

Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole
April 26, 2016

Attendance: Commissioner Cruz (Chair); Commissioners Adams, Powell, Elliott, White, Hallmark, and Evans (arrived 6:19PM).

Parent Representative: Giancarlo Giannini.

District Staff: Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz; Lauren Poehlman, Chief Financial Officer; Everton Sewell, Budget Director; Shaun Nelms, Superintendent of East High School; Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning; Adele Bovard, Deputy Superintendent for Administration; Mike Schmidt, Chief of School Operations; Christopher Suriano, Director of Special Education; Ray Giamartino, Chief of School Transformation; Kelly Bauman, Office of School Innovation; Ruth Turner, Director of School Counseling & Social Work.

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 6:12PM, noting the continued challenges from facing annual budget deficits and having to make difficult decisions. He discussed the chief priorities of the Board: keeping classrooms whole and providing resources to meet students' needs.

I. Presentation of Updated 2016-17 RCSD Budget

Lauren Poehlman pointed out that the greatest challenge in the budget development process has been uncertainty of the amount of revenue the District will ultimately receive, which also impedes the ability to finalize the figures in the budget. She noted that she continues to receive updated news and information. She presented plans for balancing the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget, identifying the following priorities:

- Maintaining programs as close to current levels as possible
- Support for receivership schools
- Support for students' social/emotional needs
- Minimize staff reductions, with school-based positions as a last resort
- Improve the accuracy of revenue and expense projections

Ms. Poehlman stated that the projected 2016-17 budget gap was approximately \$40M in January 2016. After applying a portion of the Fund Balance, reducing expenditures, and eliminating contingency funds, the projected 2016-17 shortfall amounted to about \$24M. Ms. Poehlman noted that the adopted NYS budget added another \$7M in revenue for the District, but some funds also had to be restored to summer learning programs. The net effect of these changes yielded an estimated budget deficit of approximately \$18.3M, which was reported to the Board in the second budget deliberation meeting on April 12th.

Ms. Poehlman reported a number of funding changes since the last budget meeting on April 12th:

- An additional \$270K for K-2 curriculum development, which will cover the cost of five teachers to write the new curriculum and \$200K to help support the program
- Reduction in funding for the Big Picture program from \$600K to \$78K: Ms. Poehlman stated that resources were shifted from a number of different departments to reduce funding. Superintendent Cimusz noted that this led to the loss of 6.0FTE for instructional coaches to fund the launch of the Big Picture program.
- Increase in funding for Help Rooms from \$600K to \$715K, which will add Help Rooms in another 13 schools so that these rooms will be available in every 7-12 school. Dr. Otuwa explained that Help Rooms are places for students in distress to calm down, with the opportunity to speak with a teacher or other school staff member to debrief and prepare for return to the classroom.
- Elimination of the 2nd Step Curriculum pilot in the 2016-17 RCSD budget
- Removal of APPR external evaluation from the 2016-17 budget

Superintendent Cimusz reported that eliminating the 2nd Step curriculum pilot and the APPR external evaluation from the budget yielded approximately \$1M in cost savings. She noted that the District still has to enter into 3012-d negotiations, which have just begun. The Superintendent stated that there is uncertainty at this point about options available to school districts in 2016-17 regarding NYS testing. She expressed the hope that additional options will be offered to districts next year to enable this budget line to be reduced, so that funding could be used for the APPR external evaluation.

Adele Bovard stated that she has been speaking with State officials about options and flexibility with respect to 3012-d. She noted that these discussions have been intensifying lately because school districts need fiscal relief to implement the provisions of 3012-d. Ms. Bovard pointed out that student test results are not being used to evaluate teachers and principals, but many restrictive requirements remain. She stated that she has been collaborating with the Big 5 and local districts to advocate for flexibility to allow districts to shift resources to meet requirements, rather than having to add funding for this purpose.

- Increase of \$200K for staffing, based on matching staffing levels with course requests and special placements.
- An additional \$200K to enable another 47 students at East High School to attend Career & Technical Education programs at BOCES. Currently 15 East High School students attend these programs.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the need for additional funding for the East High School EPO, particularly in light of the substantial funding already provided by RCSD and by NYS for receivership schools (e.g. \$11M). She expressed concern regarding the level of spending for East High School and questioned the need for another \$200K from the District, contending that

these funds could be drawn from the initial allocation to the school to provide BOCES services to East High School students. Dr. Shaun Nelms explained that the additional funding for BOCES is required due to the NYS Education Department (NYSED) designating East High School as an “out of time” school prior to establishing the educational partnership with the University of Rochester. To ensure that students’ needs are met, NYSED requires courses to be offered through an approved Career & Technical Education (CTE) program and BOCES is the only approved program in the region. He noted that the additional funding for BOCES is part of a receivership grant, and the EPO will return much more than \$200K to the District this year.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the specific CTE programs in which East High School students are participating at BOCES. Dr. Nelms reported that most students are taking CTE courses in fields such as welding, cosmetology, manufacturing/fabrication, criminal justice, or one of the other 40 programs offered through BOCES. He stated that students interested in pursuing a career in public safety are directed to the RCSD police, firefighter, or EMT programs, which have been approved by the NYS Education Department. Dr. Nelms added that students will be directed to CTE programs at Edison High School, after the school has been designated “in good standing” by NYSED.

Commissioner Adams asked about the length of time for which East High School will be in “out of time” status. Superintendent Cimusz replied that “out of time” is a determination made by the State, and applies to the same schools that have been designated as “persistently struggling”. Dr. Nelms expressed the hope that East High School will be removed from “out of time” status within five years, when the educational partnership agreement will expire.

Ms. Poehlman discussed further reductions in funding in 2016-17 to help close the budget gap:

- Reduced use of temporary staffing through agencies (-\$1.0M)
- Reduced use of substitute teachers (-\$2.0M)
- Reduced use of Professional/Technical services (e.g. contracts with consultants and other types of vendors) – no cost savings estimate yet because this item is continuing to be evaluated
- Scheduling schools on a consistent basis to reduce transportation costs (-\$2.0M)
- Include administrative costs for reimbursement under the Facilities Modernization program (based on a recent legal ruling) (-\$0.4M)
- Provide standard per-student allocations for Expanded Learning Time (ELT) programs (-\$1.3M)
- Reduce extra pay costs by reducing ELT programs to a 7.5-hour day (-\$0.8M)
- Consolidate under-enrolled classrooms at the 6th grade level (-0.4M)
- Reduce Central Office and Administrative costs (-0.9M)

Dr. Otuwa discussed consolidation of five 6th-grade classrooms in 2016-17 to maximize classroom capacity and staffing efficiencies.

Commissioner Powell asked whether these 6th grade classrooms are all in the same school building, pointing out that Board policy assures parents that students can remain in the same school until the terminal grade. Dr. Otuwa explained that the target class size at the 6th grade level is 26 students. If a school already has 26 6th grade students in a class and a few additional students enroll, another classroom would have to be created. Dr. Otuwa explained that this leads

to multiple classrooms in many different schools with a small number of students. She stated that the District will not allow any voluntary transfers to a school if the 6th grade class already has 26 students enrolled. At that point, 6th grade students will be directed to choose from other schools that have not maximized these class sizes.

Commissioner Powell inquired why this is an issue specifically at the 6th grade level. Dr. Otuwa responded that the District currently has more students in 6th grade in classes with low enrollment than in the other grade levels. She explained that teaching staff have been shifted among schools to align with the maximum classroom capacity at the 6th grade level. Superintendent Cimusz added that a larger number of students tend to leave the District at the end of 6th grade to attend parochial, private or charter schools than at other grade levels.

Ms. Poehlman pointed out that the current proposal would reduce funding for Central Office by another \$900K beyond the amount contained in the initial draft budget, leading to a total of \$1.8M in reductions for the Central Office. She reported that Central Office and administrative cost savings amount to \$8.8M.

Commissioner Adams asked about the amount of the proposed \$1.8M in cost savings for Central Office that is due to staffing reductions. Ms. Poehlman replied that all of the projected cost savings will be attained through staffing reductions, although some of the positions are currently vacant.

Action Item: Ms. Poehlman will provide the Board with a list of the positions to be cut in Central Office, including information about which positions are currently vacant.

Superintendent Cimusz discussed the \$75M in NYS funding dedicated to community and receivership schools. She reported that NYS officials have indicated that an estimated \$10M of these funds will be allocated to the District. The Superintendent stated that the School Improvement Grant (SIG) 7 is another potential source of revenue for priority schools that have not received these funds in the past. She stated that NYS officials have estimated an allocation of approximately \$500K per school for five years, which would add another \$8M in revenue to the District if all RCSD schools are successful with their grant applications. Superintendent Cimusz pointed out that the updated 2016-17 RCSD budget includes \$7M of additional revenue to the District, which is quite conservative. Ms. Poehlman cautioned about potential restrictions on the use of these funds, and offered to provide updates as information is received. The Superintendent noted that some of the items that the District has not been able to include in the 2016-17 RCSD budget (e.g. social and emotional supports, additional staffing at schools newly designated as “priority schools”) will be able to be funded through these other revenue sources.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the amount remaining in the Fund Balance at this point. Ms. Poehlman reported that the Fund Balance is approximately \$20M at this time, and she hopes to replenish approximately \$5M through current year cost savings. She stated that the exact amount to be restored to the Fund Balance will depend on the resolution of the current cash capital issue with the City of Rochester and several other outstanding issues. Ms. Poehlman added that \$1.2M in funding has been returned to the District this year from the East High School EPO and \$2.6M in premiums from a bond sale earlier this year. She stated that she hopes to restore \$10M to the Fund Balance, but the net impact from using some of the funds to cover the 2016-17 budget gap will leave a total of approximately \$29M. Ms. Poehlman emphasized

that these figures are dependent upon attaining significant cost savings in the current year and the additional funding represents a one-time opportunity. She stated that successful management of costs in 2016-17 will leave the District in an advantageous position for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Commissioner Evans asked about budgeting for contingency funds to cover unforeseen circumstances in 2016-17. Ms. Poehlman replied that \$5M in contingency funds were included in the budget earlier in the process, but removed when the \$40M gap became apparent. She stated that she plans to put processes in place to exert greater control over RCSD expenditures. Ms. Poehlman added that unforeseen costs that arise during 2016-17 may lead the District to have to make mid-year funding cuts.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that projections are more important than ever this year because of the lack of contingency funds in the 2016-17 RCSD budget. Everton Sewell stated that every line in every fund has been scrutinized to maximize cost savings as the District goes into the 2016-17 fiscal year. He noted that this detailed, in-depth review has provided the basis for the amount of funding estimated to remain in the Fund Balance at the end of the current fiscal year.

Ms. Poehlman summarized the efforts being made to reduce costs:

- Review of ELT budgets for 2016-17 in terms of the standard work hours, contracts, and the services to be provided;
- Examine vacancies and streamline the process to enable the District to fill vacancies in schools more quickly;
- Stringent review of non-essential positions to determine whether they should be filled;
- Consider reductions in transportation costs, although a proposal is not yet ready to present;
- Reduce vendor contracts, which are currently being reviewed to verify information and the necessity for the contract;
- Shift resources to support initiatives:
 - » Funding for 6.0 FTE for instructional coaches that was repurposed for the Big Picture program
 - » 3.0FTE for Teachers to implement restorative practices
 - » 5.0FTE for Teachers to develop a new K-2 curriculum
 - » Help Zones in 13 additional schools
 - » Maintain all art, music, and extracurricular activities
- Ensure that grant funds are expended and maximized;
- Base school staffing on student enrollment projections, with Special Education staffing based on projected student needs;

Commissioner Elliott commended District staff for their efforts in developing the budget and making very difficult decisions this year. She pointed out that the community and New York State are quite aware of the substantial resources provided to the District, yet student achievement remains low. She contended that this has contributed to some of the resistance on the part of the City to issue bonds, since substantial investments have been made with no results (e.g. major improvements to Charlotte High School, which will be closed at the end of the current school year). Commissioner Elliott expressed the hope that District staff will become

more aware of the fact that money is not the issue regarding school and student performance, which will lead to greater creativity and positive change.

Commissioner Evans thanked District staff and leadership for their willingness to make difficult decisions in the budget process this year, particularly since the Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer came to RCSD just at the outset of budget season. He discussed the fiduciary responsibility of the Board, noting that RCSD has supported programs that duplicate other effective programs in the community. He emphasized the importance of recognizing and utilizing effective programs outside of RCSD that can serve District students and families (e.g. Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (REOC)). Commissioner Evans expressed the hope that costs will be contained and monitored diligently to enable the Fund Balance to be replenished.

Adele Bovard reviewed the proposed reductions to the Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES), stating that eight Career & Technical Education programs for adults will be sustained and four had to be scaled back to align program costs with tuition and grant funding. She reported that these programs are also offered by community providers, and the District is collaborating with workforce development agencies to refer students and families to these programs. Ms. Bovard stated that youth GED programs will be provided at multiple sites (e.g. OACES, REOC, All City High School) and through other providers. She noted that funding for high-school equivalency courses for adults and English for speakers of other languages will remain the same in 2016-17.

Commissioner Cruz observed that some of the misconceptions regarding the RCSD budget arise from reports from District staff members, particularly when not described accurately, based on fact, or put in context (e.g. services to English Speakers of Other Languages, GED, mentoring programs – none of which have funding reductions for 2016-17). He noted that this creates a great deal of harm in alarming other staff, parents, students, and community members.

Parent Representative Giancarlo Giannini referred to the recommendations of the Community Task Force on School Climate, noting that the response to a follow-up question (1.52) presented in the second round of budget deliberations did not mention restorative practices. He asked whether the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget includes funding to support implementing restorative practices in schools. Superintendent Cimusz replied that the proposed budget does contain funding to support restorative practices, including an additional 3.0FTE for Teachers on Assignment to work with the Director of Counseling & Social Work to continue implementation. She added that 1.0FTE for these Teachers on Assignment would be assigned to each zone.

Mr. Giannini asked about funding for the 2nd Step program. The Superintendent explained that funds were not available to support this program in the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget, but the District is currently seeking external funding for this purpose.

Mr. Giannini inquired about funding for Help Zones in schools. Superintendent Cimusz replied that a total of \$715K will be used to create Help Zones in 13 additional schools, but only in schools that have a 7th grade and SIG funding available.

Mr. Giannini asked whether the funding proposed in the updated 2016-17 RCSD budget encompasses the recommendations of the Community Task Force and for funding support for

next year. Dr. Otuwa confirmed that most priorities and initiatives have been supported in the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget. She explained that professional development will be provided for staff working in the Help Zones, based on the work of Dr. DeGruy and will be conducted from May 16-18. She stated that this funding came out of the current year budget. Dr. Otuwa also described use of student monitors to evaluate student engagement and the treatment of students in schools.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about professional development for teachers in 2016-17. Dr. Otuwa replied that a professional development plan is currently being prepared and will address racism and cultural competence. She described using a trainer to provide this professional development to assist teachers, particularly those in schools that are implementing the new Code of Conduct. Dr. Otuwa added that the professional development plan will be presented to the Board for review.

Commissioner Adams questioned whether this professional development specifically designed for teachers has been included in the 2016-17 budget. Dr. Otuwa responded that an evaluation is being conducted of the professional development offered to teachers and members of the Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals (RAP) and Board of Education Non-Teaching Employees (BENTE). She stated that some funding has been restored to cover future training, and the budget and costs for professional development in 2016-17 is currently being prepared.

Commissioner Adams referred to the model created by Dr. DeGruy, which includes an extensive parent engagement/parent leadership component. She stated that she supports use of this model, but only with systematic planning, allocation of resources, staff time in training the trainer, and budget to cover the cost of substitute teachers. She emphasized that all of these elements of the model are necessary for follow-through in operationalizing and disseminating Dr. DeGruy's work. Commissioner Adams expressed the hope that a number of detailed plans are in place to address these challenges in implementing this professional development model. She inquired whether the parent engagement/parent leadership component has been budgeted, particularly since this will be carried out by a contractor.

Commissioner Adams also asked about the staffing model for Help Rooms in schools. Dr. Otuwa responded that Help Rooms will be available to all students in the school, and the District is collaborating with the Center for Youth. She added that the Center for Youth will contribute 1-2 staff members and the District will provide 1.0FTE to staff this program in each building.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that the model used by the Center for Youth consists of one certified Teacher and one Behavior Intervention Specialist, and she asked whether these staff will be provided for the Help Room/Alternatives to Suspension program in each of the schools. Ruth Turner explained that the Help Room in each school will be staffed by 1.0FTE, who will be mobile. She clarified that the majority of staff in the Alternatives to Suspension programs in schools will be from the Center for Youth and trained in the use of restorative practices. Although the Help Zone is situated in a designated room of the school, the staff person can go into classes to intervene if necessary.

Commissioner Hallmark expressed concern regarding the District's transportation costs, and encouraged advocating for legislation to reduce the 1.5-mile distance limit to obtain NYS

Transportation Aid. She stated that she would also like a presentation regarding strategic grant planning and initiatives.

Commissioner White referred to a memo handed out in this evening's meeting about proposed funding cuts for the Office of Adult & Career Services (OACES). He encouraged the Administration to share the information in the memo with those affected by the funding cuts to dispel rumors and misconceptions. Superintendent Cimusz replied that she will share this information with local legislators. Commissioner White expressed concern that local legislators have already seen some of the negative correspondence regarding these proposed budget cuts to OACES. He emphasized the importance of counteracting rumors and negative publicity by presenting the facts to stakeholders.

Commissioner White thanked the Superintendent and her team for their diligence in preparing the 2016-17 RCSD budget, particularly since they joined the District at the outset of the budget process. He noted that there has been a rift in the past between the instructional and financial perspectives in the District, but there now appears to be positive collaboration.

Commissioner Powell expressed appreciation for the Administration's understanding of the value of early childhood learning, and willingness to support K-2 curriculum development in the budget. The Superintendent reported that the District is exploring the availability of external funding (i.e. foundation grants) to support K-2 curriculum development.

Commissioner Powell inquired about funding for implementing restorative practices in schools, specifically in terms of carrying this out over a three-year period as planned. Superintendent Cimusz replied that the amount requested for restorative practices has been incorporated into the proposed 2016-17 budget.

Commissioner Powell discussed the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy (5153) and current efforts by the Board to re-examine this policy, since District practices have not supported its implementation. She explained that a substantial public campaign was launched when the policy was first adopted to inform parents of the school selection process, but now parents are largely unaware of the way in which this process works. Commissioner Powell asserted that the lack of information about the school choice process has significantly interfered with communications with parents and with parent engagement. She urged the Administration to give serious consideration to the forthcoming recommendations of the Board's Managed Choice Task Force.

Commissioner Powell also pointed out that Board policy requires at least 1.0FTE for a Parent Liaison/Home School Assistant in every school. She stated that she has heard reports of school principals diverting funds away from these positions to use for other purposes. She noted that Board policy has already been degraded and further reduction of support for parents cannot be accepted. Ms. Bovard replied that she has discussed the role of Parent Liaison/Home School Assistants with school principals and the staff members themselves to create consistency and to strengthen these positions. She reported that a training plan is being developed to maximize the use of these positions. Ms. Bovard stated that Parent Liaisons and Home School Assistants have had several sessions with principals in which best practices were shared, as well as evidence of highest impact actions. She noted that future training sessions are planned with Parent Liaisons, Home School Assistants, Assistant Principals, and Principals to discuss ways to maximize the

impact on parent engagement. She added that there are no plans in any school to eliminate these positions.

Commissioner Adams expressed concern about the proposed budget adequately supporting transformation of the Code of Conduct in the District. She noted that parents and community members are already skeptical about recommended changes because the District has a history of establishing policies without providing the resources or supports necessary to put into actual practice.

Commissioner Adams requested an explanation and updates regarding:

- Alternative settings for students who need programming at a level comparable to day treatment
- Utilizing a certified Teacher and Behavior Specialist in Help Rooms, rather than 1.0FTE of a staff member with any type of background, training or experience
- Plans for implementing restorative practices, specifically whether this will be undertaken district-wide or with a small subset of schools

Commissioner Adams asserted that the Board of Education should be scrutinizing its own budget for potential cost savings: Board staff, the Auditor General's Office, and Claims Audit. She commended the Administration for efforts to keep staffing cuts away from classrooms and for providing stability in school staffing.

Commissioner Adams reported that SIG 7 grants could potentially be a source of support for some of the initiatives she has specified. She asked about the level of confidence in the support provided to individual schools to apply for these grants. Commissioner Adams pointed out that the Community Task Force has the expertise and resources necessary to assist with these grant applications.

Commissioner Evans contended that substantial reductions in the budget for the Board of Education would yield little in the way of cost savings, and would largely be a symbolic gesture. He emphasized that the Board's budget is quite small (~\$1.4M) and does not affect funding support for programs, priorities, or initiatives.

Commissioner Cruz expressed appreciation for the substantial effort undertaken by the Administration in preparing the 2016-17 budget at a time when the District was in the middle of this process. He emphasized the importance of examining staffing levels on a regular basis in light of continued declines in student enrollment.

Commissioner Cruz also requested a breakdown regarding the specific functions/items supported through NYS Foundation Aid to the District, and discussed this as a priority for the Finance Committee over the next year.

Commissioner Cruz referred to the substantial reductions in the Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES), pointing out that RCSD has to ensure the capacity of the community organizations to serve individuals who can no longer obtain these services through the District.

Commissioner Cruz also announced that options for reducing RCSD transportation costs will be an important focus of the Finance Committee over the next year.

II. Review of Proposed 2016-17 Budget for the East High School Educational Partnership (EPO) – Section 7 of the Budget Book

Shaun Nelms provided an overview of the proposed 2016-17 budget for the EPO for East High School. Below are the highlights of his presentation:

- One of the goals of the EPO is to be as fiscally conservative as possible, and to return funds to the District to build internal capacity and maximize efficiency.
- Some of the funding provided by the District to the EPO will be returned: an estimated \$3.5M in the first year, and approximately \$4M in the second year. The actual amount of funds returned to the District the first year was \$5M, an additional \$1.5M above projections.
- Support efforts to build internal capacity for continuity when the EPO ends.
- The proposed 2016-17 budget will be adjusted according to actual student enrollment.
- Some funding has been used this year for Chromebooks for students, to enhance the auditorium, sound equipment, and facilities maintenance and repair.

Commissioner Evans inquired whether the leadership at East High School collaborates with the RCSD Grants Office when seeking grant funding. Dr. Nelms replied that the educational partnership has collaborated with the RCSD Grants Office and with the University of Rochester Grants Officer to explore opportunities for grant funding, with the intent of only seeking grants that will not extend beyond the time period for the EPO. He pointed out that this approach is in an effort to ensure that the District will not have to absorb additional ongoing costs beyond the life of the EPO.

Commissioner Elliott expressed concern that 83% of the proposed 2016-17 budget for the EPO is for staff salaries. She emphasized the need to examine whether this level of staffing is necessary, particularly since there have been no significant improvements in terms of student achievement or school performance. Dr. Nelms replied that in light of the Board's concerns, consultant contracts have been scrutinized and reduced. He pointed out that this has led to some of the work being performed internally, which may have increased the number of staff over the years. Dr. Nelms stated that expenditures for consultants and vendors will be decreased. He concurred that the EPO cannot sustain staffing levels that are substantially above the norm for the District. Dr. Nelms recalled that his report to the Board in last month's meeting reflected a 5% staffing reduction, and further reductions are expected in the upcoming year through attrition and allowing vacancies to remain unfilled. He explained that staffing levels are based on enrollment and student need for Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and Special Education. Dr. Nelms noted that staffing levels for AIS are mandated by the State and staffing for Special Education is based on individual performance and the model approved by the State. He pointed out that the EPO offers double blocks of time for ELA and Math instruction for all students in grades 6-9 and

additional supports to students who are not on track, which comprise the majority of East High School students.

Commissioner Adams referred to the Center for Youth Alternatives to Suspension (ATS) program being implemented mid-year, and asked about the school's experience to date with this program in terms of capacity and resources. Dr. Nelms replied that all staff have been trained in restorative practices, which has been adopted at East High School among students and staff members. He added that the ATS program complements restorative practices by targeting interventions to focus on mending relationships and change past practices in which students tended to be removed/suspended from classes in which they performed well. Dr. Nelms described a tiered system of support and intervention under the ATS program, with out of school suspension utilized as a last resort. He pointed out that behavioral intervention is not sufficient, and efforts must be made to restore relationships among students and staff. Dr. Nelms reported that these practices have had an impact, but additional time is needed to realize results.

Commissioner Hallmark commented on a response to a budget question regarding the willingness of the University of Rochester to transition to RCSD internal management of East High School. Dr. Nelms discussed in-kind support provided through the Noyes Foundation (Teacher leaders in Math and Science) and Urban Education Success (cultural relevance), noting that a formalized structure is to be developed to sustain supports from external partners. He also pointed out that professional development is offered to RCSD teachers through the EPO to enhance internal capacity to sustain educational/instructional improvements.

Commissioner Hallmark pointed out the importance of ensuring ongoing collaboration in this educational partnership and formalizing structures/processes to share best practices.

Commissioner White observed that the data in the School Profiles and Budgets section of the Budget Book does not include graduation rates for any of the secondary schools. He noted that this is a critical benchmark, and has typically been included in the Budget Book.

Action Item: The final Budget Book will include data regarding graduation rates for the last several years for all RCSD secondary schools, including East High School.

Dr. Nelms reported that the graduation rate for East High School was 33% in 2014-15. He stated that a thorough audit of student transcripts was conducted this year, which indicated that only 19% of East High School students were on target to graduate after the January Regents exams. Dr. Nelms described efforts to revise the master schedule for seniors and to offer differentiated supports. He explained that the educational partnership has been working to halt a steep decline in student achievement at East High School that has been occurring over a number of years, while also improving academic performance in the earlier grades. Dr. Nelms pointed out that raising graduation rates is a multi-year process.

Commissioner Powell discussed the arts integration study, which did not include East High School because the school did not have a 6th grade until this school year. She noted that one of the most significant findings of this study was that the greatest impact on academic achievement was found at the 6th grade level. Commissioner Powell inquired whether the 2016-17 budget includes funding for arts integration at least at this grade level at East High School. Dr. Nelms replied that East High School students have the opportunity to participate in band, chorus, and

orchestra, all of which are embedded into the school day. He described collaborative efforts with the Eastman School of Music to assist with the East High School music program and musical productions. He added that support for these collaborative efforts has been included in the 2016-17 budget, as well as funding for enhanced equipment for music and video production.

Commissioner Powell clarified that arts integration does not involve supplementing the curriculum with arts programs, but integrating the arts into course content and assignments. She asked whether the EPO plans to enhance professional development to implement arts integration at East High School. Dr. Nelms reported recently visiting schools in Atlanta, which use spoken word in the curriculum to engage students. He stated that this approach has been piloted at the high school level at East High School, and will be expanded to the middle school in the upcoming year.

Motion by Commissioner Evans to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:05PM.