

Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole
April 12, 2016

Attendance: Commissioner Cruz (Chair); Commissioners Adams, Evans, and Powell (arrived 6:17PM).

Parent Representative: Giancarlo Giannini.

District Staff: Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz; Lauren Poehlman, Chief Financial Officer; Everton Sewell, Budget Director; 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; and Kelly Bauman, Office of School Innovation.

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 6:07PM.

I. Review Minutes of March 29, 2016 Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole

Motion by Commissioner Evans to approve the minutes of the March 29, 2016 Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

II. Round 2 of Budget Review: Sections 4 and 5 of the Budget Book

Commissioner Cruz announced that the following sections of the Budget Book will be reviewed in this evening's meeting:

- Section 4: School Profiles and Budgets
- Section 5: Program Profiles and Budgets

Commissioner Cruz reminded his colleagues that the next public budget hearing will be held on Thursday, April 14th, and the next set of budget questions are due on Monday, April 18th.

Lauren Poehlman presented an update to the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget, based on adoption of the NYS budget earlier this month. She discussed planned reductions in expenditures, comparing actual figures with projections originally presented to the Board in the March 14, 2016 Special Meeting. Ms. Poehlman noted that the planned cost savings for 2015-16 have not materialized, which has exacerbated the District's fiscal circumstances and budget for 2016-17. She stated that the added expenditures in the current year have compromised the District's ability to replenish the Fund Balance, and all options are being explored to sustain programs. She reported that expenditures have risen above anticipated levels for extended learning time and summer learning programs; instructional excellence (e.g. International Baccalaureate program, Career & Technical Education, Music, Art, and Teaching English as a Second Language). Slight cost savings were found in the Reading by Third Grade initiative.

Ms. Poehlman reported a net increase of \$25.8M in expenditures, compared to the original projection of \$25M in March 2016.

Ms. Poehlman also reported that cost savings are \$20M less than projected in the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget. She stated that spending has not decreased to the extent anticipated by aligning staff levels to student enrollment; implementing the Special Education redesign; transportation; use of per diem substitutes; alternative programs; and Central Office and other administrative costs.

Ms. Poehlman stated that the originally proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget included a \$24M deficit, and it was hoped that a significant portion would be covered through increased NYS Aid. However, the final NYS 2016-17 budget included just \$7M in additional aid for the Rochester City School District. The increased NYS Aid and cutbacks in summer learning programs will further reduce the 2016-17 RCSD budget deficit to \$18.3M.

Ms. Poehlman discussed specific initiatives that the District would like to support in 2016-17: K-2 developmental curriculum; the Big Picture program for 9th grade students; Help Zones/Alternatives to Suspension in every school; the Second Step Curriculum pilot; and external evaluation of the District's APPR methodology, which is mandated by the State. Ms. Poehlman stated that support for these initiatives will add \$2.4M in District costs for 2016-17.

Ms. Poehlman identified the following categories for which expenditures are to be reduced: use of agency temporary staff; Professional/Technical services; transportation; and the use of building substitutes. She estimated that these savings will amount to a total of \$4.9M, and stated that further savings could be realized by switching from expanded day to a standard day program where possible.

In light of the cost of District priority initiatives and the measures to generate additional cost savings, Ms. Poehlman reported a \$15.8M budget gap. She discussed additional revenue sources potentially available to the District, such as NYS Community Schools Aid, grants, increased NYS Transportation Aid by reclassifying expenses, and enhanced NYS Aid for Career & Technical Education by reclassifying courses. Ms. Poehlman also discussed cost savings options: scrutinizing Central Office budgets for further spending cuts; reductions in expanded day programs to a standard school day; further staffing cuts in non-essential positions; minimizing exceptions to the 1.5-mile distance limit to decrease transportation costs; consolidating under-enrolled classrooms; reducing vendor contracts; and shifting additional expenses to grant funding. Superintendent Cimusz added that 6th grade classes have a significantly lower level of enrollment than other elementary grades, so consideration is being given to consolidating some of these classes. Ms. Poehlman noted that all of these options are currently being explored, and a plan for a balanced 2016-17 RCSD budget will be presented at the next budget deliberation meeting on Tuesday, April 26th.

Commissioner Powell observed that the option of strengthening the zone boundaries is not included in the list of potential cost saving options. She stated that a study conducted several years ago found that transportation costs could be reduced by approximately \$5M by ensuring that students are placed in a school within their zone. Commissioner Powell pointed out that a more recent study conducted by Michael Alves found that almost 10% of RCSD students are transported to a school outside of their zone, increasing the number of buses needed. She noted

that these additional buses are typically under-filled because of the long distances travelled, which is inefficient and costs twice as much as within zone transportation. Commissioner Powell stated that minimizing cross-zone transportation would lead to reduced costs in 2016-17, while the District would receive a greater amount of NYS Transportation Aid based on the costs incurred in 2015-16. She explained that the lag between incurring transportation costs and receiving NYS Aid would effectively yield about \$5M in additional revenue to the District in 2016-17.

Ms. Poehlman identified the following priorities for the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget: maintaining programs at current levels; supporting receivership schools; increasing support for students' social and emotional needs; minimizing staff reductions, which are to be concentrated in Central Office; and enhancing accuracy in revenue and expenditure projections.

Commissioner Cruz asked about allocation of NYS funding to the Rochester City School District, as compared with the other four large urban districts in the State. Ms. Poehlman replied that all of the large urban districts were disappointed by the funding allocated by the State this year. She stated that additional funding to school districts did not reach the \$1.6B recommended by the NYS Senate or the \$2.1B recommended by the NYS Assembly. Although the final increase in NYS Aid amounted to \$1.47B, approximately \$160M was spent to close the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Since large urban districts were compensated for the GEA last year, most of this year's funding for GEA restoration went to other school districts. Ms. Poehlman explained that the remaining funds available for Foundation Aid did not amount to much after restoring the GEA to all other school districts. She stated that these were the factors leading to a rather disappointing allocation to large urban districts. Ms. Poehlman pointed out that Community Aid was also removed from the aid allocations, which increased the total pool of funds for all districts but led to a smaller apportionment to RCSD.

Commissioner Adams followed up on Commissioner Powell's suggestion regarding strengthening zone boundaries and minimizing cross-zone transportation. She asked about the possibility of reaching out to families whose child(ren) are currently being transported to a school outside of their zone to explain the cost and impact on the District, with an offer to assist in relocating to another school within their zone. Commissioner Adams acknowledged that this approach would require an intensive effort in outreach, placement, and modifications in school staffing levels. She pointed out that she frequently receives reports from families and school staff about the need for qualified staff and flexibility in grouping students, suggesting that efforts focus on identifying efficiencies in placement, reducing transportation costs, and building community-based neighborhood schools. Commissioner Adams asserted that if these tradeoffs could be communicated clearly to families, the District could be successful in these efforts. She asked the Superintendent to discuss RCSD capacity to conduct these intensive efforts at this point.

Superintendent Cimusz replied that this is the first time she has heard Board members discuss the idea of strengthening zone boundaries in the District. She stated that these efforts are not beyond the District's capabilities, but would not yield a quick resolution in terms of reducing transportation costs to cover the projected 2016-17 budget shortfall. Superintendent Cimusz emphasized the importance of planning these conversations with schools and families, particularly in attaining an understanding and acceptance of the potential benefits from relocating

to neighborhood schools. She cautioned that the complexity of factors contributing to cross-zone transportation and student placement would not be resolved by September 2016.

Commissioner Adams suggested that the effort to strengthen zone boundaries begin on a pilot basis at the 6th grade level. By piloting this approach with a smaller group of students, a protocol could be developed for addressing these issues district-wide. Superintendent Cimusz responded that efforts are under way to consolidate under-enrolled classrooms at the 6th grade level, which can include placing students within their zone. She stated that consideration will also be given to strengthening the zone boundaries for students entering kindergarten in September 2016.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that there is no reason for kindergarten students to attend a school outside of their zone because this is the entry point into the school system. She stated that a phased-in approach would enable the District to be more assertive with zone boundaries with each successive cohort each year. She emphasized the need for the District to establish a set of protocols regarding specific items/parameters that are non-negotiable.

Commissioner Cruz described an analysis performed by Jerome Underwood and Maria Mello-Dupre several years ago regarding the impact of placing students within their zone and found substantial cost savings from reducing transportation costs.

Action Item: The analysis performed by Jerome Underwood and Maria Mello-Dupre several years ago regarding potential cost savings from strengthening zone boundaries will be provided to Board members and to the Administration for further consideration.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that concerns about the RCSD transportation structure have been discussed for years because the costs are unsustainable. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Placement Office is set up for success (i.e. tools, training, and support) in implementing any changes in policies or practices regarding the zone boundaries. Commissioner Evans cautioned against creating further disruptions in customer service because the District has been struggling in this respect.

Adele Bovard reported that the Placement Office has been meticulous about placing students in the early grades (i.e. K-1) within their zone, and she offered to provide data to illustrate these efforts.

Action Item: Ms. Bovard will provide data to the Board regarding placement of students in grades K-1 within and outside of their zone.

Commissioner Evans asked about the rationale for waiting until April 26th to present a balanced budget. Superintendent Cimusz stated that the District hopes to receive some funding through the new NYS Community Schools Aid for receivership schools, and that flexibility will be allowed in using this aid to support other priorities. She explained that the Finance Department has been working diligently to restore some of the monies in the Fund Balance in the current year, so that an additional portion of this Balance can be used to help cover next year's budget gap. The Superintendent emphasized that the 2016-17 RCSD budget has been developed according to realistic projections of District funding needs, rather than underestimates that have been used in the past. She reported that even with additional funds potentially available from the Fund Balance, staffing and program cuts also have to be considered to close the projected 2016-

17 RCSD budget deficit. Superintendent Cimusz stated that she has been meeting with division and department leaders in Central Office to identify additional staffing cuts.

Commissioner Evans expressed appreciation for efforts to improve the accuracy of financial projections and to address funding needs at the outset, rather than in the middle of the year when fewer options are available. He inquired about efforts to address the District's long-term structural deficit. The Superintendent noted that this year's budget has suffered from under-funding and removal of some key positions.

Superintendent Cimusz noted that the termination of School Improvement Grants (SIG) has also led to a need to reduce some school staffing, and the Administration has been collaborating with principals to identify specific positions that are truly needed.

Parent Representative Giancarlo Giannini referred to a follow-up question (1.24) regarding annual changes in funding and staffing for Special Education. He requested additional detail, specifically of the number of students in Special Education who were declassified for each of the six years for which data has been provided. Mr. Giannini also asked for a comparison of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in Special Education for each school in 2015-16 and budgeted for 2016-17. He pointed out that the figures cited for one of the job codes did not seem to be included in the totals for Special Education teachers. Chris Suriano explained that this particular job code is for teachers of students with a speech and hearing disability, which is accounted for separately from Special Education classroom teachers.

Action Item: Additional information will be provided to the Board of the number of students in Special Education who were declassified each year since 2010-11, and the number of FTE in Special Education for each school in 2015-16 and budgeted for 2016-17.

Commissioner Powell expressed concern about the Young Mothers & Interim Health program, noting that students are not automatically re-enrolled in the program from one year to the next. As a result, the program begins each school year without any students, and teachers' time is wasted waiting for students to be reassigned from their home school. Commissioner Powell requested assurance that students in the Interim Health Academy and in the Young Mothers program will be offered an opportunity to re-enroll for the following school year. She asserted that new mothers need assurance and stability in knowing that these supports will be available to them for the next school year. Commissioner Powell reported that there has been leadership resistance to providing continuity and stability for these programs. Dr. Otuwa responded that the Administration has been working to provide greater stability and support for students in the Young Mothers' program, and a new permanent program leader is being sought.

Commissioner Evans observed that the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget includes a \$1M reduction in overtime for Civil Service positions (Section 3, p. 15), but expenditures are still quite high (\$3.3M) in this category. He asked why there is a need for so much funding for overtime for these positions. Ms. Poehlman replied that she also inquired about the rationale for Civil Service overtime, and found that there are some circumstances in which it is less costly to pay overtime than to hire additional staff. Ms. Bovard added that she has been examining data to identify specific departments that have exceeded their overtime allotment. She stated that department heads have been required to provide a clear justification regarding the need for overtime.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that overtime and the use of agency temporary staffing are largely controllable expenses and must be monitored closely to ensure that there is a genuine need.

Commissioner Adams commented on each department having an “allotment” of staff overtime pay, asserting that overtime should be driven by operations and necessity rather than a predetermined amount. Ms. Bovard clarified that each department is asked to estimate the amount of overtime anticipated throughout the year as part of developing the budget.

Commissioner Adams inquired whether the overtime allotments for 2016-17 will be based on analysis of cost effectiveness. She stated that when overtime is required on a significant and extended basis, positions should be filled. She contended that overtime should not be based on past practice, but on need and analysis of cost effectiveness. Ms. Bovard explained that a clear justification and rationale must be provided when a department is reaching its total allotment for staff overtime. She cited the example of overtime needs in the Placement Office when 300-400 families are coming into the office to register their child for the upcoming school year. She noted that projected staff overtime for the Placement Office is based on past experience and knowledge of peak times requiring additional staff hours. Ms. Bovard emphasized that there has to be a justification and clear rationale for the use of staff overtime.

Commissioner Evans stated that he is pleased to see the \$1M reduction in expenditures for staff overtime, but the trend has been a steady increase in these costs over time. Mike Schmidt reported that some of the Civil Service overtime resulted from the need to move schools over the last three summers, which involved a considerable amount of time. Mr. Schmidt reported that other factors affecting staff overtime include District events that are held on Saturdays. He explained that security and custodial staff are on staggered schedules to provide coverage for events held on weekday evenings to minimize overtime costs. He offered to collaborate with the Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Superintendent for Administration to identify other factors contributing to increasing staff overtime costs.

Commissioner Cruz recalled that there has been an issue with community use of RCSD facilities and difficulties in capturing these costs, inquiring whether this continues to be problematic. Mr. Schmidt responded that the District has improved its ability to capture these costs, pointing out that many of the agencies using RCSD facilities are also facing fiscal difficulties. He noted that he has been working with community organizations, offering guidance in using buildings when custodial staff are already scheduled to be on site. Mr. Schmidt stated that the majority of staff overtime is due to events conducted internally in the District.

Commissioner Powell asked about the costs of expanded/extended learning time (ELT) compared to the ~\$3.4-3.5M in grant revenue received (Section 3, p. 12). Ms. Poehlman stated that despite maximizing the use of grant revenue, some of the costs of ELT are covered in the General Fund. She reported that additional transportation required for ELT is included in the program budget, and the District hopes to receive additional NYS Transportation Aid to replenish at least some of the monies used from the General Fund.

Commissioner Powell noted that efficiencies in school scheduling and the two-tiered transportation structure will allow funds to be reallocated for other purposes. She observed that

the ELT program is basically a net cost to the District because expenditures have exceeded the grant revenue provided. Commissioner Powell asked about the possibility of trimming the ELT program so that it is supported solely through grant funding.

Commissioner Evans questioned the suggestion that ELT be a self-supporting program, since additional instruction time has been a priority in the District and a great deal has been invested in this program. He sought clarification about the suggestion to cut back on ELT to balance the 2016-17 RCSD budget.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that the significant budget gap for 2016-17 requires first funding mandates and jettisoning items that are not required. She stated that the net cost of ELT programs represent funds that could potentially be used to fulfill the District's mandate. Commissioner Powell clarified that she is basically asking whether more funding is being used for ELT than strictly necessary to maintain the program. Dr. Otuwa confirmed that additional funding is allocated for ELT beyond strictly maintenance levels. She asserted that the District is responsible for ensuring that ELT is fulfilling the needs of students at each school, but acknowledged that she cannot assure that the program is working as intended at every school. Dr. Otuwa reported receiving ELT data in January, which is currently being analyzed to evaluate efficacy and the extent to which the program is being used where needed.

Commissioner Adams inquired about the impact of providing ELT only where it is grant-funded. Dr. Otuwa replied that 300 hours of additional instruction time is required in priority schools, so it is not an option to cut the program in these schools. She added that the ELT programs current in place must be examined to avoid major disruptions to teaching staff and in school educational programs.

Kelly Bauman noted that four RCSD priority schools are currently required to have an ELT program, but do not have grant funding.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that the ELT program at priority schools is very different from that at schools choosing to pilot the time and learning initiative. She stated that a certain number of hours are required and a specific percentage of students must receive additional learning time in priority schools. Commissioner Adams asked about the prospective impact of providing ELT programs only where funded through grants. She noted that the priority schools required to have ELT are funded through School Improvement Grants (SIG), except for School No. 41 because its grant proposal was not approved.

Ms. Bauman explained that several schools have been added to the priority list, such as School Nos. 46 and 10.

Commissioner Adams asserted that these newly designated priority schools will most likely be eligible for SIG grant funding. Dr. Otuwa added that schools that have been newly designated as priority schools are not required to implement an ELT program in 2016-17.

Commissioner Adams asked again about the impact on the District if ELT is provided only to the extent that it is supported by grant funding. Dr. Otuwa replied that the program at each school must be evaluated to determine if it is satisfactory in terms of meeting students' needs.

Superintendent Cimusz replied that information regarding the cost of ELT to the General Fund will be provided to the Board.

Action Item: Information will be provided to the Board regarding the cost of ELT programs to the General Fund and the impact of providing expanded/extended learning time (ELT) only to the extent that it is supported by grant funding.

Commissioner Evans noted that eliminating ELT programs where not supported by grant funding would lead to closure of programs in a number of schools. He emphasized the importance of evaluating the impact of ELT on school performance and student achievement. Commissioner Evans discussed examining the original intent of ELT and the District's investment in these programs for improving student outcomes, offering enrichment activities, and providing a safe environment for students beyond the traditional school day.

Commissioner Adams reported that there have been varied responses and results from ELT programs, pointing out that school communities have come to depend on the staffing and supports provided. She encouraged consideration to be given to school scheduling and providing supports, which may lead to even greater improvements in efficacy. Commissioner Adams discussed the importance of distinguishing the extent to which improvements are due to the ELT program itself or to additional staffing and supports, so that the District is able to determine the factors most critical to maximizing effectiveness.

Commissioner Cruz stated that he has received some reports from schools that ELT has created more problems than results. He emphasized the importance of building internal capacity to perform these types of evaluations to identify programs that are not effective and redirect resources to maximize efficacy and efficiency.

Commissioner Cruz inquired about the functions supported in the District through NYS Foundation Aid (~\$393M), noting that this Aid constitutes the main portion of discretionary funding. He pointed out that this information is essential in determining District funding priorities. Ms. Poehlman replied that she plans to distinguish discretionary from restricted funding in the future to illustrate specific programs/initiatives being supported.

Commissioner Powell observed that one of the high-performing elementary schools in the District (e.g. School No. 23) has an ELT program with enrichment activities, yet the families of these students are of higher socioeconomic status and able to support these types of activities on their own. She stated that she does not understand the rationale for providing the ELT program at a school in which students already have many advantages and opportunities, noting these funds could be used more equitably and efficiently by providing ELT to high-needs students.

Commissioner Evans contended that all RCSD students should have enrichment comparable to that provided in suburban school districts or private schools, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the ELT program is effective.

Commissioner Powell asserted that there is value to the extent that School No. 23 has offered an effective ELT model for the District. She contended that the issue is the continued expenditure of scarce resources in a school that already has an abundance in terms of the advantages and opportunities that families can provide to students (e.g. private lessons in art/music, academic

assistance). Commissioner Powell declared that the District should be directing funding for ELT programs to schools in which the majority of families do **not** have the ability to provide these opportunities for their children. Dr. Otuwa concurred that RCSD resources should be targeted toward students with the greatest need. She stated that this has not been the case historically in the District: the highest quality services have not necessarily been provided to the students with the greatest need.

Commissioner Adams discussed equity in funding for different departments in the District, and suggested that these funding allocations be examined over the last five years. She asserted that some departments have ballooned in terms of funding increases during this period (e.g. Finance Department, Athletic Department), while others have been cut dramatically.

Commissioner Adams inquired about the rationale for restoring \$1.3M in funding for summer school. She also asked whether Innovation Greenhouse will include ELT, language enrichment, cultural knowledge, and principles for teaching children of color. Commissioner Adams also asked for assurance that the Freedom School would continue to be supported and implemented with fidelity. She discussed a directive from the Board approximately four years ago regarding partnering with the leadership of the Freedom School, and suggested re-examining the needs of this school. Dr. Otuwa explained that the \$1.3M is from SIG/SIF grants awarded in the current year for summer school in 2016, and this funding cannot be used for other purposes. She noted that the District is advancing the funding for summer school, which will be replenished when the SIG/SIF grants have been received. Dr. Otuwa stated that the \$1.3M is in addition to the \$13M budgeted for 2016 summer programs.

Commissioner Adams inquired about funding for the other varied summer school programs offered by the District. Dr. Otuwa replied that some programs have been funded through the \$13M that has been budgeted (e.g. the Freedom School), and all funds available for summer programs have been exhausted. She stated that the SIG/SIF grants allocated to schools will be used to cover additional expenses for summer programs at each school. Dr. Otuwa added that these programs were budgeted separately because of the use of SIG/SIF grant funding.

Commissioner Adams asked whether any changes in plans have been made for summer programs since the initial presentation of the proposed 2016-17 RCSD budget (e.g. number of students to be served, number of programs, number of program sites). Dr. Otuwa reported that the initial plans included a greater number of students and funding for summer programs. She explained that summer programs totaled \$13.1M in 2015, which provided the basis for projected costs in the proposed 2016-17 budget. Dr. Otuwa stated that the District had to use an additional \$1.3M in SIG/SIF funding to support summer programs in 2016.

Commissioner Adams asked why the overall allocation for summer programs is not being reduced by \$1.3M, since this funding is provided through SIG/SIF grants. Ms. Poehlman clarified that approximately \$14M was spent in 2015-16 for RCSD summer programs. She stated that \$13M was originally budgeted, but this is not the amount that actually materialized.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that a number of other grants are available for summer school programs (e.g. Wallace Foundation and other philanthropic organizations). She questioned whether past commitments made by the District have affected the overall budget for 2016 summer programs. Dr. Otuwa responded that cuts were made in summer programs with low

enrollment/attendance or in which students were not learning, resulting in some pressure from community organizations. She noted that the \$13M budgeted for summer programs in 2016 is based on past student enrollment/attendance and program effectiveness in advancing student learning. Dr. Otuwa added that this budget also includes extended school year for students in Special Education. She reported that there are still summer programs in need of funding, even after applying the \$13M that has been budgeted.

Dr. Ray Giamartino stated that the District is committed to the Innovation Greenhouse and ensuring equity in representing various types of programs.

Commissioner Adams declared that she is not interested in equity among different summer programs (e.g. language infusion, expeditionary learning), but in staffing, professional development, and modeling for a standalone program regarding cultural knowledge and culturally responsive teaching. She stated that cultural competence should not be infused in other programs in the Innovation Greenhouse, but treated with equal status and import. Dr. Giamartino stated that Djinga St. Louis, Director of African/African American Studies, has been collaborating in the 2016 Innovation Greenhouse to ensure that cultural competence is embedded. He noted that teachers participating in the Innovation Greenhouse will also have professional development regarding a culturally responsive curriculum.

Commissioner Adams emphasized the importance of offering a separate strand for cultural knowledge and competent teaching that is treated in the same way as expeditionary learning. She stated that if funding is available for Innovation Greenhouse, the cultural competence strand should be offered this year – particularly since this has involved a multi-year effort. Dr. Otuwa assured Commissioner Adams that a separate strand for cultural knowledge and culturally responsive teaching will be supported in Innovation Greenhouse this year.

Mr. Giannini referred to information that has been provided to the Board regarding school schedules for 2016-17 (Appendix 1.37.1), and asked whether these are the final schedules. Superintendent Cimusz confirmed that the information given to the Board reflects the finalized school schedules for 2016-17. She stated that the District was able to reclaim some funding for programs by reducing transportation costs.

Mr. Giannini observed that ELT will now consist of a 7.5-hour day, while other elementary schools will be on a standard 6.5-hour school day in 2016-17. The Superintendent noted that the 7.5-hour school day will enable RCSD to comply with NYS requirements for priority schools to provide 200 additional hours of instruction time, and this will yield some cost savings for the District.

Commissioner Evans stated that he has repeatedly requested the District to develop a staffing formula to provide guidelines for decision-making. He cited an example in terms of the number of students needed to support an Assistant Principal position. Commissioner Evans emphasized the need for guidelines for schools and Central Office departments (e.g. number of direct reports, number of administrators per Administrative Assistant). He stated that the District can plan to attain the target staffing levels through attrition, but there has to be a foundation for the targets. Ms. Bovard replied that efforts have been made to align the work of budget, staffing, and placement, which has assisted in making determinations about filling vacancies. She stated that consideration has been given to staffing ratios, emphasizing the importance of establishing a

basis for these ratios to ensure that decisions are made on an impartial basis rather than personal preference or personality. She discussed the operations calendar, which has made a difference in terms of staffing schools, administration, and Civil Service. Ms. Bovard reported that each department will meet with the Superintendent to review staffing ratios in an effort to balance the 2016-17 RCSD budget.

Commissioner Powell requested that attention be given to maximizing efficiencies in transportation for Special Education by ensuring that services are provided to students within their zone. She pointed out that cross-zone transportation is generally twice as costly as within-zone transportation, and these costs escalate significantly in transporting students in Special Education to various services across zones (e.g. at least four times the cost of within zone transportation). Commissioner Powell requested information regarding the number of students receiving Special Education services outside of their zone. Mr. Suriano responded that the Special Education redesign included establishing equity among zones in terms of the services offered (e.g. for students with autism, significant cognitive disabilities, or behavioral problems), but progress remains to be made in this respect.

Commissioner Cruz summarized the concerns expressed by Board members regarding the 2016-17 RCSD budget:

- ELT programs
- Special Education
- Strengthening zone boundaries
- Minimizing cross-zone transportation and overall transportation costs

Commissioner Cruz reflected on the Board's fiduciary responsibilities in ensuring that programs are self-supporting and effective in meeting intended goals.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:38PM.