



rochester teachers association

Representing teachers • school instructors • substitute teachers • home/hospital teachers • preschool teachers • retired teachers

Investing In the Safety, Social/Emotional and Academic Needs of Our Students

RTA Proposal to the Rochester City School District

(December 2, 2021)

While the Rochester City School District received hundreds of millions in additional aid from the Federal and State governments, our students returned to in-person learning traumatized by the effects of the pandemic, with significantly heightened social/emotional needs, and schools that are less safe.

Instead of investing in what our students need, the District plans to move in precisely the opposite direction: closing some schools, merging or relocating other schools, creating more disruption at a time that our students need stability – thus laying the foundation for maxing out class sizes, laying off teachers and reducing services for our students. But since the District now has the revenue to provide what our students need and deserve, we recommend the following instead:

1. Reduce class sizes.

To meet safety, pandemic, social/emotional and academic needs of students, maximum class sizes should be adjusted: from 26 to 22 at Elementary Schools; from 28 to 24 at Middle Schools; from 29 to 25 at High Schools. PreK is already required by the State to be at 18:1:1.

2. Increase students' access to social/emotional support services.

Based on enrollment and current allocations, hire 38 more School Counselors so that each PreK-6 school also have a full-time Counselor; add 9 additional School Social Workers; and add 13 more School Psychologists.

3. Create and strengthen alternative programs and placement opportunities.

- a. Reopen the Young Mothers Program/Interim Health Program as an initiative for Secondary students. Restore the staff who were there who had already developed relationships and strategies.
- b. Reestablish an Evening School for students in grades 9-12 who need to work during normal school hours, are short of credits or who need to care for younger siblings.
- c. Increase the capacity for the LyncX Program to add a Middle School for students who do not function effectively at traditional schools.
- d. Restore NorthSTAR Elementary program with Hillside support staff to address the need for helping students at the earliest possible opportunity.

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4. Provide incentives to address high shortage teaching positions.

- a. Since July 1, more than 110 teachers have resigned from the Rochester City School District. Approximately half of that staff had less than 8 years of service.
- b. Provide incentives to address the general shortage of teachers and especially the shortage of substitute teachers, Bilingual teachers, Special Education teachers.

The unprecedented increase in Federal and State funding to our District, as well as the State's commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid, presents a historic opportunity to invest in our schools and in our students. The District should abandon its current plan to close schools, max out class sizes, and lay off teachers in the name of "right sizing" the District. Instead, we should do right by our students at a time when we can afford it and when our students need it the most.