teacher at Rise Community School and also an instructor of the Pride of Rochester Marching Band, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget. At Rise Community School we already lost numerous positions, including on full music teacher during last years budget cuts. This school was meant to be an Arts Magnet School offering different enrichment opportunities for students as well as testing a new model of how to run the school. Midyear budget cuts have already ended some of</p>

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			<p>pilot programs we were implementing. Please reconsider your budget, our students will feel the brunt of these budget cuts, losing opportunities that could stop the gains we worked together on.</p>
<p>Carrie Howe</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Cuts to the Arts Department</p>	<p>Do you remember your own public elementary education? Do you remember what it was like to look forward to going to school because it was a 'gym day' or a 'music day' or 'library day' or 'art day'? There is a reason why they call these subjects 'specials'. They do not happen every day and students look forward to their favorite ones. It IS the reason students want to get up and go to school many times. It is also the reason some students are willing to try their best at other subjects. In an educational system such as the RCSD, that prides itself on reaching students as individuals, it behooves us to hook students by any means possible and get them to attend school on a regular basis. The special subjects do exactly this. In addition, the specials are often the one area that young students feel free to express themselves with their innate talents, or at least, inclinations. I can tell you that was the case for myself as well as my own three children and I have no reason to believe it was otherwise for you or our current RCSD students. They deserve the best we can give them. They deserve what other districts provide for their students. Cuts to the Arts department (or library or physical education for that matter) would be a step in the wrong direction. Our students need MORE time with the special subjects, not less. Students need to learn to think creatively, learn to work together as a group, explore the potential of a variety of media and materials so that they will today, and in the future, feel</p>

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			completely at ease trying new things and exploring possibilities in a wide range of subjects. The visual arts help students feel proud of their accomplishments and give them a reprieve during their day from their academic subjects. Students tell me all the time that “Art” is their favorite subject. Please do not take that away from them. Itinerant teaching is not the answer. I urge you not to cut back on art teachers, and thus the arts. Our students deserve more not less.
Andrew Hargrave	Staff	2020-21 Budget	I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a Music Teacher of Rochester Early College International High School, and as a member of the community, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.
Eric J. Williamson	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	I am writing in response to the proposed cuts to the RCSD Arts Department. These cuts are extremely detrimental to our students and their families. Students that traditionally struggle with academics, have incredible family stressors/demands, and those working through their own gender and identity, often use the Arts as a means of expression, escape, and healing. I myself, as a struggling child of poverty, found that art, music, and theater were places where I could feel express myself, connect with others, and learn new skills in a safe, open and nurturing environment.

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			<p>The recent events, spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic, have left our students disconnected, and isolated from people and places where they felt appreciated and enabled. Cutting these positions would further damage the delicate relationships that students have built, and are dependent upon, as they reenter the academic setting and try to establish a sense of normalcy.</p> <p>Dominic Pickard, and the group of staff under his leadership, has done an outstanding job of managing and growing the Arts Department/facilitating, promoting district ensembles, clubs and programs/recruiting more students to join these than ever before/and unifying department members across the arts disciplines. I have worked in this district for 20+ years in the RCSD, with previous Arts Department leaders, and find his commitment, approach and love for our students, staff and programs to be above and beyond expectations. Removing his leadership from this amazing group of students and educators would be devastating.</p> <p>Please reconsider cuts to the RCSD Arts Department. These programs and clubs are lifelines for some of our most ostracized and marginalized students. The connections they form with teachers and mentors can be life changing. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Maria Hambas	Staff	2020-21 Budget Cuts	<p>I understand these times are indeed very difficult, however, I am in disagreement with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, <u>particularly in the Arts Department</u>. As an Instrumental Music Teacher, serving 2 fine</p>

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			<p>schools in our district, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students, particularly with our City Wide Concerts, District Musicals, The Pride of Rochester Marching Band and Art Shows. How are we to continue these amazing ventures without our Department Director and the outstanding teachers who are slated to be cut?</p> <p><u>As a long time RCSD educator and <i>city resident</i>, I have a vested interest in this community. It is VITAL that we keep our Arts Programs alive and well, so our students have a means of expression.</u> I believe these cuts would be a costly mistake for our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>
Molly (Mary Ellen) Sanchez	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As the general music teacher at Abelard Reynolds School 42, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>Losing our department head, Dominic Pickard, would erode the effectiveness of our programs, and we would lose our voice in championing for the importance of the Arts in our district. As the beloved late congresswoman Louise Slaughter has said, children in the arts score significantly higher on SAT tests. Children need the Arts. Their lives are richer; their horizons are expanded. Our director has enabled my classroom</p>



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			<p>to have enough ukuleles, keyboards, and xylophones for every child. These are acquisitions I could never have done on my own. My students are now enjoying a musical experience which is much more equitable to those students in surrounding suburban districts. Previously, children had to wait their turn on a handful of instruments. Due to having a strong arts director who has fought for our student programs, my students have participated in all city Band and Choir, and in All City Musicals, such as the very excellent “Schrek” and “Frozen.” These experiences have become a key focus in their lives, often leading to auditions for School of the Arts, and scholarships for private lessons. The arts CAN be the difference between a student engaged in education, or a child without focus.</p> <p>Without a strong director, and fully staffed department, the RCSD could easily become a wasteland for the arts. What a disservice our students, and how wrong to deny them access to the highest quality programs!</p>
Jennifer Woods	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am writing today to express my concerns for the cuts and position reductions to our Visual Arts Department. I have worked for the RCSD as an art teacher for over 20 years. I have taught in many different schools and have seen many different views at all the schools which I have been assigned. I am finally at School 7 in an ideal full time schedule not only working in a wonderful facility, but more importantly, great staff and students where I am establishing relationships.</p> <p>Currently, you have slated to cut our department of 80 full time visual art teachers and 1 part time sub contract position</p>

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			<p>with the proposal is to eliminate 14 art teachers and drastically reduce many of the positions remaining for the upcoming school year. Visual art teachers service the entire school the same as their other special subject colleagues, yet this proposal targets visual art specifically.</p> <p>When looking at the new schedules after you cut the 14, nearly every single remaining position is being reduced, making a large amount of the remaining teacher's to be itinerant between multiple buildings.( I can't even imagine the scheduling nightmare this will cause) . One teacher will be traveling between two or more buildings every other day. I personally have taught in 3 schools in one school year and it was the most difficult year of teaching because of the setbacks of relationships that we all know is so important. Not only with students, but to be able to have time to collaborate with staff members and feel a part of a team in a building. We've done this. It isn't the best for our students or for our own morale which then affects the students. I am saddened that it is slated that I will be put back in the position of needing to split my time and trying to give my best to multiple school families. As an Itinerant teacher, we do the job of 2 or 3 jobs together by adding to the school culture and community, hanging artwork, holding art clubs, giving kids a safe environment or when they need extra support or attention, helping with family gatherings at school and attending parent conferences - - which are often on the same night as well as missing important things that happen on days they are not in the building.</p>
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			<p>Art is absolutely essential when educating the whole child, we have seen document after document throughout the years proving this. I have many children that have told me time after time, the only reason they came to school today was because they knew they had art club or art class.</p> <p>These cuts are the exact opposite of cutting as far from the classrooms as possible. Please reconsider these staffing reductions and position cuts in the visual art department.</p>
Mary E. Robey	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As an instrumental music teacher at The Children's School of Rochester, #15, I have seen the impacts that our Arts programs have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that cutting any of these programs or positions would be a costly mistake for our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>Our department offers so many positive curricular and extracurricular opportunities for RCSD students. These experiences are often the driving force to encourage students to attend school, stay off the streets after school hours, and boost self-esteem, school pride, and a sense of community. Diminishing the Arts in any way will hurt individual students, school communities, and will negatively impact many other academic areas for years to come. Please make cuts as far away from students as possible!</p>

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Zachary Arenz	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>My name is Zach Arenz and I am a music teacher at Flower City School #54. When I was in school, music was my saving grace. I didn't particularly like school, my teachers, or my peers. But I did like music. Music was the reason that I came to school each day. You currently have the choice to make school a place that students want to be; a place where they feel safe and supported. I am broken seeing the most recent budget proposal.</p> <p>My music education really took off when I was in 4th grade. I was fortunate enough to begin in our school's band program. Through those elementary years, I had band rehearsals twice each week, plus a separate lesson. When I got to middle school and high school, it was like the gates of Heaven opened because I got to have band rehearsal everyday, plus a lesson. In seventh grade, I also joined the school choir. I didn't love it like I loved band, but it was yet another opportunity to make music. During my senior year, I was a member of every musical group in our school. I loved it! Music in my education was the sole reason for why I am where and who I am today.</p> <p>In the current proposed budget, you are looking at reducing the allotment of a full, rigorous arts education, among several other areas, for students across our district. You may be taking away reasons for kids to show up. Yes, all students in our school will still get general music and/or art, but the beauty of classes like music and art often lies outside of it. It lies in the spaces reserved for performances, where it is seen and heard by others. It lies in the space when parents and community</p>
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			<p>members come back to school to see their babies perform on stage. This year, I was fortunate enough to add two new ensembles to my schedule and I had a third ensemble on the horizon for next school year. Each of those is slated to be cut.</p> <p>At Flower City School #54, we host several community nights every year. Between open house, ELA or Math night, school dances, and the like, we never see a turnout of parents, students, and families like we do when it's concert night! Sadly, with the way the budget is slated we are looking at a drastic reduction in the amount of ensembles I can teach, rehearse, and shine in our community.</p> <p>Our school is trying so hard to move ahead. In the four years I've taught with the students and teachers at #54, I've seen struggles and I've seen achievements. But as we continue to be provided with less and less each year, it becomes harder and harder. We will not be able to get ahead and succeed if you continue taking away from us.</p> <p>I urge you to very carefully consider the lifelong effects that your decisions will have on our students and be mindful of Superintendent Dade's promise to the RTA and community in September 2019 to keep cuts <i>as far from the students as possible</i>. Reductions in music, art, PE, speech, ESOL, special education, and social work are NOT how progress is made.</p> <p>To close, I will remind you of these 20 <i>facts</i> about music education and why it is so critical to our students and their futures as members of our global, 21st century society, which</p>
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			<p>are posted to the National Association for Music Education’s website.</p> <p>Nearly everyone enjoys music, whether by listening to it, singing, or playing an instrument. But despite this almost universal interest, many schools are having to do away with their music education programs. This is a mistake, with schools losing not only an enjoyable subject, but a subject that can enrich students’ lives and education...</p> <p><b>1. Musical training helps develop language and reasoning:</b> Students who have early musical training will develop the areas of the brain related to language and reasoning. The left side of the brain is better developed with music, and songs can help imprint information on young minds.</p> <p><b>2. A mastery of memorization:</b> Even when performing with sheet music, student musicians are constantly using their memory to perform. The skill of memorization can serve students well in education and beyond.</p> <p><b>3. Students learn to improve their work:</b> Learning music promotes craftsmanship, and students learn to want to create good work instead of mediocre work. This desire can be applied to all subjects of study.</p> <p><b>4. Increased coordination:</b> Students who practice with musical instruments can improve their hand-eye coordination. Just like playing sports, children can develop motor skills when playing music.</p> <p><b>5. A sense of achievement:</b> Learning to play pieces of music on a new instrument can be a challenging, but achievable goal. Students who master even the smallest goal in music will be able to feel proud of their achievement.</p>
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			<p>6. <b>Kids stay engaged in school:</b> An enjoyable subject like music can keep kids interested and engaged in school. Student musicians are likely to stay in school to achieve in other subjects.</p> <p>7. <b>Success in society:</b> Music is the fabric of our society, and music can shape abilities and character. Students in band or orchestra are less likely to abuse substances over their lifetime. Musical education can greatly contribute to children’s intellectual development as well.</p> <p>8. <b>Emotional development:</b> Students of music can be more emotionally developed, with empathy towards other cultures. They also tend to have higher self esteem and are better at coping with anxiety.</p> <p>9. <b>Students learn pattern recognition:</b> Children can develop their math and pattern-recognition skills with the help of musical education. Playing music offers repetition in a fun format.</p> <p>10. <b>Better SAT scores:</b> Students who have experience with music performance or appreciation score higher on the SAT. One report indicates 63 points higher on verbal and 44 points higher on math for students in music appreciation courses.</p> <p>11. <b>Fine-tuned auditory skills:</b> Musicians can better detect meaningful, information-bearing elements in sounds, like the emotional meaning in a baby’s cry. Students who practice music can have better auditory attention, and pick out predictable patterns from surrounding noise.</p> <p>12. <b>Music builds imagination and intellectual curiosity:</b> Introducing music in the early childhood years can help foster a positive attitude toward learning and curiosity. Artistic</p>
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			<p>education develops the whole brain and develops a child’s imagination.</p> <p>13. <b>Music can be relaxing:</b> Students can fight stress by learning to play music. Soothing music is especially helpful in helping kids relax.</p> <p>14. <b>Musical instruments can teach discipline:</b> Kids who learn to play an instrument can learn a valuable lesson in discipline. They will have to set time aside to practice and rise to the challenge of learning with discipline to master playing their instrument.</p> <p>15. <b>Preparation for the creative economy:</b> Investing in creative education can prepare students for the 21st century workforce. The new economy has created more artistic careers, and these jobs may grow faster than others in the future.</p> <p>16. <b>Development in creative thinking:</b> Kids who study the arts can learn to think creatively. This kind of education can help them solve problems by thinking outside the box and realizing that there may be more than one right answer.</p> <p>17. <b>Music can develop spatial intelligence:</b> Students who study music can improve the development of spatial intelligence, which allows them to perceive the world accurately and form mental pictures. Spatial intelligence is helpful for advanced mathematics and more.</p> <p>18. <b>Kids can learn teamwork:</b> Many musical education programs require teamwork as part of a band or orchestra. In these groups, students will learn how to work together and build camaraderie.</p> <p>19. <b>Responsible risk-taking:</b> Performing a musical piece can bring fear and anxiety. Doing so teaches kids how to take risks</p>
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			<p>and deal with fear, which will help them become successful and reach their potential.</p> <p>20. <b>Better self-confidence:</b> With encouragement from teachers and parents, students playing a musical instrument can build pride and confidence. Musical education is also likely to develop better communication for students.</p> <p><a href="https://nafme.org/20-important-benefits-of-music-in-our-schools/">(https://nafme.org/20-important-benefits-of-music-in-our-schools/)</a></p> <p><b>Please make decisions that support our children, not undermine them and their future!</b></p>
Cindy Beagley	Staff	Budget Cuts	<p>I am a speech language pathologist with the RCSD and have been employed there for almost 2 years. I am writing to request you do not pass Superintendent Dade's current proposal to cut more jobs in order to help close the budget gap. At a time that our district needs to close this gap, I believe these additional cuts will cause us to lose the progress that has been made toward increased graduation rates. Thank you for your time and reading my message, I understand this is a very difficult position for everyone.</p>
Taylor Johnson	Staff	Cuts to Music Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a music teacher and head director of #33 school and ROC City Players, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>

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			<p>I have seen so many students lives changed because of the music department we currently have. I know one child who was mute his entire life, last year he was a 5<sup>th</sup> grader. I encouraged him to join our theater program at RISE and by the end of the year he was speaking full, complete, LOUD sentences. 6 years in the making, and theater is what got him to talk. Dominic Pickard is the force behind the changes and excellence we have accomplished year after year. I am not sure if you know this, but we have been nationally recognized because of our music department 2 years in a row, and with these changes we will be going backwards, not forward. Our children are going to be HIGHLY affected by YOUR choices to cut the music department in any regards, and isn't that the entire reason we are here?</p> <p>I know you are trying to do the best you can, and I believe Mr. Dade is trying his hardest to do what is best for our district. But please, look at other options that cut away from our students so fiercely, and painfully; they don't deserve it.</p>
Dave Turek	Staff	Suggestion for Budget Cuts	<p>Hello, my name is Dave Turek and I am an itinerant Physical Education teacher at #34 and #9 schools. I turned 50 last September and as of June 30th, 2020, I will have 28 years and 6 months of service. Have you entertained offering an EARLY incentive to teachers in similar situations as myself? The incentive that was offered last year basically applied to people that were already eligible to retire.</p>

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			<p>Now I'm not a budget expert (I will refrain from a joke here) but "getting rid" of higher paid teachers in favor of teachers with lower salaries seems like it would save some money and lessen teacher cuts. I know that it is not that simple and there are many variables to consider but at face value, it seems like a viable option. Personally, if you offered me \$50,000 (same as last year's incentive), bridged me to 60% FAS and made retirement payments effective July 1st, 2020, I would leave in a heartbeat. Just a suggestion. Thanks for your time and consideration.</p>
Alexandra L. Pitnell	Staff	Cuts to the Music	<p>I am writing in regards to the elimination of the Director of the Arts position within the Rochester City School District for the 2020-2021 School Year Budget. I have taught beginning band at School 46 and School 54 for six years. During this time, I have had the privilege of working with Director of the Arts, Mr. Dominic Pickard, in programs like the Pride of Rochester Marching Band and the annual Citywide Music Festival. The proposed cut of Mr. Pickard's position would be a grave disservice to our students and my colleagues. This would most certainly cause the advancement and enjoyment of the arts for our students to decline and possibly disappear.</p> <p>In a study done within our own district this past year, it was proven that students who participate in pull out band lessons have a higher attendance and achievement rate than that of their peers who do not participate in these lessons. Mr. Pickard went above and beyond to collaborate with the Office of Accountability to analyze this RCSD student data. In addition</p>

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			<p>to being a reflective and responsive leader, he has made many connections with the local community to raise funds to give our students the best arts experiences during and outside of the school year. Several of these local businesses and organizations that have supported our students are not limited to the Rochester Educational Foundation, Three Heads Brewing, Swan Market, Swift Water Brewing, Tap and Mallet, Flower City Improv, Eastman Theatre, Eastman Pathways Program, and Hochstein School of Music.</p> <p>To support our music and art programs, it is imperative that our leader and director have background knowledge of what is needed to supply these highly specialized areas. Mr. Pickard works tirelessly to make sure that all of these needs are met. This past summer, he organized a complete rewriting of music and art curriculum to align with the National Core Arts Standards. This new curriculum was written and designed by teacher leaders within our district with urban teaching in mind. Mr. Pickard also secured the Title IV-A grant that allowed our general music teachers to replace broken instruments and teach our music curriculum with integrity. Please reconsider this devastating cut to our department.</p>
Allison Gowanlock			<p>I am writing today to share with you a personal experience I had that exemplifies the importance of the Foundations Language Enrichment Program.</p> <p>The Foundations Language Enrichment Program, Foundations for short, is an evidence-based language enrichment program that was developed and is implemented by speech-language therapists. This program is currently</p>

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		<p>available to all Kindergarten and first grade students throughout the whole district, and we are hoping to expand the program to benefit second grade students. Foundations ensures that every student receives the skills necessary to demonstrate academic readiness and success with emphasis on pre-reading skills, literacy, and social language development.</p> <p>The Kindergarten lessons are divided into two categories, basic linguistic concepts (e.g., first, next, last, above, below, next to, etc.) as well as phonemic awareness. A typical lesson looks something like this: introduction to the topic, instruction of a sign language sign that corresponds with the topic, some physical movement to keep the busy minds focused, a story, questions, and then a fun activity related to the concept. This is a great multimodal approach to teaching language that keep young students engaged and eager to learn.</p> <p>Now to my personal experience. This year I have the privilege of having three first graders on my caseload who are full of energy and excited to learn. Back in the fall, I was in the middle of a following directions activity. I gave them each a 1-2 step directions and the students had to complete the direction to the best of their ability. I started the students off with simple directions that I thought they would be able to follow with no problem to get them acclimated to the task. I told one student, “Put the apple next to the leaf.” I thought she would</p>
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			<p>be able to do this direction with no problem because I knew she had learned the concept “next to” in kindergarten through the Foundations program. I watched as she mouthed the direction quietly to herself. She had a puzzled look on her face. I assumed one of two things, either she would do the direction wrong, or, she would ask what “next to” meant. Instead, she surprised me. The young student took her hands and did the sign “next to”- a skill that she learned through Foundations in kindergarten. Then, looked at me, repeated the sign and clarified “next to”? I said yes, and she was able to follow through with the direction of putting the apple next to the leaf. I then asked the student where she learned the sign language from, and she simply replied, from Mrs. W in kindergarten.</p> <p>This young student learned valuable basic concepts that we likely take for granted through the Foundations program. At such a young age, she was able to problem solve her way through her own question. Without the help of Mrs. W, the speech therapist, who knows if the student would have been able to carry through with the direction. This skill is important not only in the therapy room but also in the classroom. Foundations has developed basic vocabulary and language comprehension skills that support academic performance across a variety of domains.</p>
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			<p>Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story. I hope this story brings awareness to the importance and need of the foundations program.</p>
Ismael Sanchez	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As an art teacher of Leadership Academy for young men, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>In the 2019-2020 school year I received the channel 8 news Golden Apple teacher award. Leadership Academy truly appreciate how the visual art change the culture of the school. By fueling a student's imagination and creativity, the arts enhance a student's problem-solving and critical thinking skills, which aid their learning in other subject areas. An education in the arts exposes students to a variety of cultures while enriching their learning experience and teaching them how to be empathetic, tolerant and open to working with others, all necessary skills for success in a multi-cultural society.</p> <p>We are just getting started with the arts at leadership Academy, it would be devastating if you take that away from the students. Thank you</p>

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Jillian Hauck	Staff	Cuts to Arts Department	I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a Visual Arts Teacher of Wilson Foundation Academy, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Throughout my 4 years of teaching in the RCSD I have taught Art in 4 different schools, two positions were art on a cart. Did that keep me from doing my best to reach and teach all of my students art? Absolutely not. Education in the arts teaches our students so much more than how to make pretty pictures. It teaches our students resilience, persistence, empathy, self-expression, reflection, and problem solving. You want to create well-rounded students who are ready to take on anything that comes at them, keep the arts department. Arts education is beyond important and should be recognized as such. Additionally, I ask you all to take a moment to reflect on the fact that during unprecedented times all of us lean into the arts in one way or another; the puzzles or coloring books you are completing, the music you’re listening to, the movies and television shows you are streaming, even the house you live in and the couch on which you sit, all of these would not be available to you were it not for artists and creative people. Nevertheless, time and time again, the arts are one of the first departments to see the chopping block when finding places to “trim the fat” when balancing the budget. Let’s change that narrative and find somewhere else to “trim the fat”. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.
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Dr. Rosa Mazurett Boyle	Staff	2020-21 Budget	<p>I respectfully want to address issues that may seem like a remedy now but lack long term vision, as per other poor budget years. Clearly, RCSD schools did not entered receivership status because of teachers. Yes there is lot of blame to go around but at the end of the day we are complicit in failing our students.</p> <p>The following are points to consider during the current budget decision making process:</p> <p>1. Stop paying the school board a salary 2. Increase support for schools that are preforming well, such as East, providing high quality education 3. Provide support for Bilingual, ELLS, and SPE students and teachers. If these students do not graduate the district will continue to fail now and in the future -see historical data and the distinguished educator report. By proving support to these student populations we will INCREASE ELA scores. There are proven methods that work for ELLS, bilinguals and traditional urban students that have showed positive increases in passing rates. Defunding will push the district back to low graduation rates.</p> <p>4. Increase literacy instruction. Better reading and writing skills will have a huge impact on graduation- if students cannot read (background knowledge, vocabulary &amp; expressive language) content subject gains will be minimal is the sciences, math, social studies, ELA, foreign languages and career tracks/TCTs.</p> <p>5. Maintain high level of social, emotional and physical support for our students. Our children experience untold challenges daily which are clearly outlined in the research literature. Teachers cannot go at it a lone.</p>
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			Budget challenges are not new to this school district. However, decisions to mitigate immediate money problems have left a legacy of negative effects for generations of Rochester City School students and families. As a RCSD graduate and educator I can give witness to them. We need leaders with long term visions. We need leaders that promote plans and decisions for a bright future. You are in that position, let's make it happen!
Sheila Eagan	Staff	ELLs in the RCSD--a response to Board of Ed meetings	<p>My name is Sheila Eagan and I am an ENL teacher at Helen Barrett Montgomery School 50. I have been teaching since 2006. I started my career teaching middle school Spanish, and in 2013 I made the switch to teaching ENL. Since that switch, I've taught everything from Kindergarten to high school to working in the Youth and Justice Program in MCJ. I have loved every minute of it and every grade level—they all have their pros (and cons) and I may have learned more from my students and their families than they have from me.</p> <p>I'm writing with concerns about the way this school board speaks about our ELL population at large and RIA more specifically.</p> <p>Let's start with the obvious and indisputable: RIA is amazing. They provide safe space for newcomer students to learn. They have on-demand translation and home language coaches available to students and families. They work so hard to create valuable learning experiences and help students transition into American school and culture, while still celebrating home cultures and languages. They do valuable work at RIA.</p> <p>But RIA is not exclusive in their value. They are not special because they work with newcomer students. Every</p>

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			<p>year, I teach newcomers. Every year, I work with students who speak little to no English, have little or limited experience with formal schooling, who need to learn customs and cultural expectations of the United States. Every year, my ENL teacher colleagues and I also work hard across the district to create valuable learning experiences and help students learn more about American school and culture. We do it with much more limited resources than RIA (some schools MUCH more limited as you will see below).</p> <p>Hearing the way you talk about RIA is heartbreaking and frustrating to me. The way you say that students can’t survive without RIA makes it feel like we, the ENL teachers in ALL the other schools in our district serving these same types of students, are not as competent, not as hard working or not as good. Newcomers could never survive under our tutelage. But they do.</p> <p>See me.</p> <p>See my kids.</p> <p>They survive.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>They THRIVE with me, too.</p> <p>The ENL teachers in other schools are constantly being asked to do the same things that RIA does—but with less supports. And we do it. And I can’t speak for other schools, but I can tell you that at 50, we do it exceedingly well. I am proud every day to work in a school with an ENL team that works so hard to service SO many kids—not just academically but socially and emotionally as well.</p> <p>Listening to all of you speak about the ELL population in the RCSD, it truly seems to me that there are misconceptions</p>
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			<p>about who our ELLs are and where they attend school. ELLs are not just at RIA. Newcomers are not just at RIA. They are spread throughout our district. Students of every proficiency level are in every school. For an eye opening experience, ask to see the ratio of ENL teachers to students for each building. I don’t know what it currently is, and as a teacher it’s very difficult to get this data. In 2017, when we at 50 were trying to find a way to make things equitable for ALL ELLs district-wide, this is a sample of what we could find for student to teacher ratios:</p> <table><tr><th>School</th><th>ELL Students</th><th>ESOL Teachers</th><th>Student: Teacher Ratio</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>17</td><td>1.4</td><td>12.14:1 (13:1)</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>38</td><td>4</td><td>9.5:1 (10:1)</td></tr><tr><td>52</td><td>12</td><td>2</td><td>6:1</td></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>192</td><td>6</td><td>32:1</td></tr><tr><td>58</td><td>69</td><td>3.4 + vacant</td><td>15.68:1 (16:1)</td></tr><tr><td>20</td><td>23</td><td>1.6</td><td>14.37:1 (15:1)</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>18</td><td>2</td><td>9:1</td></tr></table> <p>All those numbers may not mean much to someone not doing this work every day. So what does this look like in practice? This looks like me having a case load this year of 36. I have classrooms with 1-2 ELLs, that I service for 50 minutes. I leave them to go to a classroom with 15 that I see for 40 minutes. This is happening across the district. Some ELLs see</p>	School	ELL Students	ESOL Teachers	Student: Teacher Ratio	1	17	1.4	12.14:1 (13:1)	4	38	4	9.5:1 (10:1)	52	12	2	6:1	50	192	6	32:1	58	69	3.4 + vacant	15.68:1 (16:1)	20	23	1.6	14.37:1 (15:1)	10	18	2	9:1
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			<p>an ENL teacher in a small group. Others see an ENL teacher in a large group. I don't care about my caseload on a personal level. Give me 100 kids. I care about it for them. Because other kids aren't being asked to learn in the same crowded groups and with the same limited time.</p> <p>This is not acceptable. We have to do a better job of allocating services equitably for our students. We all know that we would absolutely want our children in the schools with the lowest student to teacher ratios. It's hard not to see these numbers and feel that we are taking advantage of our families with limited English and hurting some of our students at the benefit of others.</p> <p>The distinguished educator reporter from Dr. Aquino from last year states: "There is a lack of coordinated professional development and other structures to ensure that all district schools, rather than just the targeted programs (e.g., the Rochester International Academy; the Bilingual Language and Literacy Academy; and other bilingual and ELL-specific programs, such as programs for Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education), provide ELLs with appropriate instructional supports and use methodologies tailored to the needs of ELLs." He was not saying RIA was bad. He was saying our district needs to step up to provide equitable opportunities for all ELLs.</p> <p>Instead of only focusing on what RIA does, instead let's look at what other schools ARE doing, and doing with limited resources in comparison. Let's get all of our ELLs the services they need and deserve, instead of just the lucky few who are able to secure spots in RIA.</p>
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			<p>If you have any further questions or would like to discuss any of this further, I would love to. I have spent every year since I've been in this district teaching ENL trying to find allies who can actually impact meaningful change to support ALL ELLs. Please be my ally?</p>
Stephanie Ribis	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a <u>Vocal-General Music Teacher of Pinnacle School No. 35</u>, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>
Lauren Piampiano	Staff	Social Workers	<p>According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, serious mental health problems, such as self-injurious behaviors and suicide, are on the rise among youth. Approximately 60% of students do not receive the treatment they need due to lack of access to services. Of those who do get help, nearly two thirds do so only in school. Access to adequate staffing of school-employed mental health professionals is essential to the quality and effectiveness of these services. (2016). The proposed cut of 32 social workers, almost 1/3 of our department, would be devastating, and an injustice to our students who deserve direct and available mental health support in school.</p> <p>School social work intervention is a resiliency factor that promotes academic progress. The Journal of Child Psychiatry and Human Development found that mental health was the strongest predictor of academic performance, and that</p>

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			<p>students who receive mental health support do better academically (2015). The right to an education means access for all. Many students in our district are facing poverty, violence and systemic inequality. They are balancing immense challenges with academic demands. Students are better able to participate in their education when their mental health and resource needs are met first. These services are provided directly by the social workers in our schools.</p> <p>In addition to IEP counseling, school social workers provide building-wide services including crisis intervention, suicidality risk assessment and obtainment/coordination of community resources to meet a variety of student needs. As you make these difficult decisions in order to balance the budget, please consider the impact that social work services have on the safety and wellbeing of our students, as well as the impact of mental health on academic outcomes. Thank you to the RCSD Board of Education for advocating for students and making student mental health a priority.</p>
John Frazier M.S. Ed.S.	Staff	School No. 3	As a dedicated community advocate of Rochester's students and families, I strongly recommend to keep NRCS #3 School as it currently stands or a 6-8 grade levels school.
Lisa McClary	Staff	Social Workers	<p>I want to first thank you, for your taking the time out, to read my letter, regarding the budget cuts and perspectives heard, when reviewing the Board of Education meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>As a school social worker in this district, going on 14 years. I have had many experiences/observations, which have cultivated my opinion and views, on the subject I speak of.</p>

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			<p>Firstly, I would like to offer my insight on the SRO’s and their role in our educational process, which I have found non-effective and more of a legal and emotional liability, when it comes to our most vulnerable population. For example, in the 2018 commencement program, at Franklin. I had the opportunity to work with our students, during a critical and stressful time of their lives. I must also say, it was truly an honor. I was given the task to find students who were chronically absent, and encourage them to attend school. Mainly 12<sup>th</sup> graders, who had the potential to walk the stage and graduate. Many of these students were dealing with major life stressors, which would often interfere with their education. The issues ranged from homelessness, mental illness, lack of food, poverty, pregnancy, family estrangement and failing grades that triggered more hopelessness. The list can go on.</p> <p>One student in particular, (I will not name) we had the good fortune, of actually locating. He was excited and grateful, that someone cared enough about him, to make the effort with vigilance. He was brought into school by my colleague, after making sure he had food in his stomach, so that he could concentrate in class. This was his first day in summer school, after a 2 week delay. He thanked us profusely and was taken to class thereafter.</p> <p>No more than 10 minutes into class, a verbal altercation took place between him and the teacher. The student was told to leave the class, which he refused, because he felt he did nothing wrong and was determined to push through. SO officers were called, along with lower administration. Eventually, a social worker was requested, only after, the</p>
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			<p>situation had escalated. Upon my arrival, I observed 6-7 adults, standing over and around a frightened young man, who had started to cry, while requesting, a reason for his removal. I was able to speak with the young man in private, trying to understand what took place and how to resolve the issue. His spirit had been broken, his trust had been shattered and he was on his last leg of hope. He threatened to leave school and give up, but I continued to beg him for one more chance to make it right. By this time, we had made it to the front entrance of Franklin. I requested the presence of the summer school principle, in hopes of facilitating an educational, restorative circle. The student was still emotionally wounded, but willing to engage in the process. I was able to stop him from walking out on his future, for the time being.</p> <p>Unfortunately, a SRO officer had made his way to the front of the building where we were standing and started antagonizing the student with questions and unnecessary agitation. The principal had not shown up as requested and things were about to get worse. The SRO officer appeared to be determined to get the outcome he desired, which was to arrest this young man and derail his future. And that! Is exactly what he did.</p> <p>As I write this experience, the pain resurfaces as if it were yesterday. Here is a young black male with 2 credits left to graduate, living in a homeless shelter, having to bury his 1 month old daughter, no job, utilizing the last bit of hope he had left, to walk the stage. And he gets arrested, within 30 minutes of attending summer school! This should not be happening on the watch of the RCSD.</p>
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			<p>Commissioner Adams, I applaud your concern regarding the SRO's presence on school grounds. They have not made our schools safer, nor do they bring the level of emotional intelligence needed, for our most vulnerable population. I and many of my colleagues, find them to be a hindrance, to both, the educational and emotional development, within our school walls. I have witnessed them undermine district policy and administrators, when addressing disciplinary and mental health procedures. They tend to over-step boundaries and lack the knowledge, on district policy.</p> <p>In my capacity, I often find myself having to intervene fast enough, to avoid any contact they may have with a student, during emotional distress. I find the SO officers, more appropriately trained and fit to handle such situations, until a mental health professional arrives on the scene. Many students have been given court appearances, over infractions that are settled, with restorative practices, 1 hour later.</p> <p>I ask that you strongly consider decreasing them from 7 to 0 if possible. If not, 2 will do. Superintendent Dade made a worthy recommendation for increasing SO officers. They typically take the time to cultivate meaningful relationships with our students. And the students respond very well to those they have a familiarity with. During my time as a RCSD student, some of my best relationships, were with the SO officers. Many of them continue to have the admiration and respect to this day, from the students who crossed their paths. The SROS bring comfort to teachers, not students. No student ever says, I need to talk, to officer Friendly. Because in their mind, he/she does not exist!</p>
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Brenda Richey	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I have grave concern with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a Music &amp; Theater 5-8 teacher of Roberto Clemente School # 8, I have seen the positive impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District students, families and community members and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>When I came to Roberto Clemente School # 8 in 2016, it was designated as a school “in need” and was also in need of an immediate turn around in many areas. A new administrative team including Dominic Pickard (my immediate supervisor), Principal Avery-DeToy, and other administrators collaborated to design a school culture with heavy emphasis on Arts offerings to students. The reason being they realized that Arts experiences would be a very important piece of education that would help restore the school culture, and would help restore discipline and TEAM building between the students. The administrative team strongly believed the large variety of Arts would be an important tool to help cultivate a close knit, positive culture. They believed that a great array of Art and Music offerings equaled a great variety of means of self-expression opportunities for the students, which our inner city students so desperately need. Through Artistic expression comes emotional healing, belief in self, strength of character, and self-discipline. Arts courses naturally cause students to collaborate with other students they normally would not and helps to break down social barriers and prejudices. Time and time again we see that students who may not have not</p>
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		<p>experienced academic or social success, can nearly always find an area in the Arts that they can thrive in. This is often the breakthrough experience that helps to an unsuccessful student to begin to turn their school experiences towards the positive. Arts experiences lends itself to build life skills that explore multicultural learning, authentic experiences, public performance, public speaking, and community involvement in a way no other curriculum does.</p> <p>Through grants initiated by Dominick Pickard, Roberto Clemente #8 was provided a wonderful array of pianos, guitars, ukuleles, and xylophone/marimbas, and cultural drums. With a heavy focus on music and visual arts. RC8 was a model to see the benefits that arts programs might bring to our RCSD population. By 2019 RC8 was no longer a school in need. Although there are many factors that contributed to this successful turn-around at RC8, the Arts have definitely played a significant factor in creating a positive, thriving, stronger educational culture, and a more stable social well-being at RC8. Under my direction the RC8 students have performed at the Founders Café (ukuleles and soloist), the Presbyterian home (choruses), WBEE radio (choruses), at the U of R Red Wings concert with college students (chorus) , the annual Lilac Festival (ukuleles with soloists), RIA school (2<sup>nd</sup> grade musical),in-house award ceremonies(solo and group pianists 5-8), Wegmans caroling (ukuleles and soloists), Hochstein Music School (myself and another music teacher organized a Ukulele Day with 4 schools, clinicians, local artists, and combined performances. We have touched our school community frequently with the sounds of music. In 2018 RC8 started the</p>
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			<p>first Theater Program with grade 5-6 performing “The Lion King”. By 2019 the program doubled and expanded to grades 5-8 who performed “101 Dalmatians”. This program alone instills discipline, Team work, dance, public speaking, multicultural experiences, and scientific study and builds a strong “family” for those students and staff, and parents who work so closely together. The number of students who have enrolled in music lessons and theater has doubled every year. Given the choice of an arts program, many students have a difficult time deciding because they love them all. Each one of the arts builds different pieces of the whole child. They are each needed for developing coordination, critical thinking, building self-esteem, and offering a creative outlet to develop a voice, and to thrive as a whole person. All students are able to find a niche where they thrive in each of the Arts. It is a very important component in their lives and the lives of their families. Currently I teach music lessons: piano, dance, rap, ukulele, guitar to 42 out of 52 in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 33 of 38 students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 64 of 76 students in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 57 of 62 in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Many of these students are also in art, theater, band, or orchestra and/or chorus as well. Students at RC8 Absolutely LOVE the Arts. They are very proud of their accomplishments and they are very upset if an arts lesson is cancelled. We try very hard not to cancel. If the cuts to the Arts department go through as proposed, one of the most effective components that spurs nearly all students towards the positive, to thrive individually and as a TEAM will be lost. As we have seen at Roberto Clemente #8 and at other schools in RCSD, Arts classes are needed to break down social, academic, and economic prejudice, particularly</p>
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			<p>with a population of inner city students, whom we serve. Inner city students have a great need for these opportunities to develop their social &amp; emotional well-being. They need Arts to collaborate with others who love Arts outside their classroom, and school buildings. They need to continue to share the Arts to bring important messages, to bring light, and to develop partnerships with others in the community and around the world.</p> <p>Dominic Pickard stands out exceedingly as a department chair. Never has one department chair run a department so eloquently in all my years of experience as a teacher. This Arts Director has found creative solutions for financing digital curriculum for the Music department, “QUAVER” and he also locates and connects us with pertinent organizations such as “little kids rock” who provide pertinent modern band curriculum, trainings, and donations of instruments such as drum kits, electric and bass guitars and amps to start up our programs. Our Arts Director has leveled the playing field among music educators in RCSD by providing classroom keyboards, guitars, ukuleles, drums, xylophones for each music teacher (like was done for RC8). These are instruments that students love, and develop skills for a lifetime on. Even the most “uncool” kid can be a superstar on these instruments. All students are on a level playing field when it comes to having the same equipment opportunities across the district. The Director works their magic on all areas of the Arts and provides our student body with the best of the best supplies for all via grants. The marching band has grown into an organization that is a source of pride and is embraced and adored by our schools and community. We have reconnected with the organizers of</p>
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			<p>the LILAC festival and our students provide countless performances one after theater all organized seamlessly by the Arts Director. This important performance opportunity in the community had gone by the way side for years until the current Arts Director came on the scene and got it going again. Every single RCDS school has the opportunity to attend a high quality professional Arts performance of either the RPO, ROC city players musical, EAST High theater production, or Nazareth ballet performance each year. This huge undertaking is coordinated and is orchestrated flawlessly each year by the Arts Director. Without an Arts Director, none of these amazing opportunities would be possible. These venues would never allow us to come if we each tried to coordinate our own field trip.</p> <p>Our Arts students are able to have a very positive presence in our community only because we have an amazing Arts Director. Without the Arts director position, passion, guidance, coordination, and care for all of such a large, diverse Arts department, the amazing programs, staff, and students, we would be like lost sheep without a shepherd. The Director guides us safely and smoothly through every part of our Arts education experiences. Without a content-expert Arts Director, there will be gross negative impacts to our program oversight and coordination districtwide in visual art, music, dance and drama. These budget cuts and diminished opportunities will directly impact our students’ academic, social and emotional needs. Kindest regards,</p>
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Brendan Stiner	Staff	2020-21 Budget Cuts	<p>Hello Board of Education,</p> <p>We all are in uncertain times but if possible the rcsd deficit that is faced can we look elsewhere to reduce costs before going to teacher curs again? Please don't take away the main workers for RCSD look elsewhere at other cost saving measures please! Thank you for hearing me out!</p>
Stephen Georger	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>Good Evening,</p> <p>I write this to encourage you not to make any cuts to the Arts Department. I have been at #22 School for 7 years and have grown the program from the bottom up. We now have 80 students in beginner and advanced band. We have participated in a number of field trips around the Rochester area on a regular basis. And the community LOVE it. Students absolutely need the arts in their lives and it would be devastating to see cuts within the arts department. I thank you for your time.</p>
Angela Nassimos	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I am writing regarding the proposed elimination of the Director of Arts position which oversees the entire Music, Visual Art, Dance and Theatre departments that is currently held by Dominic Pickard. This drastic cut would be an enormous loss to our staff and students. Within all he juggles, student success is always at the forefront of Dominic's work. This couldn't be more evident than in the recent grant he worked tirelessly on in order to acquire state of the art instruments and art equipment for our schools. The addition of such resources will assist students to further their music and artistic skills for years to come. Amongst many other things, the Director of Arts</p>



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			<p>organizes Interdisciplinary ARTS Experiences which provides students an opportunity to attend professional productions within our community. 100's of our students were able to see Lion King this year and even perform with Garth Fagan's Dance Company free of charge due in part to the collaborations between the Director of Arts and our community partners. He also oversees RCSD art events such as the Student Art Show, Citywide concerts and ROC City players' theatre productions to name just a few. These are highlights for our students to display their artistic skills and for families to gather and celebrate their children's accomplishments. It saddens me to think that under no dedicated artistic direction, all of these opportunities for our students may disappear.</p> <p>Last year, Dominic was the recipient of the SANNYS Region 11 Award for District Level Administrator for his commitment to Art/Music programs throughout the district and the community. He gets things done by following through with his initiatives and never wavers when he feels passionately about something that could benefit our students.</p> <p>For the sake of the department as a whole, but more importantly, the devastating effect it will have on our students, I ask you to reconsider the elimination of the Director of Arts position.</p>
Alison Schmitt	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>Dear Board,</p> <p>As a member of the Arts Department for fourteen years, I have seen the negative impact of significant budget cuts to the Arts on students: the quiet schools, empty Arts classrooms and young high-quality teachers lost to other districts. I have also</p>

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			<p>had the distinct pleasure of seeing the resurgence of the Arts due to district and board support in the last 6-7 years. Currently, we have one of the healthiest programs in our region, reaching every student in the Rochester City Schools in diverse and wonderful ways that have been recognized regionally and nationally for multiple years.</p> <p>Student opportunity for Arts participation has never been higher...and in many schools, the demand for programs still outstrips the allotted teaching time!</p> <p>There are vibrant art shows in the district and community, school-based concerts, large-scale music festivals, musicals popping up across the district and finally enough instruments and art supplies to equip student artists of every stripe. Thanks to your continued support, we are finally on near-equal footing with other urban and suburban districts.</p> <p>The proposed cuts would roll back the majority of our district's hard-earned gains and leave a large department with no content-certified leader to coordinate services. This is not what the students need, nor what our families and community wants. Our community deserves continued progress, not regression. I urge you to reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>
Kelly Follman	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a music and theater teacher_of RISE Community School #106, Director of ROC City Players, and Eastman Pathways program liaison, I</p>

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			<p>have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students. I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>I am very disappointed to see that the Director of Arts position has been eliminated. Our director has played a very critical role in creating and maintaining special connections to our Rochester community in arts education. Our connections and relationships with the Eastman School of Music, Rochester Education Foundation and the Rochester Philharmonic are maintained through our director. These special relationships afford great opportunity for the children in the RCSD. Without a director to coordinate and promote these programs, I feel our children stand to lose valuable experiences in the arts. The loss of an arts secretary is also disheartening. Arts are performance based, and this requires myriads of layers of scheduling concerts, NYSSMA events, Field trips, dissemination of materials and resources amongst a large department across the entire district K-12. I feel there will be a breakdown in continuity of communication without someone designated to cover this position.</p> <p>I also want to address the elimination of 14 Art teachers, which seems excessive. While I understand that right-sizing the district is important, I do not want to see reduction in program for our students.</p> <p>The Arts play a critical role in developing the whole child in the RCSD. First hand I have witnessed children discovering their</p>
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			<p>gift or participating in an arts learning experience that has had a significant change in their quality of life. Please consider other cuts before you diminish the arts for our RCSD children.</p>
Kaila DeLany	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a music teacher of School of the Arts, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>
Stacey Yazo	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As a General Music and Choral Teacher of School 20. I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p> <p>Additionally, I am an educator at one of the schools being proposed to close. From the moment I began teaching at this school, I knew it was special. It was difficult as a new educator, but over the three years that I have been employed at School 20, not only have I grown, but my program has grown! We went from a school that was sheltering instruments from students, to a school that provides a hands-on, explorative, and creative environment for students to grow as musicians and as people. These amazing students have taught me everything I know—with School 20 closing, I will not get a chance to tell these kids how much I love them and how much</p>

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			<p>they've changed my life. Our kids don't deserve this kind of treatment. I have students e-mailing me in complete shock because they don't understand what is going on. These cuts and closures are going to be emotionally detrimental to our students (especially with the cuts to Social Work). Music is going to be our saving grace in these trying times.</p> <p>I urge you to really consider the effects your decisions will have on the students of this City. Put yourself in the shoes of the families and students. Imagine being hurt, confused, and scared about their future. These students NEED us. We are their safe space. We are their families. Cutting essential staff is going to cause the rest of the remaining staff to be spread so thin. Please look for other areas from which to cut. Why are district officials accepting raises? Why are board members accepting additional pay, when their surplus of income can be applied to save our schools?</p> <p>We elected you as officials to support our students. Please consider these different areas for cuts. Please consider the needs and the best interests of our students. Us teachers do it every day and we elected you to support us and the kids and do the same.</p>
Stacy Embrey	Staff	School No. 43	<p>Good afternoon RCSD Board of Education! I am writing to you to ask a favor! I know you are extremely busy and have a lot on your plates, as we all do. Last week, it was announced, unbeknown to our staff, that my school, School #43 was going to be recommended to be closed at the end of June 2020. It</p>

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			<p>was so heartbreaking and almost, cruel to find out that after 24 years of teaching at School #43, that it was closing from the media. The School #43 staff, students, parents and community deserve more than that. I am writing to you today, even though I know, it will probably fall on deaf ears, to clarify what seems to be another attack on the most vulnerable...our districts students and their schools, which are a safe place for many of them.</p> <p>I understand the decision to close our building was based on three points of a triangle. It was stated that School #43 was underutilized, old (condition) and low scores. I would like to address these three points and bring to your attention these inaccuracies. The first point that we are underutilized is not accurate. Yes, our enrollment has dropped to 440 students. However, did you even consider the fact that this is because we are disproportionally heavy with special education students and self-contained classrooms (12:1+1 and 15:1). These classrooms cannot have more than 12 or 15 students in them by law. Over the past few years the district has given us more and more of these classrooms. To date we have 5 (12:+1 classrooms) and 2 (15:1 classrooms). These self contained classroom have a total of 90 available spots for students instead of 175 spots for non self contained classrooms. If we had more equitable distribution of general education and special education students, Our numbers would be right back up to 615 students. We did not ask for these self contained classrooms, but we embraced them and created safe and successful environments for the districts most vulnerable children. Yet, the district's decision over the years</p>
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			<p>to place a disproportional amount of these classroom settings in our building are now being used against us. I also want you to know teachers and support staff working out of closets due to lack of space. How about we close the falling down portable classrooms (6) in our fields and move those students into the building? Point two was stated we have low test scores. In addition to 7 self contained classrooms, we also have two LEAD classrooms and 4 ICOT classrooms. As you can see, once again, School 43 has more special education students than most other buildings in the district at the elementary level. So this brings me to my point of using scores on statewide tests to count against us. We have many students who have made tremendous progress in these programs, but are still in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading at a 1<sup>st</sup> or second grade level. Of course, that will bring our scores down. However, in looking at the Draft Budget Book, which has details about every school based on 2018-2019, School 43 is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> from the top, on state math test results. 16 schools in our district scored lower than we did. Seems like we are a pretty successful school, based in this evidence. This is even with our disproportional amount of special education students. Also seems like the staff are doing great job with these students, yet the district wants to break this apart. This makes no sense. Last point, point 3 was about the age and condition of our building. From what I have been told, School 43 is slated for an upgrades either next year or the following. For the 24 years I have taught at this school, upgrades have been happening all along. We have updated girls bathrooms, new playground, drinking fountains, etc.. and for god’s sake, every room finally got smartboards. This only happened last year. It seems to me that’s a waste of money. I</p>
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			<p>also am wondering why our building is going to be slated for swing space if it is in such terrible condition?</p> <p>As you can see, the three points the district is basing this closing on are inaccurate and paints a false picture of what is really happening at School #43. I am begging you to look further into this and reconsider the closure of our building. Please freeze this disruption to our students and stop yet another punch to the special education population. These students need consistency and the teachers they are familiar with. A great majority of special education students need time to develop trust and a relationship with their teachers and school community. As you saw above, we have made great strides with our students and want to continue their success. Closing School #43 will only set them back, yet again and hurt their academic and social emotional success. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns and my hope to clarify what was presented to you about School #43.</p>
Susan Boyd	Staff	Cuts to the Arts Department	<p>I do not agree with the cuts that are being made in your 2020-2021 budget, particularly in the Arts Department. As an Instrumental Music Teacher at School 43, I have seen the impacts that the arts have made on Rochester City School District Students and I believe that it would be a costly mistake in the lives of our students. Please reconsider your proposed 2020-2021 budget.</p>



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			This is going to greatly affect the students. I know they love their art and music teachers. Please do not cut Dominic Pickard's position. He is such a valuable and insightful leader. He has been a tremendous leader and brought so many valuable programs to expose the students to the Arts that they would not have had otherwise.
Lisa A. Englert	Staff	2020-21 Budget	<p>In the first budget book draft, East High receives \$22.98 million for 1,048 students; \$4 million of that is for EPO administration. Monroe High receives \$9.04 million for 928 students. IA&amp;T receives \$9.26 million for 1077 students. Monroe and IA&amp;T accept 8:1:1 and 12:1:1 students.</p> <p>If East's budget is cut by \$6 million, it would receive \$16.98 million. What is the rationale for the imbalance in East High's favor if Monroe and IA&amp;T have SPED populations that are more costly to educate, per pupil?</p>
Paulette Vaccaro	Staff	Adult Family Educator	<p>My name is Paulette Vaccaro and I have been a Parent Group Leader/Adult Family Educator for 18 years. I have been trying to sum up my position in less than 2 minutes. The position has changed and evolved over the years due to parents working, technology and the changes in Pre-k, half-day to full day and the curriculum.</p> <p>The AFE roll has an important position that begins before the school year starts with contacting families, that continues throughout the year. A large part of the position is to make families feel welcome. The first time parents, the parents that are on their 4<sup>th</sup> child entering school, the parents that had bad experiences in school but still know it's important and the grandparents that have taken over the parenting. The</p>

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			<p>Preschool Team is made up of the Teacher, Para and Adult Family Educator, all trying to work together sharing the importance of Pre-k.</p> <p>The AFE helps to explain the curriculum, routines in the classroom, the setup of the classroom, letter links and why I for example am called Mrs. Vaccaro Volcano. We have parent/child activities, an educational activity with their child. We bring in people from the community to talk with parents, example WXXI.</p> <p>The AFE helps to navigate the Rochester City School District, a place that can be ever changing and overwhelming. We help bring kindergarten registration to the school, and this year CBO’s, to get as many children registered without having to go downtown. I was able to register approximately 100 students.</p> <p>I have attended CPSE meetings with the parents for support, have gone to autism tests at Kirsh Center, and have gone on tours of schools trying to find the best fit for kindergarten for their child with needs. We try to support parents, in learning how to advocate for their child.</p> <p>A school district is about the children and it should be, but the parents, grandparents, caregivers and families need support too. My job is to be there for them and give them that support.</p> <p>There is a reason why our Pre-k Program is recognized nationally and I know part of that is the importance of the Adult Family Educator and the team approach that we use in Pre-k.</p>
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Kacie Castle	Staff	School No. 43	<p>My name is Kacie Castle and I am writing to ask a favor of you. Last week I was abruptly informed by the media and parents that school 43, the school I have been at for almost 3 years now and come to truly love, is recommended to close come June. I would like to draw your attention to some specific items that will hopefully cause you reconsider this closure.</p> <p>1. <b>We Have 2 Portable Buildings with 6 Classrooms</b></p> <p>These building have had sewage problems, heating and ventilation problems, structural issues, and rodent infestations. Being in a portable building also keeps students from feeling they are a part of the school community.</p> <p>Proposal: Close the portables, not the whole school. Take those 80 seats off our registration and move those classes into the building. This would bring our students together, making them feel more a part of the whole school community. It would also keep intact a strong team of dedicated professionals who work well together and work for the benefit of all the students at School 43.</p> <p>2. <b>Special Education:</b></p> <p>Two LEAD classes</p> <p>Four ICOT classrooms</p> <p>Five 12:1:1 classrooms</p> <p>Two 15:1</p>
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			<p>Our school is disproportionately heavy in special education classrooms which cannot have more than 12 to 15 students by law. These contained rooms have a total of 90 spots available for students instead of the 175 spots for non contained rooms. If we had more general education classes, our numbers would be up in the building as well. Saying our building is underutilized and that being one reason to close is unfair because of this reason. Also, bringing the portable classes into the building will not impact SPED Program. The students will continue to learn and grow with the classmates and teachers they have known for several years.</p> <p>I am also aware low test scores in the building is another factor in making this decision. These students in special education are easily reading a few grade levels below where they should be, so of course our test scores will be down. This is another reason that seems unfair in making this decision. With the school being a majority of special education I would think this would be taken into consideration. Looking over the Budget Book showing details about every school based on 2018-2019, School 43 ranked 7th from the top on math test results. Sixteen schools in our district scored lower than we did... Seems like we are indeed a successful school looking at this evidence.</p> <p><b>3. Money in the building</b></p> <p>Upgrades have been happening in this building for years... Some of those updates include: girls bathrooms, new playground, drinking fountains and Smart Boards in ever</p>
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			<p>classroom. To close 43 would be wasting ALL THAT MONEY... If the building is in such terrible condition, why is it being considered for swing space??</p> <p><b>4. School Morale</b> One final point in my effort to make you vote to keep School 43 open has to do with school morale. This year we have a new principal, Wakili Moore. He inherited a school that needed a change. Mr. Moore has begun to create a culture of trust and respect that was missing. He is bringing Restorative Justice into our building and breaking down walls between the children in our school and the staff as well. This is the beginning of a growth period that can be special. We need the chance to see what we can do with Wakili Moore as our leader. Our future is the brightest it has been in a long time. Please vote to keep School 43 open.</p>
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