

Bilingual education

Overview

The Rochester City School District has a lot of students who need help learning English. There are a lot more students who speak Spanish now because hundreds of students have come from Puerto Rico because of Hurricane Maria. The District has promised to hire a lot more people to help with Spanish-speaking students next year.

Positive Changes planned for 2018-2019

- Edison Tech will become a bilingual high school for the first time;
- The District is hiring a lot of staff who are bilingual.

Concerns for 2018-2019

- The Bilingual Language and Literacy Academy, a special program for students from Puerto Rico, has not officially been made a program school.

Recommendations

The District should:

1. ***Hire a permanent Director in charge of bilingual education.***
2. ***Create a permanent K-12 newcomer program for Latina/o students, just like the Rochester International Academy school for refugee students.***
3. ***Make a solid, long-term plan for Latina/o students so there is enough space for them in classrooms and school buildings, and so they have more choices in their education.***

A more positive learning environment in schools

Overview

Since the new RCSD Code of Conduct (student discipline policy) started in June of 2016, there have been fewer suspensions and more restorative practices in the Rochester City School District. Restorative practices are a different way of dealing with student discipline that brings together people involved in a disruptive or harmful incident to talk it through with respect and consideration. However, much work remains to be done.

Positive Changes planned for 2018-2019

- More social workers and counselors will be hired next year, and some of them speak Spanish as well as English.

Concerns for 2018-2019

- There are plans to hire more sentries and suspension assistants, and these staff people might not help create a calm, positive atmosphere in schools.

Recommendations

The District should:

1. *Use more restorative justice practices in more schools.*
2. *Create more "Help Zones" in schools instead of suspension rooms. Help Zones are rooms where students can take breaks, talk with an adult, and help calm down so they can behave better and learn more in school.*
3. *Involve students and parents more in school decisions, and provide help and training so they can become leaders in the school.*

Special Education for students who need extra help

Overview

In March 2018, a boy with special needs drowned. Trevyan Rowe's tragic death shows that we all need to care for every child, especially those with special needs. The proposed 2018-2019 budget restores and expands important positions for special education. It is essential that these additions are approved and are quickly filled. There are no easy fixes for special education. However, with greater transparency, stability, and the best use of resources, we will make serious improvements for Rochester's children.

Positive Changes for 2018-2019

- The District is hiring a lot of new staff to help with special education.
- Some of the new staff will speak Spanish so they can help students who haven't learned how to speak or understand English yet.

Concerns for 2018-2019

- A lot of Special Education Paraprofessional positions have been cut;
- Parents must be aware of all the people at school who are working with their children, and parents should be involved when their child's IEP plan is being written.

Recommendations

1. ***Programs and services for students in special education should be available in as many school buildings as possible so that students don't have to change schools.***
2. ***Every school staff person who works with students with IEPs should have the proper training to support those students.***
3. ***Schools should reduce suspensions of students with disabilities and they should have more prevention programs to help avoid suspensions.***

Learning programs for 3- and 4-year old children in RCSD

Overview

The Rochester City School District has programs for 3-year-old and 4-year-old children that help them grow and learn in a healthy way. Children who go to these programs do better once they start kindergarten than children who don't go to a preschool program.

Positive Changes for the 2018-2019 school year

- The District is adding more parent leader positions, more bilingual staff, and more permanent teachers so there won't be as many substitute teachers
- The District is spending money to help preschool children who need special help like physical therapy or speech therapy.

Recommendations

The District should:

1. ***Do more to help 4-year-old children have an easy transition from preschool to Kindergarten so they are happier and can learn more in Kindergarten.***
2. ***Talk to the state government about getting more money for special education services for preschool children who need extra help.***
3. ***Provide money so that young children can go to good programs during the summertime. This helps them remember all the things they learned during their last school year so they are ready for the new school year.***