

Review of Proposed Budget for Rochester City School District 2023-2024



Hundreds of millions in new state and federal funding have helped stabilize the Rochester City School District's (RCSD) finances in recent years and allowed the district to add positions and programs in key areas. Unfortunately, the federal support will end after next school year, and staffing shortages have made spending even those temporary funds difficult. Meanwhile students are still facing many challenges and shortfalls in mental health, school climate, special education, multilingual learning, healthy and flavorful school meals, and teacher diversity.

RCSD must be of two minds: committed to getting the most out of these unprecedented resources, while also preparing for a future when budgets will be tighter. Not every program or position will be sustainable, but there is no benefit to letting the money go unspent. It's important the community seizes this once in a lifetime opportunity for the sake of the students and families of RCSD. This report lays out recommendations to take full advantage of these unprecedented resources, while setting up students to succeed for the long-term.

Funding and Position Overview

The 2023-2024 Rochester City School District (RCSD) Draft Budget is **\$1.13 billion**. The year will likely mark a high point for RCSD in funding flexibility that will not be seen for another generation or longer. This is the first year RCSD will receive its full amount of state aid under the Foundation Aid formula. It is also the last school year to spend the remaining **\$106 million in one-time federal funding** from the American Rescue Plan¹.

The draft budget is a **slight increase of \$8 million** over the 2022-2023 amended budget of \$1.12 billion²³. Although the overall budget will increase slightly, that small increase will not cover increases in salaries, benefits, and inflation. Funded positions will decrease by 123.64 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in 2023-2024. However, **student enrollment is decreasing at a faster rate than staffing**. The K-12 enrollment at RCSD declined 6.4% between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years⁴. It is likely **enrollment will continue to decline somewhere between 2% and 7%** for the 2023-2024 school year, while **staffing will only decrease by 2%**⁵.

¹ Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-state-grantee-relations-evidence-based-practices/state-and-grantee-relations/deadlines-and-announcements/>

² RCSD April 2023 Financial Report:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/rochny/Board.nsf/files/CR3MJR57BA8D/\\$file/April%20Financial%20Report%20Package%20-%20March%20Data.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/rochny/Board.nsf/files/CR3MJR57BA8D/$file/April%20Financial%20Report%20Package%20-%20March%20Data.pdf)

³ The 2023-24 RCSD Draft Budget Book does not include the CRRSA funding for 2022-23 (\$50M) or the additional revenue (\$9M) RCSD has received in grants after the 2022-23 budget was adopted, which is why the listed \$66M increase differs from our \$8M calculation.

⁴ NYSED Enrollment Data: <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/home.html>

⁵ Calculated using staffing data provided by the RCSD Administration

Some tough choices will have to be made when the 2024-2025 budget is put together early next year. The \$106 million in federal stimulus will be gone. Declining enrollment will impact the amount of state aid RCSD receives, and because Foundation Aid is fully funded, the district cannot expect another large increase in state funding. If Foundation Aid remains fully funded, the district will maintain a relatively strong financial position in 2024-2025. Even so, **declining enrollment and rising costs** will require consolidation of buildings and less generous staffing ratios.

Recommendations

Below are our key recommendations for the 2023-2024 RCSD Budget. Additional recommendations are included within each section of the report.

1. **Fund satellite mental health clinics at every school**, which will become sustainable through billing of insurance.
2. **Make telehealth available to all students** for behavioral and mental health needs.
3. Fund **15 Roc Restorative coaches** and a set aside of **\$10 million to contract with outside agencies** to provide additional professional development and trainings for students/parents on restorative practices such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and/or Positive Emotional Development and Learning Skills.
4. **Fund professional development** for all Pre-K through 3rd grade staff in **restorative practices, the Pyramid Model, and the culturally responsive framework** to be able to eliminate nearly all suspensions in Pre-K through 3rd grade.

Mental Health

The Need

In the fall of 2021, a **national emergency for children’s mental health** was declared by several pediatric health organizations. Even before the pandemic, suicide had become the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 in 2018. When the pandemic hit, emergency department visits spiked for youth mental health emergencies.⁶ The number of children in crisis at the Rochester City School District (RCSD) listed below is staggering. Connecting these children to mental health resources is urgent for their social-emotional well-being and academic success. Early detection of mental health concerns has been shown to improve academic achievement and reduce disruptions at school.⁷

The Children’s Agenda 2023 Parent Poll

- 2 out of 5 Rochester parents say at least one of their children has struggled with their emotional or mental health since going back to school in-person.
- 80+% of Rochester parents said barriers to accessing services included: finding and navigating services, affordability, transportation, and/or long wait times.

2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey at RCSD

- 45% of girls at RCSD reported “feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row in the past year that they stopped doing usual activities” (a sign of depression).
- 19% of all students reported they were feeling depressed, anxious, afraid, empty, or confused because of the death of a close family member or friend.
- 11% of girls at RCSD reported attempting suicide in the past year.⁸

Commendations

- Publication of the **Behavioral and Mental Health Community Resource Guide**
- **School-based Health Centers offering Mental and Behavioral Health Supports:** East Upper and Lower, Edison High School, Franklin Upper and Lower, Freddie Thomas

⁶ AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (2021). <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

⁷ Baskin, T. W., Slaten, C. D., Sorenson, C., Glover-Russell, J., & Merson, D. N. (2010). Does youth psychotherapy improve academically related outcomes? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57, 290–296. doi:10.1037/a0019652

⁸ Monroe County Department of Public Health (2022). <https://www.monroecounty.gov/files/health/health-action/RCSD%20YRBS%202021-22.pdf>

Campus (School 53/25), Northeast College Prep (Charlotte Campus), Northwest College Prep (Douglas Campus), Schools 9, 33

- **Schools participating in the ECHO program** through the EACH grant, that provides specialty training for school teams to help support youth behavioral health needs: Schools 2, 4, 15, 16, 19, 28, 39, 54
- **URMC Supporting Our Students Mental Health Referral program:** Schools 17, 45, East Upper/Lower, NE/NW College Prep, Franklin Upper
- **Potential new Mental Health Clinics** under a pending Office of Mental Health grant with New York State: Northstar Program, Schools 3, 22, 58, School of the Arts, Wilson Commencement, Wilson Foundation/Early College

The Solution

1. Fund **satellite mental health clinics** at every school, which will become sustainable through billing of insurance.
2. Make **telehealth** available to all students for behavioral and mental health needs.
3. Invest \$10 million more in **restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and mindfulness.**
4. Invest \$5 million more for **Help Zones.**
5. Invest \$5 million in additional mental health and **stress reduction** supports.
6. Implement **preventive practices** such as peace circles led by trained staff, parents and students in all schools.
7. To the greatest extent possible, the racial and ethnic background of RCSD staff providing these services should **reflect the students** with whom they are working.
8. Implement the above using a **racial equity** lens.

Position Summaries and Student to Position Ratios

Mental Health: Student to Staff Ratios

Job Title	2018-19 Student:Position Ratio	2022-23 Student:Position Ratio	2023-24 Student:Position Ratio*
Counselor	284:1	240:1	216:1
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	351:1	365:1	398:1
Sch Social Worker	257:1	274:1	203:1
School Psychologist Bilingual	1,008:1	821:1	796:1
School Psychologist	410:1	386:1	331:1
Student Srvcs Rep Bil	2,016:1	1,642:1	796:1
Student Srvcs Representative	25,669:1	7,848:1	5,042:1
Tchr-Health Education	933:1	793:1	659:1

*2023-24 staffing ratios calculated assuming a 3% decline in student enrollment.

Notes: Ratios are calculated based on K-12 enrollment. Enrollment numbers are school year specific and obtained from NYSED. These ratios do not reflect class sizes or caseloads. Actual ratios may be higher depending on how many budgeted positions go unfilled.

Mental Health: Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23- 24 Change (FTE)
Asst Medicaid Analyst	2	4	4	0
Community Coordinator	1	2	2	0
Community Liaison Specialist	2	3	4	1
Community School Site Coord	5	18	18	0
Computer Services Liaison	2	1	1	0
Coor Crisis Support Compliance	0	0	1	1
Counselor Bilingual	0	3	3	0
Counselor	90.3	86.7	93.5	6.8
Dir Of Student Suppt Srvc	1	1	1	0
Dir Of Youth Eng & Cultural Re	1	1	1	0
Director Of Multi Tier Support	0	1	1	0
Ex Dir Eqty Social Emotional	0	1	1	0
Exe Dir Eqty Incls'n Crclmprgm	0	1	1	0
Medicaid Analyst	1	1	1	0
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	11.5	9	8	-1
Sch Social Worker	100	86	99.5	13.5
School Health Coordinator	1	1	1	0
School Psychologist Bilingual	4	4	4	0
School Psychologist	62.6	61	61	0
Student Srvc Rep Bil	2	2	4	2
Student Srvc Representative	1	3	4	1
Tchr-Health Education	27.5	29.7	30.6	0.9
Tchr-Home/Hospital	29.5	26.25	51.25	25
Tchr-Prek Psychologist	2	2	3	1
Tchr-Prek Soc Wrkr	3	5	5	0
Tchr-Wellness Ctr. Coord.	5	0	2	2
Toa Multi Tier Support System	0	3	3	0

School Climate

The Need

Studies show exclusionary discipline does not work. Suspensions are handed out in a racist and ableist way, hurt students academically, and make students more likely to end up incarcerated at some point in their lives (School-to-Prison Pipeline).⁹ The Rochester City School District (RCSD) has one of the highest suspension rates in New York State (15%), about 5 times as high as New York City (3%).

- 19% of Black students were suspended in the 2021-22 school year at RCSD compared to 7% of white students.
- 20% of students with a disability were suspended in the 2021-22 school year at RCSD compared to 14% of general education students.¹⁰

Commendations

- Funding for restorative practices, including the **Roc Restorative** team.
- Funding for **Help Zones**, alternative to suspension rooms, and calm down rooms.
- Passed a **resolution** in support of the Solutions Not Suspensions Bill (A.5691/S.1040) in November 2022.

The Solution

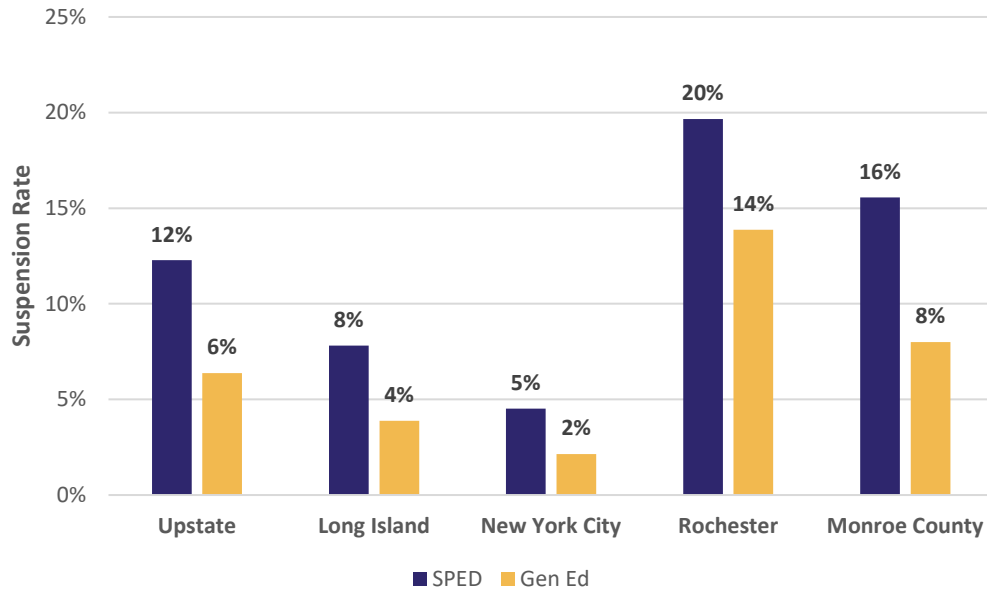
1. Funding for **15 Roc Restorative coaches** and a set aside of **\$10 million to contract** with outside agencies to provide additional one-time professional development and trainings for students/parents on restorative practices.
2. Funding for Help Zones/alternative to suspension rooms in **every school**.
3. **Professional development** for all Pre-K through 3rd grade staff in restorative practices, the pyramid model, and the culturally responsive framework to be able to eliminate nearly all suspensions in Pre-K through 3rd grade.
4. **Limit** long-term suspensions to 20 days.
5. These efforts should be implemented with a focus on equity and driving down inequitable outcomes.

⁹ Rosenbaum, J. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X17752208>

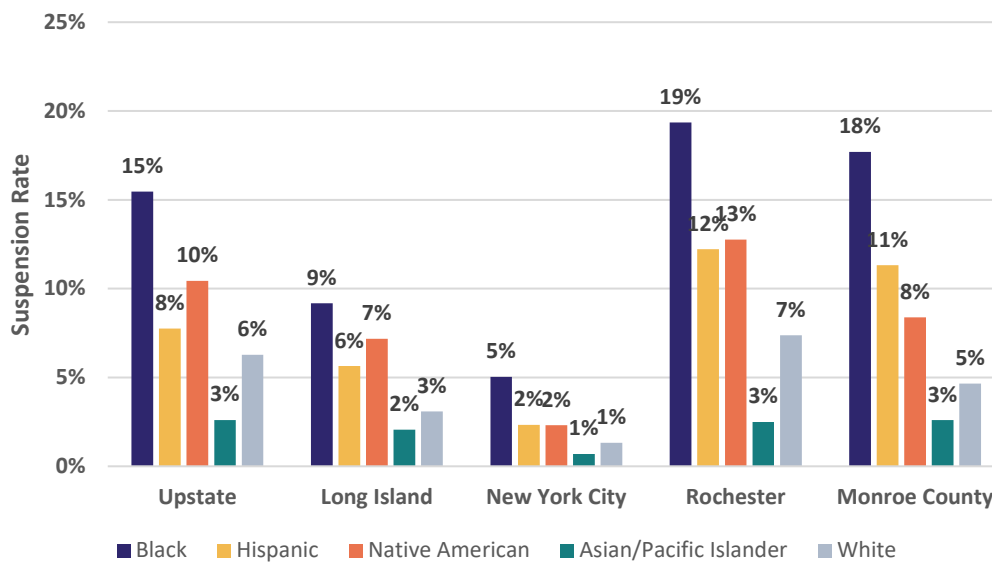
¹⁰ Data provided by NYSED through a FOIL request for the 2021-22 school year

*"Positive change begins with creating a positive environment. This means focusing on inclusion and ensuring children have access to trained RCSD staff who model restorative practice and foster a space grounded in trauma-informed care."
 --Valerie, Rochester community member and certified behavior analyst*

Disparities by Learning Classification (2021-22)



Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity (2021-22)



Position Summaries and Student to Position Ratios

School Climate: Student to Staff Ratios

Job Title	2018-19 Student:Position Ratio	2022-23 Student: Position Ratio	2023-24 Student:Position Ratio*
Counselor	284:1	240:1	216:1
Parent Liaison/Asst Bilingual Total	224:1	149:1	138:1
Parent Liaison/Asst Total	284:1	322:1	290:1
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	351:1	365:1	398:1
Sch Social Worker	257:1	242:1	203:1
School Psychologist	437:1	341:1	331:1
School Sentry Bilingual Total*	175:1	106:1	110:1
School Sentry Total (Includes Bil)*	180:1	113:1	122:1
Tchr-On-Assign Behavior Spec	1,510:1	2,310:1	2,521:1
Roc Restorative Coach	2,567:1	2,599:1	2,241:1

*2023-24 staffing ratios calculated assuming a 3% decline in student enrollment. Notes: Ratios are calculated based on K-12 enrollment. Enrollment numbers are school year specific and obtained from NYSED. These ratios do not reflect class sizes or caseloads. Actual ratios may be higher depending on how many budgeted positions go unfilled.

School Climate: Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23-24 Change (FTE)
Coor Crisis Support Compliance	0	0	1	1
Counselor	90.3	86.7	93.5	6.8
Ex Dir Eqty Social Emotional	0	1	1	0
Guard	4	4	4	0
Parent Liaison Bilingual	3	5	5	0
Home School Asst Bilingual Total	15	17	18	1
Parent Liaison/Asst Bilingual Total	18	22	23	1
Parent Liaison	33	25	25	0
Home School Asst Total	57.5	39.6	44.6	5
Parent Liaison/Asst Total	90.5	64.6	69.6	5
Part-Time Guard	3	3	0	-3
Prek Parent Liaison Bilingual	2	1	1	0
Prek Parent Liaison	4	2	2	0
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	11.5	9	8	-1
Sch Social Worker	100	86	99.5	13.5
School Psychologist Bilingual	4	4	4	0
School Psychologist	58.7	61	61	0
School Sentry Bilingual Total*	23	31	29	-5
School Sentry Total (Includes Bil)*	143	184	166	-18
Security Patrol Officer	5	6	6	0
Tchr-On-Assign Behavior Spec	17	9	8	-1
Roc Restorative	10	8	9	1
Tchr-Prek Soc Wrkr	3	5	5	0
Tchr-Wellness Ctr. Coord.	5	0	2	2
Toa Multi Tier Support System	0	3	3	0

Multilingual Learners

The Need

When a child who speaks English as a second language enters the Rochester City School District (RCSD), they are tested for English proficiency and placed in a program that fits their unique language needs. These students are known as English Language Learners (ELL) or Multilingual Learners (MLL).¹¹ This school year there are **3,238** of these students making up **14% of the student population**.¹²

Many programs for MLL students help them **transition to English-only instruction**, but because Rochester has a substantial Spanish-speaking population, there are also bilingual programs where students **learn in English and Spanish at the same time**. These students and the programs that support them are an asset of cultural vibrancy and exchange rarely seen in suburban districts.

However, MLL programs are more expensive per student than general education¹³ and there is shortage of bilingual teachers.¹⁴ MLL students often face challenges in finding the right placement to meet their needs, depending on the availability of programs in different schools. A lack of consistent staffing and certified teachers is a serious barrier to program improvement and availability.

Commendations

- RCSD has significantly increased the number of **funded translator positions** from 4 in 2018-19 to 10.15 in 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- Student and parent communications/documents are **more consistently translated** into the top 5 languages spoken by MLLs.
- Expansion of **Pre-K Bilingual Staffing** to 11 teachers (up from 4) in the draft budget to meet the needs of MLL Pre-K students.¹⁵

¹¹ For full description of NYS policies regarding ELLs/MLLs:

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/bilingual-ed/guideforparentsofellsinnysenglish.pdf>

¹² NYSED Enrollment Data, 2023: <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/home.html>

¹³ Ed Note, 2020: <https://ednote.ecs.org/how-states-allocate-funding-for-english-language-learners/>

¹⁴ Education First, 2020: Rochester <https://www.education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Farash-Foundation-Rochester-Teacher-Pipeline-Analysis.pdf>

¹⁵ Staffing data provided by RCSD Administration

The Solution

1. Increase multilingual **professional development** for all staff including techniques for scaffolding language acquisition. Increase course offerings and multilingual materials (\$3 million).
2. Make a one-time investment in **translation equipment** (headsets and transmitters) and **translate all routine documents and forms** into all languages spoken by RCSD-student caregivers (\$150 thousand).
3. Increase **engagement** of refugee families with dedicated staff to support parent engagement from non-English speaking families.
4. **Fully fund** the recommendations of the New York State corrective action plan.
5. Align continuum of multilingual services including bilingual programming for **fewer student transitions** and more equitable program availability.

Position Summaries and Student to Position Ratios

Bilingual Education: Student to Staff Ratios

Job Title	2018-19 Student:Position Ratio	2022-23 Student:Position Ratio	2023-24 Student:Position Ratio*
Foreign Language Translator	1,008:1	323:1	314:1
Home School Asst Bil	504:1	365:1	354:1
Lang Assessor Asst Bil	4,032:1	1,642:1	1,593:1
Language Assessor - Bilingual	1,613:1	1,642:1	1,593:1
Library Media Specialist Bil	unavailable	3,283:1	3,185:1
Office Clerk Bilingual Total*	84:1	68:1	71:1
Para Sped Ed 1:1 Bil 35 Hrs	unavailable	821:1	796:1
Parent Liaison Bilingual	1,344:1	657:1	637:1
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	336:1	365:1	398,1
School Psychologist Bilingual	1,008:1	821:1	796:1
School Secretary Bilingual	403:1	328:1	319:1
School Sentry Bilingual Total*	175:1	106:1	110:1
Student Srvcs Rep Bil	2,016:1	1,642:1	796:1
Tchr Reading - Bil	1,344:1	3,283:1	3,185:1
Tchr-ELL Coach	1,344:1	1,642:1	1,593:1
Tchr-Esol	20:1	19:1	18:1

*2023-24 staffing ratios calculated assuming a 3% decline in student enrollment.

Notes: Ratios are calculated based on K-12 enrollment of English Language Learners. Enrollment numbers are school year specific and obtained from NYSED. These ratios do not reflect class sizes or caseloads. Actual ratios may be higher depending on how many budgeted positions go unfilled.

Bilingual Education: Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23- 24 Change (FTE)
Attendance Assistant-Bilingual	1	1	1	0
Bil Community Liaison Spec	1	2	2	0
Child Development Assist-Bil	2	1	1	0
Counselor Bilingual	0	3	3	0
Dir Of Bil Edu & World Lang	0	0	0.5	0.5
Dir Of Bilingual Education	1	1	0.5	-0.5
Dir Of English As New Language	0	0	2	2
Dir Of Multilingual Education	0	1	0	-1
Epo Bilingual Tchr Assistant	2	1	1	0
Epo Para Bilingual	2	1	1	0
Exec Dir Bilgual Ed World Lang	0	0	1	1
Exec Dir Of Multilingual Ed	1	1	0	-1
Executive Assistant Bilingual	2	3	3	0
Foreign Language Translator	4	10.15	10.15	0
Home School Asst Bil	8	9	9	0
Lang Assessor Asst Bil	1	2	2	0
Language Assessor - Bilingual	2.5	2	2	0
Language Assessor Assistant	1	0	0	0
Library Media Specialist Bil	0	1	1	0
Office Clerk Bilingual Total*	48	48	45	-3
Para Bilingual 35 Hrs	5	12	6	-6
Para Bilingual	9	0	0	0
Para Prek Bilingual 32.5 Hrs	4	6	13	7
Para Spec Ed 1:1 Bilin 30 Hrs	13	4	3	-1
Para Sped Ed 1:1 Bil 35 Hrs	0	4	4	0
Parent Liaison Bilingual	3	5	5	0
Prek Parent Liaison Bilingual	2	1	1	0
Sch Soc Wrk Bil	12	9	8	-1
School Psychologist Bilingual	4	4	4	0
School Secretary Bilingual	10	10	10	0
School Sentry Bilingual Total*	23	31	29	-5

Student Srvc's Rep Bil	2	2	4	2
Tchr Asst Bilingual	6	6	6	0
Tchr Asst - Spec Ed Bil	12	9	11	2
Tchr On Assign -Bil	3	4	2	-2
Tchr Reading - Bil	3	1	1	0
Tchr-Bilingual-Math	5.2	6.2	7	0.8
Tchr-Bilingual-Science	6.2	9.2	10.5	1.3
Tchr-Bilingual-Soc St	6.6	6.4	8.2	1.8
Tchr-Elem 1-3 Bilingual	31	28	30	2
Tchr-Elem 4-6 Bilingual	31	29	27	-2
Tchr-ELL Coach	3	2	2	0
Tchr-Esol	203.65	173.4	174.3	0.9
Tchr-Kindergarten-Bilingual	11	10	10	0
Tchr-Pre-K Bilingual	4	4	11	7
Tchr-Spec Ed Bilingual	55	42.8	48.9	6.1
Toa Latino Studies Suppt Coach	1	1	1	0
TOA-Lang Proficiencyteam Assr	1	1	1	0

Special Education

The Need

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) is under **multiple improvement plans and legal sanctions** for problems with legal compliance and student performance in special education.

- 22% of RCSD students are classified as having a disability, one of the highest rates of any school district in New York State.¹⁶
- The Continuum of Services document, which outlines what services and educational settings are available in which buildings, has not been updated since the 2018-19 school year.¹⁷

Parents continue to struggle with **navigating** the special education system. Parent leaders with The Children’s Agenda and the Special Education Parent Advisory Council have noted difficulty with:

- Getting their children properly evaluated
- Finding the right placement and services
- Understanding their rights as parents

In a parent poll conducted by The Children's Agenda in March 2023, only 56% of parents in Rochester (the majority RCSD parents) said their child with a disability has the supports they need to thrive in school.

Commendations

The **graduation rate** for students with disabilities has steadily improved from an abysmal 22.5% in August 2010 to 55% in August 2022.

The Solution

- **Fully fund** the recommendations of the Special Education Advisory Council, who helped developed the consent decree.
- Consistent **mandatory professional development** for all staff on students’ IEPs, implicit bias, the asset model approach, Other Health Impairment (OHI) classification, and the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

¹⁶ NYSED Enrollment Data 2021-22, <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2022&instid=800000050065>

¹⁷ RCSD Special Education Department Website (2023). <https://www.rcsdk12.org/domain/12378>

- **Align** the continuum of special education services across buildings for fewer student transitions, more program availability, and adherence to LRE.
- Fund regular **trainings for parents** on how to read an IEP, the process for testing children, the continuum of services available to children, and the right to IEE.
- Strengthen MTSS by investing in **universal language supports** in K-3.

Position Summaries and Student to Position Ratios

Special Education: Student to Staff Ratios

Job Title	2018-19 Student:Position Ratio	2022-23 Student:Position Ratio	2023-24 Student:Position Ratio*
Associate Dir Of Special Educ	-	184:1	155:1
Para Spec Ed Total*	23:1	19:1	19:1
Tchr Asst - Special Education	26:1	23:1	22:1
Tchr-Coordinator Of Special Ed	304:1	386:1	387:1
Tchr-Spec Ed Blind/Vis Imp	868:1	798:1	774:1
Tchr-Spec Ed Sp/Hh	44:1	45:1	43:1
Tchr-Spec Ed	10:1	9:1	9:1

*2023-24 staffing ratios calculated assuming a 3% decline in student enrollment.

Notes: Ratios are calculated based on K-12 enrollment of students with disabilities. Enrollment numbers are school year specific and obtained from NYSED. These ratios do not reflect class sizes or caseloads. Actual ratios may be higher depending on how many budgeted positions go unfilled.

Special Education: Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23- 24 Change (FTE)
Admin Spec For Special Ed	0	0	1	1
Associate Dir Of Special Educ	0	26	30	4
Associate Dir Sped Compliance	1	1	1	0
Chief Special Educ & Rel Srvc	1	1	1	0
Dir Alt Spec Ed Prog	2	1	1	0
Epo Para Sp Ed 1:1	2	2	3	1
Epo Spec Educ Administrator	1	1	1	0
Epo Tchr Asst Special Ed	6	2	2	0
Para Pre-K Spec Ed	10	15	17	2

Para Spec Ed 1:1 Bilin 30 Hrs	13	4	3	-1
Para Spec Ed 1:1	95	82	78	-4
Para Spec Ed 32.5 Hrs	12	16	8	-8
Para Spec Ed 35 Hrs	4	11	44	33
Para Spec Ed	118	112	79	-33
Para Sped 1:1 32.5 Hrs	0.5	2	0	-2
Para Sped 1:1 35 Hrs	17	18	26	8
Para Sped Ed 1:1 Bil 35 Hrs	0	4	4	0
Para Spec Ed Total*	259.5	249	242	-7
Special Education Counsel	1	1	1	0
Tchr Asst - Spec Ed Bil	12	9	11	2
Tchr Asst - Special Education	231.5	205	209	4
Tchr-On-Assign Behavior Spec	17	9	8	-1
Tchr On Assign Special Ed	4	5	4	-1
Tchr-Coordinator Of Special Ed	20	12.4	12	-0.4
Tchr-Pre-K Sped	15	18	20	2
Tchr-Prek Speech/Hearing	13.7	18.9	22.1	3.2
Tchr-Spec Ed Blind/Vis Imp	7	6	6	0
Tchr-Spec Ed Sp/Hh	139.6	106	108.7	2.7
Tchr-Spec Ed	600.8	544.7	514.7	-30
Tchr-Spec Ed Bilingual Total	55	42.8	48.9	6.1
Tchr-Speech/Hrng Imp Bil	0	5	5	0
Tchr-Speech/Language-Audiology	5	5	5	0
Zone Dir Of Specialized Srvc	3	4	4	0

Early Childhood Education

The Need

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) faces challenges as it continues to **build back enrollment and support children dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Data collected by the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership's (RECAP) 2021-2022 Family Survey showed that 28.4% of children lost a close family member to bereavement and approximately 16% of surveyed families were struggling to find adequate child care.¹⁸ These sources of family stress often manifest in a child's behavior and school performance, potentially impacting the student's long-term success.

Other RECAP Annual Report¹⁹ findings include:

- Average attendance was lower than previous years, at 70% for all students, with only 15.1% of 4-year-olds attending 90% or more days compared to 36% in 2016-2017.
- 43.6% of 4-year-olds in Pre-K were determined to be kindergarten ready, a decline from 50-57% in previous years.
- Low attendance was a significant factor in kindergarten readiness, with a readiness rate of 37.4% among students who attended fewer than 80% of school days and 54.1% for students who attended 90% or more days.
- Students in bilingual classrooms had the same rate of growth compared to their peers in general education classrooms and showed a higher rate of growth on the English Language Learning subscale.

Over the next few years, these challenges are likely to be exacerbated and the successes diminished without state-level reforms to the current Pre-K funding structure. Unlike K-12 and child care market rates that include mechanisms for increases over time, the Pre-K grant amount, when analyzed at a per-student level, has not increased in several years. In the 2022-2023 school year, the K-12 per-student Foundation Aid rate was \$14,331, over \$2000 higher than the stagnant \$12,305 Rochester receives per Pre-K student.²⁰ As this disparity continues to grow and inflation continues to erode flat-funding, RCSD Pre-K programs are likely to further struggle with staff retention and affording the investments necessary to meet the growing needs of Rochester's children. State leaders are understandably focused on expanding the

¹⁸ Children's Institute (2022). RECAP 2020-2021 Annual Report Highlights, https://www.childrensinstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/RECAP-report_2021-22_facts-at-a-glance_10.2022_V3.pdf

¹⁹ Children's Institute (2022) Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Project 2020-2021 Annual Report, https://www.childrensinstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/2021-2022_RECAP-Annual-Report_FINAL3.pdf

²⁰ New York State Education Department (2022). 2022-2023 UPK Allocations List, <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/early-learning/2022-2023-upk-allocations-list.pdf>

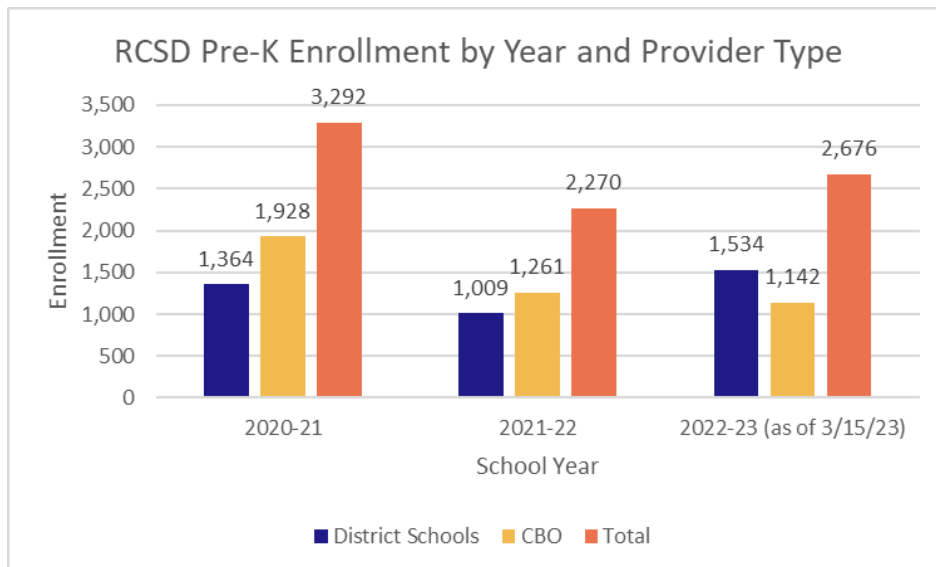
number of Pre-K seats in areas of the state without universal preschool offerings, but this should not come at the expense of sustained investment in existing programs.

Commendations

Rochester’s Pre-Kindergarten programs are widely viewed as a **high-quality bright spot** within the school district and are the result of decades of close partnership between RCSD and a number of community-based organizations (CBOs).

The proposed budget includes significant **expansions in the bilingual Pre-K workforce** when compared to last year’s budget, more than doubling the number of bilingual teachers from 4 to 11 and the number of bilingual paraprofessionals from 6 to 13. There are also **modest FTE increases for both general and special education Pre-K teachers and paraprofessionals**. While these investments are promising, they come with a backdrop of anecdotal reports of high rates of teacher attrition and turnover which may mitigate their effectiveness.

Per-student state funding for the UPK program has been flat for several years, resulting in an inflation-adjusted cut in revenue. In the 2022-2023 school year, RCSD was able to increase the per-student rate for community-based Pre-K programs from \$9,000 to \$10,000, but will struggle to increase rates for community-based programs in the future without state action. The 2022-2023 CBO rate increase is maintained in the 2023-2024 budget.



The Solution

1. RCSD should continue to join with and **support advocacy** efforts to achieve an increase in per-student UPK rates from New York State.
2. Use American Rescue Plan Act funds to strengthen RCSD’s early childhood programs through:
 - a. Full **developmental screenings** for all 3- and 4-year-old students.
 - b. **Training** for teachers, paraprofessionals, aides, and other school staff, as well as parents and students, on topics such as Restorative Justice, Social-Emotional Learning, De-escalation, the Pyramid Model, and Infant Early Childhood Mental Health.

Early Childhood: Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23-24 Change (FTE)
Child Development Assistant	4	4	5	1
Child Development Assist-Bil	2	2	1	-1
Dir Roch Erly Childhood Ed Ctr	1	1	1	0
Director Of Transition Systems	1	1	1	0
Exec Dir Of Early Childhood Ed	1	1	1	0
Lead Para Prek	1	1	1	0
Occup Therapy Asst	4	2.2	1	-1.2
Occupational Therapist	32.8	38.05	40.3	2.25
Para Pre-K 30 Hrs	3	4	0	-4
Para Prek Bilingual 32.5 Hrs	4	6	13	7
Para Pre-K Break	25	48	56	8
Para Pre-K Spec Ed	10	15	17	2
Para Pre-K	41	69	78	9
Prek Parent Liaison Bilingual	2	1	1	0
Prek Parent Liaison	2	2	2	0
Pre-K Tchr On Assignment	0	10	10	0
Prog Admin Pre-K	0.6	0.6	0.6	0
RPPP Prek Para	24	0	0	0
School Selection Spec 40 Hrs	0	0	1	1
Tchr-Pre-K Bilingual	4	4	11	7
Tchr-Prek Music	1	1	1	0
Tchr-Prek Psychologist	2	2	3	1
Tchr-Prek Soc Wrkr	3	5	5	0

Tchr-Pre-K Sped	15	18	20	2
Tchr-Prek Speech/Hearing	13.7	18.9	22.1	3.2
Tchr-Pre-K	75	83	86.67	3.67

School Meals

The Need

Student surveys and student testimony at Rochester City School District (RCSD) Board of Education meetings have criticized the **quality of school meals**. The quality of school meals is determined by the federal reimbursement rate per meal, which is \$4.49 per lunch and \$2.77 per breakfast (2022-2023). This must cover the cost of food as well as materials and labor.²¹ A low reimbursement rate limits the options for quality and variety. RCSD spent less than half their reimbursements on food in 2020-2021, with the rest used for materials and labor.²² In the short-term, RCSD may supplement its food service budget, as it plans to do in 2023-24, but that means less money for other needs across the district. In the long-term, New York State and the federal government should increase reimbursement rates for school meals.

Commendations

- The 2023-24 Draft Food Service Budget is **supplemented** by \$3.5 million from the General Fund and savings. This will help improve quality and variety of meals.
- Use of one-time federal funds to purchase **salad bars**.

The Solution

- We fully **support** the \$3.5 million in supplemental funding from the General Fund and savings being spent on food service to improve meal quality and variety.
- Ensure all schools have access to **salad bars and flavor stations**.
- Work with a representative committee of **parents and students** to come up with meal ideas that are culturally relevant.
- Source more **fresh produce** and use the purchasing power of the district in collaboration with other large districts to bend the supply chain towards healthier options.
- RCSD should **advocate** for increased state and federal funding for school meals.

"Children need good nutrition to attend, listen and concentrate on learning."

-- Gloria, retired social worker

²¹ New York State also pays a small amount of the reimbursement rate. More information here: <http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/2022-2023-reimbursement-rates>

²² See 2021-22 RCSD Draft Budget, Section 4 Page 77, Facilities and Related budget line

Position Summaries and Student to Position Ratios

Food Service: Student to Staff Ratios

Job Title	2018-19 Student:Position Ratio	2022-23 Student:Position Ratio	2023-24 Student:Position Ratio*
Asst Cook	2,438:1	572:1	502:1
Cafeteria Manager	2,852:1	2,970:1	2,521:1
Cook Manager	626:1	520:1	492:1
Cook	2,080:1	3,103:1	4,237:1
Food Svc Hlpr	225:1	229:1	216:1
Food Svc Hlpr-Under 4 Hr/Da	1,247:1	11,301:1	10,961:1

*2023-24 staffing ratios calculated assuming a 3% decline in student enrollment.

Notes: Ratios are calculated based on K-12 enrollment. Enrollment numbers are school year specific and obtained from NYSED. These ratios do not reflect class sizes or caseloads. Actual ratios may be higher depending on how many budgeted positions go unfilled.

Food Service: Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)

Job Title	2018-19 Adopted (FTE)	2022-23 Adopted (FTE)	2023-24 Draft (FTE)	22-23 to 23- 24 Change (FTE)
Asst Cook	10.53	36.33	40.15	3.82
Cafeteria Manager	9	7	8	1
Cook Manager	41	40	41	1
Cook	12.34	6.7	4.76	-1.94
Dir Of Schl Food Service	2	1	1	0
Executive Chef	0	0	1	1
Food Srvc Field Supv	4	4	5	1
Food Svc Hlpr	114.24	90.99	93.32	2.33
Food Svc Hlpr-Under 4 Hr/Da	20.58	1.84	1.84	0
School Nutrition Coord	1	1	1	0

Budget Transparency

The Need

The Children’s Agenda believes **public transparency in the Rochester City School District’s budget process is necessary to strengthen collaboration and trust** between all members of the school community. Everyone should know where the public's money is being spent and why.

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) Budget Book is difficult for anyone outside the RCSD Administration or Finance Department to interpret. In the budget book format adopted last year and used once again this year, large amounts of information that were historically included have been removed. Budget transparency will remain extremely low without the release of additional information. Parents, students, staff, and community members are **unable to verify what programs and positions are funded** in the budget, and unable to hold district leaders accountable for following through on promised spending.

- The budget book follows the same format as last year, which lacks sufficient detail for the public to meaningfully review spending or hold district leaders accountable.
- Despite repeated calls last year for an Object Summary which would list all positions (e.g., counselors, special education teachers, etc.), those details are still absent.
- \$5 million in savings (appropriated fund balance) is used to close the so-called “budget gap”, despite the use of \$106 million in one-time federal stimulus funding and a \$39 million increase in state aid (Foundation Aid).
- Actual spending for the previous school year and current amended spending columns that were removed last year are still absent. This is important because the Amended column provides an updated picture of current funded positions and is more accurate than the adopted budget from the previous year.
- The federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) funding that provided \$50 million in the 2022-23 school year is not referenced in the 2023-24 budget book. This makes accurate comparisons between the two years impossible. For example, it’s not clear what is happening with the positions funded with CRRSA dollars last year.
- Major budget initiatives are outlined with no supporting financial information; for example: “Addressing chronic absenteeism” is listed without a detailed explanation of how it will be funded.²³

²³ RCSD Draft Budget Book SY2324 (2023).

<https://www.rcsdk12.org/cms/lib/NY01001156/Centricity/Domain/92/RCSD%20Draft%20Budget%20Book%20SY2324%2032423.pdf>

Commendations

- Budget Book was posted nearly **on time** (March 24th).
- The RCSD Administration has been **responsive to questions** about the budget and open to dialogue with The Children’s Agenda.

The Solution

- Include an **Object Summary** of all positions districtwide by job code.
- Provide a **narrative summary** of all major budget initiatives with supporting dollar figures and where that funding is within the budget book (should be multiple pages long not just a one-page summary).
- Restore the **amended and actual** columns.
- **Work with parents and community members** to redesign the budget book. This redesign process should be communicated publicly and should have clear timelines.