

Speaker Comment

Board Meeting April 30, 2020

Name	Affiliation	Topic	Comments
Beautiful Ford	Student	Reinstatement of Chief of Student Support Services and Social and Emotional Learning	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express the importance of having Mrs.Ruth in the role of Chief of Student Support Services and Social Emotional Learning.Not only has Mrs.Ruth dedicated many years to helping address the school climate in Rochester city schools,she has worked tirelessly with Roc responders to make sure that we are growing as individuals.Mrs.Ruth has dedicated herself to improving our city schools.She has partnered with organizations like “Teen Empowerment” to make sure that youth in our community and city are being heard and taken seriously in decision making that will affect us.I include myself because I am a junior at Wilson Magnet highschool.I have personally known Mrs.Ruth since i was a freshman in Highschool;most of our encounters consisted of discussing ways that I can be involved in restoring our city schools and using my voice to help ignite change.To take away her position would mean taking away a leader who we all love and respect.,it would mean taking away someone who organizes events for inner city students to come learn,feel represented and understood.</p> <p>Sincerely, Beautiful Ford</p>
Nadirah Stephens	Parent	Budget Cuts	<p>I was made aware of the possibility of the LEAD Program (Language Enrichment All Day) being part of the budget cuts which is very disheartening and disappointing to hear.</p> <p>I want to let you know that in the short time my son has started this program (September 2019 to March 2020) myself, as well as family and friends, have seen tremendous improvement with his expressive language and speech. Tayler was found to have a severe expressive</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>delay with his speech. He is a conscientious, bright, energetic student, yet several months ago he understood more than he was able to verbally express. He was able to read at a young age (2yrs) and was 4 yrs. old when he started at #7 school. He had been at another school prior and completed Pre-K 3yr and Pre-K 4yr. I was hesitant to separate him from his older brother and enroll him at #7 School, but I am so happy that I did as it was one of the BEST decisions I could have made for him. I noticed improvement within 2 months of him being at #7 School in the LEAD program with Mrs. Schuler and Mrs. Haugh. When he would talk family would look at me wide-eyed and an awe as Tayler began to use words he had never said prior. His teachers Mrs. Schuler and Mrs. Haugh have been nothing but amazing throughout his whole progression. They have been in constant connection with Tayler and myself and adjusting his therapy as needed, even during this COVID-19 pandemic they are available helping Tayler with speech therapy. I truly can't thank them enough.</p> <p>Ending this program for many children like Tayler would not only be heart-breaking but such a disservice to the students that truly need it and are benefitting from it daily. The LEAD Program has such a positive impact on these children and I ask that you do not cut the program from the budget. I thank you.</p> <p>Sincerely, Nadirah Stephens</p>
Mrs. Sheryl Petkus	Staff	School No. 57	<p>Dear Mr. Van White and Board Members,</p> <p>We are not just numbers in a system, we are a family. We are a small community of learners and as of yet, I have not taught a child who has been a part of our learning community that thought it was better somewhere else. I have had some student's go right after</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>preschool to another school and then their parents have reached out to me regretting the choice to leave and try to find out how they can get back into our school. To be a part of our learning community is to be noticed and to matter. Rather than getting rid of our community, it should be used as a model and admired for its tight knit connection to those that work there and the children that are truly members of a learning family. All schools should be small communities of learners. It is just more effective and impactful. The space at School #57 is truly the epicenter for a success because of its size and if anything the babies of our community or Early Childhood should be sacred and protected. Our school was that special sanctuary for early learners for at least a quarter of a century. It makes me sad to have to write this. I regret that a place I have called my learning community has been treated with such disregard and careless thought. Sadly, Mrs. Sheryl Petkus.</p>
Kim Marshall	Staff	Budget Cuts	<p>My name is Kim Marshall. I am a reading teacher at school 39. The children at my school need more reading teachers, not less. The cuts last round made it impossible for all grade levels to have a reading teacher. As we know, the ability to read well leads to higher grades, higher enjoyment of school, and higher graduation rates. Our students show frustration in their school work when they cannot read at grade level. How are students suppose to be successful in a grade level, when they cannot read the work? Have you ever considered making reading a special? Intervention at the elementary age is critical. The cuts made already have really hurt our struggling students. Please consider keeping all reading teachers. If you look at any research it shows that having elementary students reading at grade level is the greatest indicator for success in school.</p> <p>Thank you, Kim Marshall</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

Kelie Friga	Staff	Social Workers	<p>Good Afternoon, I know with last night's budget amendment that these statements specific to school #57 may no longer apply directly. However, please consider these statements as a whole when thinking about RCSD school social workers.</p> <p>Thank you all for your continued efforts during this unprecedented time with both COVID-19 and recent district news. I love working with RCSD's students and families and I am remaining hopeful that my position will not be cut, or at least, that other social workers can be restored for the sake of our students social emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>The teachers and staff at School #57 urge you to save RCSD social workers!</p> <p>· “This is who you are to school 57”</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>and at times has helped de-escalate different students who were having meltdowns (regardless of if they are on her caseload or not) so I can continue teaching. I have one student in particular who looks for her as a quiet and safe person he can eat lunch with as the lunchroom is overwhelming. She has gone above and beyond helping with CPS calls/cases, working with families' social workers, and forming bonds where the parents feel welcomed and supported. Without the ability to appropriately process emotions and socially interact, our students cannot learn academically. If anything this school, population, and district need a larger influence when talking about social emotional support. The last thing we should be doing is cutting the people who support what our students need the most."</p> <p>· "School #57 needs its social workers! Social and emotional needs are a big part of the High Scope curriculum that Pre-k follows. It would be an asset to have a skilled social worker to bring the children of our community to full understanding and get in touch with their social and emotional needs. This year I had a child in my classroom who had CPS called on her family. There were several times this year that our social worker provided a quiet place for my pre-school student to meet with the case worker. She consulted with me about what I knew of the student. The knowledge of a teacher is really important but not always valued. I appreciated the manner in which she handled the situation. It would be a shame to see her leave our learning community. She is perfectly skilled to work with a new Pre-k population. I hope we can keep her."</p> <p>· "Our social worker has been instrumental in not only supporting students in crisis, but also in helping my students grow socially and emotionally. I can count on her for support anytime it is needed and</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>my students adore working with her. She has truly made a difference in our school.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· "A teacher at School #57 is fervently asking you to save our social worker and all school social workers. The value of support from school social workers to students, families and teachers cannot be measured especially in these times of great stress in the lives of many families today. Please realize that a decrease in the social-emotional support that we receive from our social workers would deeply impact the health and well-being our school community as a whole. Thank you for hearing our voices and opinions on behalf of our young students and their families."· “Social Workers can make all the difference in a family's life. Please keep our social worker at School 57. She is a great asset that the students, families, and staff love.” 
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

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Katherine O’Hara, LMSW	Staff	Social Workers	<p>Dear President White and Members of the Board of Education,</p> <p>I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak at the April 23 Board meeting regarding cuts to Social Workers. I would also like to thank the Superintendent’s Team for their April 28 budget presentation, specifically for restoring the 12 Social Work positions through compromise and consideration.</p> <p>I am writing now to express my concern about the 7.5 grant funded Social Workers as well as the Social Workers we will have access to through DSS and Catholic Family Services. Those Social Workers, as described by Deputy Superintendent Quick, will be in “a different bucket”. They will not be legally allowed to provide IEP counseling services to students, to participate in CSE proceedings, or conduct formal CSE assessments for students and families. That would allow the 4.5 Social Workers restored to the budget from the general fund to conduct these services, along with the remaining Social Work positions.</p> <p>Although the general public has not been provided data yet on how that would change the 1:50 social workers to students ratio, it leaves me concerned that we still will not have enough time within a school schedule to meet this legal requirement. Just because the proposed closing of schools eliminates 8.5 Social Work Positions, the students previously served by those 8.5 Social Workers still require mandated IEP counseling services. Closing those schools does not</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>eliminate the need for services, it simply shuffles around students and modifies the ratio of district social workers to students served. Please see attached a sample schedule created by another RCSD Social Worker that shows that realistically, one School Social Worker cannot serve more than 29 high school students with IEP Counseling needs based on scheduling alone. This schedule only accounts for a Social Worker’s role of providing mandated counseling services and participating in CSE proceedings. It is my understanding that the grant funded Social Workers will pick up the additional “bucket” of roles. But that brings up the question- is 7.5 Social Workers enough to fill that gap? Certainly not.</p> <p>Based on data that I collected alone, in my building I was responsible for 536 other student contacts (not IEP counseling) and 578 school or community contacts (non CSE, non RTI, non-safety/crisis plans), in the months of January and February this year. This is the reality of the “other buckets” for one Social Worker. I cannot imagine what those numbers what would look like if you considered all of the District’s Social Workers. I have a hard time believing that 7.5 grant funded Social Workers will be able to manage that “bucket” while the rest of the District Social Workers are busy with a full schedule of legally mandated counseling services. I would like to reiterate that DSS Social Workers and Catholic Family Services Workers cannot fulfill the role of a School Social Worker. What will their role look like in a school? Are you aware that we have already have an existing partnership with DSS? Currently, it exists to streamline new mandated reports that CPS receives from the RCSD. This partnership does not and cannot replace the services provided by School Social Workers.</p> <p>As Commissioner Lebron stated during last night’s meeting, it appears that the current proposal still establishes new Administrative</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>positions and allows for promotions. How is it ethical to add in some areas while others are experiencing deep cuts that will prove detrimental to our students?</p> <p>Respectfully yours, Katherine O'Hara, LMSW</p>
Kellie Friga	Staff	Reinstatement of Chief of Student Support Services and Social and Emotional Learning	<p>Dear RCSD Board of Education,</p> <p>I am writing to ask that you please reconsider the job change of Ruth Turner, current Chief of Student Support Services and Social Emotional Learning. I know over the past few weeks you have received many statements supporting the need for school social workers within RCSD, and it is because of what Ruth Turner has built that our social work department stands so strong and continues to make a difference in the lives of our students and families. I know that I personally would not have found a career I love at RCSD if it wasn't for Ruth Turner. Ruth gave me a chance when most jobs overlooked a new graduate, and I have since been a committed and involved employee as well as an advocate for RCSD. When I think about RCSD's social work department I am amazed with how much support social workers are given from not only other social work colleagues, but from mentors, lead social workers and specifically our Chief, Ruth Turner. Ruth is committed to our students and families, I know that at any point in the day if I need help I can call or text her and she will respond in a timely manner. As social workers we do not feel worried to ask our boss for help because we know that she will be there and we will all be stronger because of it. I have received more training on the job with our monthly department meetings that Ruth sets up than I did throughout my college career. When being hired as a social worker at RCSD we are not thrown in the trenches, we are supported and our opinions are valued- this is because of Ruth Turner. Our students and families need a voice in the</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			superintendent's cabinet to advocate for their social emotional needs and services, without this voice our students will suffer. Please keep Ruth Turner as Chief of Student Support Services and Social Emotional Learning. Sincerely, Kellie Friga
Me'Chele Markajani	Staff	School No. 3	<p>Dear respected board members. I have worked for this district for 27 years and never have I felt so confused by the way things are handled in our district. 3 of my parents have asked me why does their Autistic child have to go to another school next year. Two of them have been in 3 schools in 4 years. Why? Because we as a district just cant get it right. One of our most vulnerable populations of students we toss around as if they are nothing. Nathaniel Rochester is finally on the upswing. The staff has high standards and expectations for everyone not just the students but for the teachers, parents, Speech Therapist, Lunch Crew, Bus Drivers. Everyone is held to a high standard and expectation. Mrs Washington along with her Admin Team along with the teachers, parents, students, Bus Drivers, Lunch Crew and so on turned it around. Make no mistake about this, it also was at the cost of our K-5 kids. Middle School requires a lot of resources. More counselors, more admins, more teachers, more alternative programs within the school, more in-school suspension rooms. I think we get the point. I am not sure taking out the elementary part of Nathaniel Rochester saves money. Please because I would love to see that operating cost next year. I cant believe we are even entertaining the idea that a single Middle School would be a great idea and cost effective. Does anyone remember Charlotte Middle School. If it worked, why isnt it still opened? The suburbs got it right and that is why their scores and graduation rate will always be WAY higher than ours and not have a bunch of 8th graders dropping out. Have you seen the Data on the</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>amount of 8th grade students who dropped out before ever entering high school. The numbers are horrific. Middle school students need no more than 200 students to a school. Individual middle schools we need to create. We either figure this out now cause we will pay later if we dont. The special education department need I say more. They are just unbelievable of the things they do. Thats a story for another time. But Nathaniel Rochester already has a full continuum of Autistic students from k-6 and growing. All is full except K. These students have all been shipped around year after year, They finally have a fantastic group of ASD Teachers who work together to meet the huge variety of needs. Now yet again we are splitting all these kids up and the students will not be able to build relationship with staff and students year after year once again. And they will more than likely have to keep changing school year after year. This is what we do to our Autism students all the time. Please I beg you to take a closer look at the proposal to make Nathaniel Rochester a Middle School. We are a community School. The children do a lot with the people in the neighborhood. All of this will be lost. Please dont dissapoint our children once again. Thank you for all your time and all you do for our children. Me'Chele Markajani ASD Special Education Teacher</p>
Andrea Zona	Staff	Budget Cuts	<p>Thank you for this opportunity to address the Board regarding the 20-21 budget proposal. The current proposal includes a loss of 31 speech/language positions. The loss of these positions would be catastrophic to our students and the vital evidence-based programs, which address their overall communication skills. Speech pathologists address the communication necessary for students to access the curriculum and function in their surrounding world.</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>Without a solid skillset in all areas of communication, students will struggle academically, socially and vocationally.</p> <p>The Speech Department offers four evidence-based, highly successful programs that directly address and support the diverse needs of our students in each domain of communication. The programs include Foundations Language Enrichment Program, INTERACT Immersive Service Delivery model, STEPS and LEAD.</p> <p>The Foundations Language Enrichment Program provides whole-class language enrichment to every kindergarten and first grade student across the district targeting foundational language skills, which are necessary for accessing all areas of the curriculum. This program has been a huge success for our students and we have the data to prove it. The INTERACT Immersive Service Delivery model is a shift in the mindset of how to provide the most effective level of services to our high needs students in ASD and NYSAA programs. Our program has become a model in Monroe County which other districts have shown great interest in emulating. INTERACT is imperative and life changing for our high needs students with disabilities and severe delays in communication. The STEPS and LEAD programs are designed to support our students in grades K-2 with severe deficits in articulation and language, respectively. Both programs have impressive data, which is secondary to the success felt by the students and their families.</p> <p>Communication should not be a privilege – it should be a right. All of our students deserve the opportunity to participate in these highly specialized programs. I implore you to reconsider the depth of the cuts to the Speech Department, which would result in an astounding 31 cuts to the Speech/Language programs. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Andrea Zona Speech/Language Pathologist</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

Nichole Stewart	Staff	School No. 57	<p>Hello Commissioners:</p> <p>My name is Nichole Stewart and I am a pre-k teacher. I was heartbroken to hear your sudden proposal to close school #57 instead of making it into the pre-k center already agreed upon. It was insensitive to the current staff that was looking forward to being able to transition to this new endeavor. It has been indicated that teachers in this district do not “go above and beyond” for their students. This lets me know that you have not been privileged to experience the magic of the school 57 spirit.</p> <p>School 57 is not just a building, it is a family. It is the only pre-k-2 building in the district. The fact that the building is so small has been interpreted as a deficit. As they say “good things come in small packages”. The smallness of the building is why the magic occurs. There is tremendous love and care packed into that space. <i>Every</i> teacher in that building goes above and beyond for their student. My daughter attended the school and I was confident in the education she received and the care shown to her.</p> <p>It was just last year that two of the classrooms were featured in the “teacher’s care videos”. Before you make a decision that is irreversible, please consider whether you have talked with staff, administration, families, community partners, or even the Mayor about the beauty of the educational experiences and love provided at school 57. <i>Nichole Stewart</i></p>
Jessica Owens	Staff	Social Workers	<p>Dear Members of the Rochester City School District Board of Education,</p> <p>My name is Jessica Owens and I am a Rochester City School District alumni, parent, and employee. I am extremely concerned regarding the proposed cuts to the Social Work Department.</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>The formula that was used to propose so many cuts to social workers is a huge concern. The NYS School Social Work Survival Kit specifically states: “School social work services should be provided at a ratio of one school social worker to each school building serving up to 250 general education students, or a ratio of 1:250 students. When a school social worker is providing services to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio, such as 1:50, is suggested.”</p> <p>The suggested “lower ratio” of 1:50 for students with intensive needs, is intended to be used for the intense needs of the general education population of that particular school. The suggested ratio does not imply that social workers should be staffed based upon an IEP caseload. In fact, many social workers in New York State do not provide IEP counseling at all. RCSD has historically used social workers to provide the mandated IEP counseling for their unique ability to receive Medicaid reimbursement.</p> <p>Not only was the suggested ratio misconstrued, the suggestion of one social worker to every 250 general education students, was completely ignored. This recommendation would mean an increase in SW staff at both of my children’s schools. My oldest daughter attends SOTA with 1110 students. A ratio of 1:250 would mean that SOTA needs 4.6 social workers. However, the proposed 20-21 budget only allocates one social worker for the entire school. SOTA currently has 47 students with counseling on their IEP. Many of which are individual units of service. This will not be a manageable caseload for one social worker. The district will undoubtedly be out of compliance with IEP students. General education students will not receive any support, even in crises. There was a statement made at the last board meeting that some buildings will be “under the recommended” suggested staffing ratio. That statement was not only irresponsible but unethical.</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>These proposed cuts will prevent most social workers from meeting federal IDEA compliance regulations. Social workers are required by law, to service mandated students in accordance to the frequency, ratio, and duration on their Individualized Education Plan. IDEA also requires that students are grouped based upon “similarity of need”. The proposed inadequate staffing ratio would force social to place students in inappropriate groups. It also assumes that social workers roles and responsibilities are limited to providing services to mandated IEP counseling students. Neglecting all other duties and services social workers provide that maintain our schools. Misinterpreting the NYSSSWA suggested staffing ratio will prove to be detrimental to all students in the Rochester City School District. I urge you to support the reinstatement of all 34 School Social Workers to our 20-21 budget. Social workers are not “sacred cows”, they are invaluable members of the Rochester City School District Community. Thank you, Jessica Owens, LCSW</p>
Regina (Neri) Maier	Staff	RIA	<p>Dear Board of Education,</p> <p>I am writing today to express my sincere concerns regarding the devastating cuts to the Rochester International Academy for this upcoming school year. RIA's program was initially started to give Newcomer refugee and immigrant students a learning experience that is unique to their needs as they begin their education upon coming to America. Our vast school district has many schools that focus on specific and unique facets of education, some on special education, arts integration, some on speech therapy, others on bilingual education for our Spanish speaking students, and some on Expeditionary Learning, to name a few. One thing that was clearly missing was a program that focused completely on teaching our</p>

Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>newcomer, non Spanish speaking, ELL students based on their specific needs. This was why RIA was created. The journey to America is a trying and hard fought battle that our students' families have endured to give their children access to a safe, equal, and superior education. The difference between our ELL students and our Bilingual students is that American Education is prepared for Spanish speaking students, materials are often already translated in Spanish for students and their families, by law. Our bilingual learners are set up for success based on this simple fact. For students who's first language is not English or Spanish there are added challenges when coming to school in America. RIA is a program that focuses on this population of students that are often left behind; it is a program that ensures our ELL students are fully immersed in language acquisition during every part of their day, including during their time in elective classes. What is most special about our program at RIA is that our ELL students not only get a uniquely tailored education that fits their specific needs, but they also have the opportunity to be in class with students who are true peers. They are able to speak their first language to other students and staff members when needed to assist in their learning. It is a program where they are getting first language support, the same as our bilingual students. If you break down this program and scatter our students throughout the district they will once again get lost in the system, as they did prior to RIA being created. They will sit in classrooms quietly, listening to teachers teach to the majority. They will only be able to receive specific ESOL support for a short pullout or push in during the school day. By closing the elementary portion of RIA you will be splitting up families over multiple schools, further lessening their support systems. Putting our students back to their home schools will eliminate their opportunities to thrive and as a result force them to</p>
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Speaker Comment
Board Meeting April 30, 2020

			<p>resort back to living in survival mode. I also have concerns regarding the devastating cuts the the Department of Arts. A proposal to cut 17 of 80 visual art teachers is gut wrenching. When teachers and community members marched outside of Central Office in December they chanted "Cut From The Top", I am willing to guess that cutting Directors of major curriculum areas and their secretaries is not what they meant. Cutting positions that work directly for the teachers and students is not how we should fix this situation. Taking away department leaders, especially in our Arts Department, is taking away liaison to many extracurricular learning opportunities from our students. Cutting Dominic and Bia's positions will surly breakdown our already hurting department even more. With the proposed staffing cuts and reductions to Art and Music teachers leaving an overwhelming majority of teachers itinerant and spread thin, I cannot see how we could collectively continue many of these Arts Learning Experiences with our students on top of everything else. Cutting and reducing our teaching positions and spreading the work load of a director on our plates is impossible and irrational. I understand how dire the budget situation is and I know that we all will be making sacrifices, but these proposed cuts is not what is best for our children. Arts is absolutely essential when educating the whole child. These cuts are the exact opposite of cutting as far from the classrooms as possible. I beg you to reconsider these staffing cuts and position reductions to our Arts Department. I understand this budget deficit is dire and that we all will have to endure some loss as a result, but please consider other areas where we may be able to restructure in order to protect this necessary program that is so important to some of our most vulnerable students.</p> <p>Sincerely, Regina (Neri) Maier</p>
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