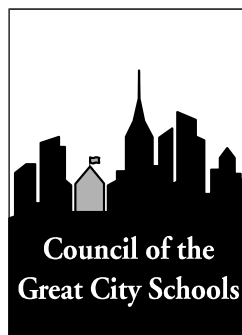


# IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOLS

Report of the Strategic Support Team  
of the Council of the Great City Schools

Submitted to the  
Rochester City School District



By the  
Council of the Great City Schools

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**Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this review of the special education programs in the Rochester City School District (RCSD). Their efforts and commitment were critical to our ability to present the district with the best possible proposals for improving special education and related services in the school system.

First, we thank Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard. It is not easy to ask one's colleagues for the kind of review conducted by our team. It takes courage and openness, and a real desire for change and improvement. He has those qualities in abundance.

Second, we thank the members of the RCSD staff, especially Ms. Kirsten Barclay, Esq., who organized the team's interviews and all the documents and data that we needed in order to do our work. Mrs. Barclay spent many hours coordinating focus groups, submitting documents, and attending to the many details involved in putting together this assessment.

Third, the Council thanks the parents, professionals, and advocates with whom we met. They work passionately to support their children and see that the district serves students with disabilities in the best possible manner.

Fourth, the Council thanks the Philadelphia and New York City school districts for contributing staff to this effort. The enthusiasm and generosity of these districts serve as a further example of how the nation's urban public school systems are banding together to help each other improve student performance.

Fifth, we thank The Broad Foundation for funding the travel, lodging, and other expenses needed to conduct this review.

Finally, I express my special appreciation to Julie Wright Halbert, legislative counsel for the Council of the Great City Schools, who guided the work of the team, and to Sue Gamm, a nationally known expert on special education who worked with Ms. Halbert to prepare the final report for the district's consideration. Their work was outstanding and critical to the success of this effort. Thank you.

Michael Casserly  
Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

### CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) is the third largest urban school system in New York State, enrolling some 34,000 students in grades pre-K to 12. Another 10,000 adult students also receive instructional services from the school district.

Approximately 65 percent of the district’s pre-K-to-12 student body is African American; some 21 percent is Hispanic; about 12 percent is white; and another 2 percent is Asian American, East Indian, or Native American.

About 79 percent of the district’s enrollment is composed of students who are eligible for a federal free or reduced-price lunch subsidy, making the RCSD the poorest big-city school district in the state. Fifty percent of the district’s schools have free and reduced-price lunch eligibility rates that equal or exceed 90 percent.

About 8 percent of the district’s enrollment is made up of students with limited English proficiency, and the district enrolls students from 35 different language groups. Finally, about 17 percent of the district’s enrollment is composed of students with disabilities.

The school district is governed by a seven-member elected school board. The board conducts its work through a series of standing committees that consider items before discussion by the full body. Committees focus on the following areas: policy development and review; excellence in student achievement (including special education); community and intergovernmental relations; board governance; finance; and audit. The full board meets on the fourth Thursday of each month.

The district’s mission is to “ensure that every child in Rochester has access to world-class content taught by world-class teachers in schools led by world-class leaders.”

Moreover, the district is driven by three core values—

- **Achievement**—Improving student achievement through a laser-like focus on teaching and learning with an emphasis on results.
- **Equity**—Equitable distribution of resources based on the needs of schools and students.
- **Accountability**—Use of data to ensure that we hold adults accountable for the success of all students.

The school board and its administration, led by Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard, operate some 39 elementary schools and 19 secondary schools. The school district also includes 55 pre-K sites, one young-mothers’ site, one adult learning center, two alternative centers, three parent information and student registration centers, one customer service center, and one parent education and training center.

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The school district serves some 11,000 breakfasts and 18,000 lunches daily, and provides transportation to and from schools for about 28,000 students. Moreover, the district provides transportation and other services, including special education services, for students enrolled in the city's private, parochial, and charter schools, as well as for students who are home-schooled.

The Rochester public school system employs approximately 6,400 people, including about 3,700 teachers, 900 substitute teachers, 300 administrators, and 1,500 support personnel—levels that suggest that the district has a higher ratio of teachers-to-all staff than do most other major city school systems.

In addition, the school system had a budget of about \$639 million in the 2007-2008 school year.

Finally, student achievement in the school district is below state averages on the New York State Assessment Program, but is showing evidence of improvement. Approximately 47 percent of the district fourth-graders scored at level 3 and 4 (the two highest levels on which Adequate Yearly Progress under *No Child Left Behind* is determined) in reading on the state test in 2007, compared with 68 percent statewide. About 15 percent of the district's fourth-graders read at level 1 (the lowest level), compared with 8 percent of fourth-graders statewide. In mathematics, 52 percent of the district's fourth-graders scored at levels 3 and 4 in 2007, compared with 80 percent of fourth-graders statewide. Some 19 percent of the district's fourth-graders scored in level 1 in 2007, compared with 6 percent statewide.

In addition, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at the highest two levels in the Rochester City School District was generally below the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at those levels statewide. Some 13 percent of the district's fourth-grade students with disabilities scored at levels 3 and 4 in reading in 2007, compared with 28 percent statewide.

Over the last several years, the district has shown progress in raising student achievement; reforming its secondary schools; partnering with colleges and universities; strengthening its finances; improving technology; and modernizing its facilities.

This report by the Council of the Great City Schools to the Rochester City School District presents the organization's findings and recommendations for improving the special education program in the school system, placing special emphasis on the organizational structure of the program, accountability, and how the instructional program generally serves students with disabilities districtwide. The process that the Council used to conduct the review is described in the next chapter. The subsequent chapter lays out the organization's observations and proposals for improving the overall delivery of services for students with disabilities across the school system.

### CHAPTER 2. PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

The Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban public schools systems, has conducted more than 160 instructional and operational reviews of its member districts over the last ten years. The organization conducts these assessments using a rigorous peer review process with highly respected and exemplary practitioners from other major city school systems who have faced similar challenges. The reports generated by these Strategic Support Teams have often resulted in significant reforms in urban school districts throughout the country.

Rochester City School Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard asked the Council to review the services provided by the Rochester City School District (RCSD) to its students with disabilities and make recommendations to improve services.

#### Project Goals

The main goals of this review were to—

- Analyze the operational and instructional efficacy of the district's special education program;
- Examine the overall central-office organizational structure of the special education operation;
- Examine the curriculum and accountability of schools and their principals serving students with disabilities;
- Review the school district's curriculum, professional development, behavior management, and other teaching strategies to determine how they are meeting the needs of students with disabilities; and
- Recommend strategies for improving the overall effectiveness of services to students with disabilities.

#### The Work of the Strategic Support Team

The Council assembled a team of experts who have been successful in administering special education programs and services in their respective districts, as well as individuals with firsthand expertise with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The team visited the district on September 9-12, 2008, and analyzed the district's organization, accountability, curriculum strategies, related services, and other features of the programs serving students with disabilities. The team also reviewed the superintendent's priorities and briefed him at the end of the visit on the team's preliminary findings and proposals.

The Strategic Support Team carried out its charge by conducting interviews and meetings with staff of the school district, reviewing numerous documents and reports, and developing initial recommendations and proposals before finalizing them in this report.

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This approach to providing technical assistance to urban school districts by using small Strategic Support Teams of senior managers from other urban school systems across the nation is unique to the Council and its members. The organization finds this approach to be effective for a number of reasons.

First, it allows the superintendent and members of his or her staff to work with a diverse set of talented, successful practitioners from around the country.

Second, the recommendations from urban school peers have power because the individuals who developed them have faced many of the same challenges now encountered by the district requesting review. No one can say that these individuals do not know what working in an urban school system is like or that their proposals have not been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

Third, using senior urban school managers from other communities is faster and less expensive than retaining a large management-consulting firm. The learning curve is rapid. And, it would be difficult for any school system to buy the level of expertise offered by these teams on the open market.

Finally, the teams comprise a pool of expertise that superintendents may call upon for advice or help in implementing the recommendations made in the teams' reports, meeting new challenges, and developing alternate solutions.

Members of the Strategic Support Team for this project included the following individuals—

<b>SUE GAMM</b> Former Chief of Specialized Services Chicago Public Schools	<b>JULIE WRIGHT HALBERT</b> Legislative Counsel Council of the Great City Schools
<b>LINDA WILLIAMS</b> Executive Director of Services and Physical Health in the Office of Specialized Services School District of Philadelphia	<b>LOIS KESSLER</b> Director of Compliance in the Office of Special Education Initiatives New York City Department of Education

### Contents of This Report

The Strategic Support Team of the Council of the Great City Schools spent many hours interviewing parents, advocates, related-services staff members, special education teachers, regular education teachers, principals, and administrative leaders at the central offices for special education and regular education. The team also interviewed Committee on Special Education chairs and psychologists; the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; the Chiefs of Schools; board members; coordinators and directors of occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, psychology, and social work services; union representatives and leaders; central-office clerks and word processors; representatives of teacher coordinators of special education (TCOSEs) and coordinating administrators of special education (CASEs), and many

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others. In addition to conducting these interviews, the team reviewed studies, statistics, and other special education reports pertaining to the Rochester City School District.

Chapter 1 of this report presents a brief overview of the Rochester school district. Chapter 2 presents findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team, which are divided into six broad areas: Organizational Functions and Duties; Leadership and Accountability; Policy, Procedures, and Data; Program Development and Instruction; Professional Development; and Parents as Allies. Finally, Chapter 3 summarizes all recommendations.

Appendix A presents a suggested organizational chart for the special education department. Appendix B contains staffing ratio data and Appendix C has incident rates and staffing data. Appendix D lists individuals with whom the team talked either individually or in groups. Appendix E lists the documents that were reviewed. The working agenda for the site visit is shown in Appendix F and brief biographical sketches of team members are presented in Appendix G. Appendix H presents a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools. And Appendix I lists all of the Strategic Support Teams the Council has conducted over the last 10 years.



### Chapter 3. Findings & Recommendations

This chapter presents the team’s findings and recommendations. Both are presented in five categories, as noted: Organizational Functions and Duties; Leadership and Accountability; Policy, Procedures, and Data; Program Development and Instruction; Professional Development; and Parents as Allies. Findings are divided into those team observations that reflect well on the district and those that reflect concerns.

#### A. Organizational Functions and Duties

##### *Positive Findings*

- Superintendent Brizard recognizes a critical need to reorganize and improve special education services in the district and has hired staff members specifically to oversee the implementation of the team’s recommendations.
- Subsequent to the team’s visit, the superintendent advertised and filled the position of an Executive Director of Specialized Services.
- Under Superintendent Brizard’s new organizational structure, the Executive Director of Specialized Services reports to the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.
- All members of the senior leadership team—including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, and the Chiefs of Schools—are committed to improving the quality of instruction and services for students with disabilities.
- Senior leadership recognizes the importance of principals’ ownership of and accountability for special education in their schools.
- The school district has made a substantial number of staff members available in schools, including teacher coordinators of special education and coordinating administrators of special education, to support the administration of school services for students with disabilities.

##### *Areas of Concerns*

- The Special Education Department of the school district had been functioning without a director, a situation that has had a major negative impact on the effectiveness of the unit.
- Because the Special Education Department is not directly represented on the superintendent’s cabinet, the department does not have an active voice in districtwide policy conversations at the highest levels, and is not always informed of the outcomes of those discussions.
- The organizational structure of the Department of Special Education and Educational Support Services is fragmented, and there appears to be insufficient communication within

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the division, among central-office colleagues, and between the central-office administration and school staffs.

- Although the district’s special education staff members recognize the need to support instruction, they spend the majority of their time on compliance-related activities.
- Teacher coordinators of special education and coordinating administrators of special education lack defined roles and responsibilities from school to school. As a result, the individuals filling these roles do not function in a consistent manner and with well-defined performance indicators.
- The school district utilizes a Committee on Special Education model that requires all initial eligibility/individualized education plan (IEP) meetings and subsequent meetings (except for those that require no placement changes to more restrictive settings) to be conducted at the central office. As a result, school-based staff members meet locally and again at the central office with parents. This practice produces the following results—
  - ✦ Teachers are required to meet twice about the same student and lose time in their classrooms;
  - ✦ Teachers lose instructional time because they are traveling to the central office;
  - ✦ Schools do not have ownership of and accountability for decisions made about their students with disabilities, because the “real” decisions are made elsewhere;
  - ✦ There is an increased need and expense for substitute teachers to cover for teachers to attend the two meetings;
  - ✦ The Committee on Special Education (CSE) must reconvene to address student placement issues when a student is rejected from a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or an approved nonpublic school; and
  - ✦ Multiple individuals are required to process CSE paperwork.
- It was reported to the team that CSE chairs do not operate in a consistent manner and that they provide inconsistent responses to similar situations or questions.
- According to interviewees, in most cases, the CSE chair and the reviewing psychologist do not personally know the child. Interviewees also indicated that school psychologists who assessed students have been asked to leave central-office CSE meetings about these students in deference to the reviewing psychologist’s role.
- Many individuals interviewed by the team indicated that there was a widespread perception that the central-office CSE participants frequently prejudge meeting results and do not give due deference to input by the school staff or a parent.

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- Numerous interviewees expressed concerns about the manner in which bilingual assessment teams are assigned and the teams' limited knowledge of the students and the school environment.
- The absence of procedures and written materials that would support effective interaction between central-office and school-based personnel exacerbates weak communications among special education staff members, as do the frequent organizational changes that have caused confusion about points of contact for information. As a result, accurate information is not consistently provided and may change based on the source.

### *Recommendations*

1. Hire an Executive Director for Specialized Services (ED), who would report to the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. (Superintendent Brizard has begun to implement this recommendation, and the position has now been filled.)
2. Include the ED in the superintendent's cabinet.
3. Appoint three Specialized Services Zone Directors with direct-line reporting to the ED and indirect-line coordination with one of the newly appointed Chiefs of Schools. Assign to each director an administrator, data analyst, and clerk. To the extent possible, each Zone Director should have exceptional knowledge of the subject matter and depth of experiences. Define the roles and responsibilities of each Zone Director, including how she or he would support school-based child-find and evaluation; coordinate placement; support tiered academic/behavioral interventions and progress monitoring; and support due process and mediation in consultation with the compliance office. These duties would specify how the Specialized Services Zone Directors would address these areas in all of the schools falling under each Chief of Schools.
4. Develop an organizational structure under the Executive Director for Specialized Services, with position titles to be determined as appropriate. See Appendix A for a suggested model, which includes the functions of various divisions. This model is further described below—
  - a. *Instructional Support.* The individuals in this unit would have deep expertise and knowledge in the areas described below. They would provide back-up support to the Specialized Services Zone Directors and their staff members. In addition, they would assist in developing research-based services in their areas of responsibility. And their functions would include support for students with disabilities, who—
    - ✚ Take regular statewide assessments and their primary area of need involves reading/math or behavior;
    - ✚ Take alternate assessments or their primary area of need involves seeing or hearing;
    - ✚ Require speech/language services;
    - ✚ Are English language learners;

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- ✚ Need transition support and Career Technology Experience (CTE); and
  - ✚ Require an extended school year.
- b. *Services Support.* The individuals in this unit would have deep expertise and knowledge in the areas described below. They would provide back-up support to the Specialized Services Directors and their staffs. In addition, they would assist in developing research-based services in their areas of responsibility. Their functions would include support for the following activities—
- ✚ Psychological evaluations, including bilingual assessments and services;
  - ✚ Social work evaluations and services, including bilingual assessments and services;
  - ✚ Health, vision, and hearing screenings and services; and
  - ✚ MATCH, juvenile justice, crisis intervention, summer assessment, and community-based child-find.
- c. *Compliance Support.* Functions would include support for the following activities—
- ✚ Development and communication of policies and procedures;
  - ✚ Committees on Special Education (CSEs) for parent placements and out-of-district placements; and
  - ✚ Due process.
- d. *Finance/Business Support.* Functions would include the following—
- ✚ Data analysis;
  - ✚ IEP Direct (Web-based special education management software) training and support;
  - ✚ Medicaid support;
  - ✚ Grant support; and
  - ✚ Business functions, e.g., budget.
5. Analyze and evaluate the current roles and responsibilities of the teacher coordinators of special education (TCOSEs) and coordinating administrators of special education (CASEs), and assess whether these or other models would provide maximum and effective support to schools. As part of this consideration—

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- ✦ Identify the core activities required to support principals, teachers, and other staff members involved in assessing and educating students with disabilities effectively;
- ✦ Describe relevant performance indicators;
- ✦ Analyze the benefits of having a nonadministrator fill the TCOSE position and an administrator fill the CASE position;
- ✦ Calculate the maximum effective ratio of each student to staff receiving support; and
- ✦ Determine whether the position descriptions of TCOSE and CASE continue to be appropriate or whether another description or descriptions would be preferable.

These TCOSEs and CASEs report directly to their school principal and indirectly to their respective Specialized Services Director. Principals should require these individuals to attend all meetings convened by the Specialized Services Directors or the Executive Director of Specialized Services (ED) in order to receive training or information relevant to his or her responsibilities.

6. Have the ED work closely with the professional development staff of the Office of Teaching and Learning to provide research-based training in the following areas for general education and special education teachers and staff: co-teaching strategies, reading and math tiered interventions and progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and positive behavioral supports.
7. Allocate funding from the Special Education Training Resource Centers (SETRCs) to the Office of Teaching and Learning's professional development unit.
8. Develop a phase-in plan to hold all public school Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings at the school level. Include the following in the plan—
  - ✦ Written procedures and training necessary to hold CSE meetings that comply with federal and state laws and regulations, including use of IEP Direct, paperwork requirements, mailing of notices and other information to parents, effective and respectful communication with parents, and the like;
  - ✦ Involvement of identified specialized services staff when it is believed that a student cannot be served within the school, or may require very intensive services, e.g., a 1:1 paraprofessional;
  - ✦ Process by which principals will designate district representatives to chair school-based CSE and subcommittee meetings;
  - ✦ Data that would be gathered electronically and reviewed regularly to target potential and inappropriate overidentification of students with disabilities, transfer of students to other schools, complaints, requests for mediation or due process hearings, etc.;

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- ✚ Determination (with New York State Education Department) whether multiple CSE meetings need to be held to change educational settings for day treatment, or a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or approved nonpublic school when one of these settings rejects a student and another is needed; and
  - ✚ Transition of central-office staff members currently involved in CSE meetings to support schools' provision of academic and behavioral interventions and progress monitoring.
9. Maintain a central CSE process for students who do not attend district schools.
  10. Review the current distribution of bilingual assessors to ensure maximum benefit across the school district.
  11. Develop, implement, and provide professional development on the following—
    - ✚ Procedures for the administration of special education services (see recommendation 16 in the following section for additional information);
    - ✚ Redesigned organizational structure;
    - ✚ Roles and responsibilities of staff; and
    - ✚ Expected interaction between specialized services staff, and external central-office and school staff.
  12. Reassess roles and responsibilities, and utilization requirements for word processors and clerks.

### **B. Leadership and Accountability: Policy, Procedures, and Data**

#### *Positive Findings*

- Superintendent Brizard has a clear theory of action for school autonomy and accountability, and he recognizes the importance of making sure that central office administrators, principals, teachers, and other school-based staff members receive the data they need to review student performance and drive instructional decision-making.
- The superintendent's recent appointment of Jeanette Silvers as Chief of Accountability will facilitate building accountability across the district.
- The school district has a new vision with clear goals and objectives for every student. It also has begun a process to establish a single curriculum in core subjects (beginning with English language arts and mathematics, grades 5-9) that focuses on recognition, assessment, and adjustment. This vision incorporates performance management rather than compliance, and requires principals to look at building-level data through the use of formative, summative,

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and benchmark assessments so that staff members are able to identify gaps and address issues immediately.

- A new district leadership academy is retraining existing principals, while fostering a new system of excellence.
- A number of principals (7 of 64) have special education certification, making them better qualified to serve students with disabilities and encourage their inclusion.
- The school district has reduced the number of due process requests significantly as a result of the increased use and effectiveness of informal resolutions and mediation.

### *Areas of Concern*

- The district, at present, does not have a system to ensure that all principals and central-office administrators are accountable for ensuring the implementation of the district's framework for instructing and providing services for students at risk and students with disabilities.
- The team found little evidence of a research-based three-tiered system of interventions in reading, math, and behavior for students who were slipping behind academically or getting into trouble. The team also saw little progress monitoring or data-based decision making within the general education program, that is, no credible Response to Intervention (RtI) process was in place.
- Interviewees reported to the team an increase in the number of referrals for special education services and a greater reliance on more restrictive placements for students with disabilities.
- The school district does not utilize a framework for special education or differentiated instruction that would ensure the provision of research-based teaching and services to students with disabilities.
- The school district's principal evaluation process is not designed to promote accountability for the instruction of students with disabilities, nor does it incorporate an assessment of how principals deal with suspensions or other behavioral issues with students with disabilities.
- Special education is not being administered in a manner that would support improved student performance, or would enhance communication within the central office and among the schools, parents, and the greater Rochester community.
- The district appears to lack clear written policies and procedures pertaining to the identification, evaluation, placement, and provision of procedural safeguards for students with disabilities. As a result, as expressed by interviewees, staff often had—
  - ✚ A limited knowledge of legal requirements regarding special education, especially those included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004;

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- ✚ An inconsistent understanding of procedures for manifestation-determination reviews (MDRs) required for students recommended for long-term suspensions and expulsions; and
  - ✚ A feeling that they were operating in the same way as they had during the time of the district's special education consent decree, which has not been in effect since the Janey administration.
- Interviewees reported that data required to review important management decisions and administration are not readily available and accessible.
  - IEP Direct is not comprehensive or adequate enough to meet the needs of the entire district—
    - ✚ The software does not interface adequately with the student information system;
    - ✚ Staff is unable to generate reports necessary to monitor instructional outcomes; and
    - ✚ The software is not fully functional or developed in the following areas: educational setting percentages, target dates for placement, quality controls, access, and clearances.

### *Recommendations*

13. As the school district develops its system of accountability, consider the following indicators to address the needs of all students at risk and students with disabilities—
  - ✚ Provide performance and compliance indicators for Response to Intervention (RtI), e.g., universal screening is in place; students in need of intervention at three tiers are identified and provided research-based academic and positive behavioral interventions according to district standards; and progress monitoring is provided at required frequencies, and reviewed at regularly determined intervals, to ensure that interventions are successful or modified as needed;
  - ✚ Provide targets for rates of referrals for initial evaluations, identification, and movement of students to more restrictive settings, and the provision of individualized education plan (IEP) services;
  - ✚ Provide performance indicators on the implementation of a framework for specially designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities; (See the section on Program Development and Instruction for further information.)
  - ✚ Provide compliance indicators for core federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to students with disabilities; and
  - ✚ Identify performance indicators for equitable distribution of services and programs.



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14. Ensure that principals' evaluations include targets and indicators for how effectively they respond to behavioral issues with students with disabilities.
15. Reorganize the central-office special education unit in order to provide a structure that supports schools, principals, staff members, parents, and community members, and that promotes accountability. (See Appendix A.)
16. Develop written policies and procedures to govern the district's provision of services to students with disabilities, and differentiate services according to who provides them (e.g., principals, parents, teachers, central-office staff, etc). Ensure that the document complies with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. (See the section on Professional Development and Instruction and the sample documents from Philadelphia that have already been provided to the district.)
17. Regularly generate reports for the management of special education processes to support effective decision making at the central and school levels. Identify key data elements, such as long- and short-term suspensions, incidence and referral rate trends, timeliness of initial and reevaluations, proportion of students by race/ethnicity receiving special education and by category of disability, assignment in various educational placements, performance benchmarks, etc. Depending on the data, this information should be provided monthly or annually (i.e., dropout and graduation data would be annual and timely evaluations and placements should be at least monthly).
18. Evaluate the effectiveness of IEP Direct to determine if it has or is able to have the functionality required to meet district needs. Include an analysis of its current or future ability to conduct the following—
  - ✚ Target dates for the provision of services;
  - ✚ Data on student progress, including state assessments and annual goals by subgroup;
  - ✚ Correct calculation of Time Out of Regular Class (TORC) percentages; and
  - ✚ Correct usage of the system.

### **C. Program Development and Instruction**

#### ***Positive Findings***

- Interviewees indicated that there was a need for and value in early interventions (academic and behavioral) and were eager for more professional development, resources, and a model for Response to Intervention (RtI).
- The school district has created a model program for young students in “Great Beginnings.” The program is a general education initiative aimed at accelerating literacy and reading

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development in grades K-2 by establishing a strong foundation in vocabulary before students need to read to learn.

- The district has assigned a person to support academic intervention services in every elementary and secondary school.
- The district has many staff members who are dedicated to increasing cultural awareness and values by infusing all content areas with stories of people of color, especially Latinos and African Americans, and with an understanding of why these lessons are so important.
- The district has provided a number of research-based interventions in various schools across the districts (e.g., Read 180, Corrective Reading, and Wilson Reading).
- Staff members reported that a significant number of classes are co-taught by general and special education teachers so that students with disabilities may be included in general education programs with sufficient supports.
- Staff members interviewed were clearly child-centered and generally supportive of inclusive instruction.
- Some principals scheduled time for teachers to collaborate and plan together.
- The district also uses a team framework to support students with autism.

### *Areas of Concern*

- The school district has not established a comprehensive RtI model that would provide the following—
  - ✚ Universal screening of students requiring tiered interventions;
  - ✚ A systemic framework for research-based interventions;
  - ✚ Systemwide progress monitoring and data-based decision making;
  - ✚ Performance and compliance indicators; and
  - ✚ Systemwide training to address academic and behavioral issues that appear to be driving a reported increase in referrals.
- The need for an RtI approach is suggested based on the following information—
  - a. According to data for the 2007-2008 school year, the school district appears to rely heavily on short-term suspensions to address the troublesome behavior of students. Further, with a long-term suspension rate of 5.8 percent in 2006-7, the district failed to

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meet New York State’s maximum target of 4 percent.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there does not appear to be an effective support system in place for students with serious behavioral difficulties. The school district also failed to meet the state’s 2006-7 targets for students with disabilities in the following areas—

- ✚ Graduation Rate: The RCSD’s rate was 22 percent;
- ✚ Drop-out Rate: The RCSD’s rate was 37.2 percent;
- ✚ Performance—
  - 3-8 English Language Arts: RCSD at 77; the target was 101.
  - 3-8 Math: RCSD at 75; the target was 84.
  - HS English Language Arts: RCSD at 65; the target was 79.
  - HS Math: RCSD at 91; the target was 98.

In addition, the school district failed to meet the 95 percent testing-participation rate at the high school level (87.6 percent for English language arts and 88.7 percent for math).

- b. The district also has a higher than usual incidence of students with disabilities. (See below.)
- The lack of a comprehensive system of RtI has contributed to a special education incidence rate that is higher than that of most urban school districts. The chart in Appendix C shows the results of a survey of urban school districts conducted through the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative. Although most of the districts reported their data during the 2005-2006 school year and the RCSD’s data are from the current school year, the comparisons are the best available. They suggest that the school district’s incidence rate of almost 18 percent is greater than all but five of the 30 districts compared and it is the same as four.

**Comparison of Special Education Incidence Rates\***

	RCSD Incidence Rate	LEAs with Higher Incidence	LEAs with Lower Incidence	LEAs with Same Incidence
<b>Incidence Rates</b>	17.97	5	20	4

\* LEAs refer to local education agencies or school districts.

Five LEAs have higher rates (three at 20 percent, one at 22 percent, and one at 26.5 percent); and 20 LEAs have lower rates (seven at 15–17 percent; nine at 14-12 percent; five at 10-11 percent; and four at 8-9 percent).

<sup>1</sup> The New York State Rochester City School District Report Card, Accountability and Overview Report, 2006-07. See <http://www.nystate.gov/publicweb-rc/2007/2b/AOR-2007-261600010000.pdf>

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

- Although the district provided the team with 15 years of initial referral and declassification data, the results do not show percentages of students, only numbers of students. As a result, the team was unable to determine if rates increased, decreased, or stayed the same.
- It does not appear that leadership actively considers the needs of students with disabilities in their decision-making process in such areas as literacy, i.e., the use of differentiated instruction to provide access to core reading curriculum.
- As discussed above, there appears to be a lack of research-based program development that would meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- The district employs a generous number of staff members to educate and provide services to students with disabilities. The chart below compares ratios of students with disabilities to staff members in the areas of special educators (special education teachers), paraprofessionals, speech/language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. The chart in Appendix C provides more detailed information.

**Comparison of Ratios of Students with Disabilities to Staff <sup>2</sup>**

Staff Area	RCSD Ratio of SwD to Staff <sup>3</sup>	LEAs with Larger Ratios	LEAs with Smaller Ratios	LEAs with Same Ratio
<b>Special Educators</b>	9:1	27	1	1
<b>Paraprofessionals</b>	12:1	21	4	3
<b>Speech/Language Pathologists</b>	45:1	29	0	0
<b>Psychologists</b>	97:1	28	1	0
<b>Social Workers</b>	87:1	19	5	0 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Occupational Therapists</b>	177:1	23	5	0 <sup>5</sup>
<b>Physical Therapists</b>	668:1	16	10	0 <sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Variance in number of districts is due to variance in reporting.

<sup>3</sup> These numbers include “Great Beginnings,” a general education program that allows approximately 26 special education teachers, 25 speech and language pathologists, and 6 occupational therapists to work with over 5,000 students.

<sup>4</sup> Four LEAs reported very few OTs.

<sup>5</sup> One LEA did not report this item.

<sup>6</sup> Three LEAs did not report this item.

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

Special education teachers (the RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to special educators is 9:1):

- One LEA has a lower ratio than that of the RCSD: 7:1.
- Twenty-seven have higher ratios: 10 at 10-12:1, 10 at 13-15:1, four at 16-17:1, two at 20-27:1, and one at 30:1.

Paraprofessionals (the RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to paraprofessionals is 12:3):

- Four LEAs have a lower ratio than that of the RCSD: 1 at 5:4, 2 at 9-11:1.
- Twenty-one have higher ratios: six at 13-15:1, eight at 16-20:1, four at 22-24:1, and three at 25-29:1.

Speech/language pathologists (the RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to speech/language pathologists is 45:1):

- No LEAs have a lower ratio than that of the RCSD.
- Twenty-nine have higher ratios: seven at 48-59:1, seven at 70-84:1, eight at 108-128:1, three at 166-188:1, and one at each of the following: 229, 325, 432 and 700:1.

Psychologists: (The RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to psychologists is 97:1):

- One LEA has a lower ratio than that of the RCSD at 90:1.
- Twenty-eight have higher ratios: six at 103-136:1, 12 at 141-179:1, six at 209-250:1, and one at each of the following: 277, 291, 293 and 299:1.

Social workers: (The RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to social workers is 87:1):

- Five LEAs have a lower ratio than that of the RCSD at 50-76:1.
- Nineteen have higher ratios: four at 89-119:1, three at 127-160:1, seven at 217-288:1, two at 318-325:1, and one at each of the following: 445, 464 and 773:1.

Occupational therapists: (The RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to social workers is 87:1):

- Five LEAs have a lower ratio than that of the RCSD at 120-175:1.
- Twenty-three have higher ratios: six at 193-248:1, three at 271-289:1, two at 347-395:1, two at 420-464:1, three at 534-556:1, two at 610-697, and one at each of the following: 700, 813, 975, 1013 and 1165:1.

Physical therapists: (The RCSD's ratio of students with disabilities to social workers is 668:1):

- Ten LEAs have a lower ratio than that of the RCSD: seven at 241-349:1, and three at 566-633.
- Sixteen have higher ratios: two at 734-773:1, four at 926-1140, three at 1238-1350, three at 1400-1548, and one at each of the following: 1857, 2679, 2881 and 3560.

- The school district utilizes a staff placement system that is based on specific program ratios that are more generous than state specifications. This system leads to excessive staff categorization and complicates program development.
- The school district does not have a program for over-age students with disabilities who are not earning enough academic credits to graduate. Several interviewees expressed frustration about the lack of appropriate vocational programs for students unlikely to earn a local or Regents diploma.
- Interviewees indicated that the school district has a culture of “pushing out” students with disabilities, rather than developing and implementing supports and services to keep students at their home schools.
- The district appears to lack strategic planning, development, and training for co-teaching of general and special educators to work with students with disabilities. In addition, there does not appear to be much expectation among educators for what their roles and responsibilities would be for students with disabilities or what the indicators for their performance would be.

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

Further, principals reported that they do not have the ability to creatively address co-teaching problems and issues (e.g., co-teaching with one teacher in two classes part time).

- In school year 2005-06, the school district placed 28.1 percent of its students with disabilities in general education programs for less than 40 percent of the day, meaning that the district did not meet the state's target of 25.5 percent or less. Current data, however, indicate that the school district met state targets for the 2007-08 school year. Other states have set targets for more inclusivity. For example, Illinois has a target of 4.6 percent or less for separate schools (compared with New York's 6.7 percent) and a maximum target of 19.3 percent for general education for less than 40 percent of the school day. In 2007-08, the Rochester school district's rates in these areas were 6.2 percent and 23.6 percent, respectively. Data also show that the district places students with disabilities in separate schools at a higher rate than the national average (2.47 percent) and places students with disabilities in general education programs for 40 percent of the day at a lower rate (18.5 percent). Finally, a large number of students are placed in schools that they would not normally attend if not disabled. The research, however, indicates that students with disabilities perform at higher levels when they are educated in general education settings to the maximum extent possible.
- It was reported to the team that student placements are based on program-seat availability, rather than identified needs of students with disabilities.
- Significant inequities exist in the placement of students with disabilities who have intense instructional needs. Some schools have large proportions of students with significant disabilities and other school may have none or hardly any. For example, at the elementary level, only 4.3 percent of students at the Montessori Academy at Franklin have been identified as having a disability, whereas 33.7 percent of students at Nathaniel Hawthorne have been identified as having a disability. At the secondary level, enrollments of students with disabilities range from 7.3 percent at School Without Walls to 25.8 percent at Global Media Arts High School at Franklin.
- There is minimal evidence that transition planning has been developed and implemented fully to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared for and can access postsecondary educational and vocational opportunities.
- Interviewees reported a lack of follow-through by the school district on an opportunity to work with staff from the Strong Center for Development Disabilities on a grant from the Golisano Foundation for transition services.
- There appears to be a lack of coordination and collaboration with agencies, nonprofit organizations and other potential partners serving students with disabilities in the Rochester community.
- The school district does not appear to have a disproportionate representation of students receiving special education based on race or ethnicity. Data, however, were not readily available for disability or educational setting by race/ethnicity.

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

### *Recommendations*

19. Develop a comprehensive Response to Intervention (RtI) model for early academic and behavioral interventions that includes universal screening, research-based interventions, and requirements for three-tier interventions and progress monitoring with expected frequency and review procedures. As part of this process, consider whether staff members currently working with students with disabilities may be used also to support this process.
20. Create a mechanism to ensure that school district leadership actively promotes consideration of the needs of students with disabilities in their decision-making process in such areas as literacy, e.g., the use of differentiated instruction to provide access to core curriculum.
21. Identify and implement research-based models of special education service delivery in order to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. For example—
  - ✚ Include research-based models for over-age students with disabilities who lack the credits to graduate and appropriate vocational programs for students unlikely to earn a local or Regents diploma;
  - ✚ Empower principals with flexibility to implement programs and services to meet student needs within their schools; and
  - ✚ Coordinate and collaborate with community-based agencies, nonprofit organizations and other potential partners to provide more effective wrap-around services to eligible students.
22. Reanalyze staffing ratios in the school district to determine whether staff roles and responsibilities might be modified to give greater support for providing academic and behavioral interventions for all children requiring them.
23. Identify and implement research-based models that provide effective supports for students with serious behavioral difficulties and strategies for using positive behavioral supports instead of suspension.
  - ✚ Evaluate the current continuum of services and revise it to reflect evidence of research-based models referenced above;
  - ✚ Delineate program ratios and specifications to comply with state requirements, but do not exceed them in a way that leads to excessive categorization and complicates program development and placement; and
  - ✚ Communicate the ratios and specifications to the public.
24. Develop a comprehensive co-teaching model, including expectations and definitions for roles and responsibilities of general and special educators.

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

- ✚ Include stakeholders and others with expertise in this area in the development of the model; and
  - ✚ Identify models of excellence in the district to showcase.
25. Analyze the current configuration of services in the school district to identify schools with disproportionately large numbers of students with disabilities.
- ✚ Develop and implement a phased-in strategic plan with a goal of promoting equitable services and distribution of programs among all schools, including Magnet and other specialized schools and programs with admission criteria;
  - ✚ Include stakeholders in the development of the plan; and
  - ✚ Communicate to the public the plan for equitable services and distribution of programs for students with disabilities with a goal of significantly increasing the number of students who attend a school they would normally attend if not disabled.
26. Develop a system for students who require placement outside of their current school, including the following—
- ✚ Safeguards that prioritize the meeting of student needs;
  - ✚ Communication among individuals knowledgeable about the students' needs; and
  - ✚ Communication with the public about how the system will work when placing students outside of their school.
27. Research the instructional and service needs of students with disabilities who are currently placed in out-of-district settings, and develop and implement a strategic plan for expanding the district's ability to meet their needs within the Rochester school district.
28. Develop a comprehensive model for transition planning and its implementation. Development should include—
- ✚ Community-based organizations, universities, and state agencies;
  - ✚ Models of excellence that the district can showcase; and
  - ✚ Follow-up with staff from the Strong Center for Development Disabilities to identify opportunities to collaborate with the Golisano Foundation on a transition grant.
29. Include core performance indicators in the district's framework for special education and differentiated instruction in the district's general education program.



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30. Continue to develop and redesign comprehensive programs for higher needs students with disabilities.

### **D. Professional Development**

#### *Positive Findings*

- The superintendent is creating a Leadership Academy to strengthen the instructional capacity of existing principals.
- Special education teachers, general education teachers, related-services providers, principals, chiefs, central-office staff members, and union representatives all expressed a desire for more professional development on special education issues.
- The district's mentor program apparently improves the retention of special educators in the district.
- Monetary incentives are available from the district to support voluntary professional development.
- A community-based organization has expressed a desire to provide training to the district team that supports students with autism.
- The Office of Teaching and Learning is supporting the implementation of more targeted instructional interventions districtwide.
- The Office of Human Capital Initiatives is leading professional development efforts for teachers, in collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning.
- The school district encourages school-based professional development to be aligned with school improvement plans.
- Board members shared with the team their view that there have been positive discussions between school board members, union representatives, and central office-staff members on district professional development needs.
- The Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC), a State Education Department funded professional development group, is housed within the district.

#### *Areas of Concern*

- Professional development in the area of special education does not appear to have been a priority in the past, in that very little training has been provided for central-office or school-based staff.

## **Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools**

- There appears to be no comprehensive framework to support the professional development necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- There is a widespread perception among those interviewed by the team that the contractual agreement between the Rochester City School District and the Rochester Teachers Association is a barrier to the frequency and amount of professional development that could enhance effective instructional strategies and positive behavioral supports for students with disabilities.
- It appears that school district staff members failed to follow up on an offer for no-cost training on research-based practices for the autism team.
- It is apparent that no training or coaching has been provided to support effective co-teaching by general education and special education teachers.

### ***Recommendations***

31. Develop and implement a districtwide phased-in professional development plan that would allow stakeholders to be more successful in all areas of accountability and program implementation in the areas referenced above.
  - ✚ Involve stakeholders—including union representatives, parents, and community members—in the development of the plan;
  - ✚ Require chiefs and other cabinet members to plan differentiated professional development to ensure that each person under their supervision receives the information that she or he needs to implement the recommendations successfully;
  - ✚ Require principals to incorporate identified elements of the district’s professional development plan in their school-based training;
  - ✚ Collaborate with central-office union representatives, the Board of Education, and parents to eliminate barriers to needed professional development; and
  - ✚ Negotiate with the Rochester Teachers Association on how teachers could have more direct and universal access to professional development on ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
32. Partner with local universities and community-based organizations to provide more effective and universal professional development. Contact the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities to provide training on research-based practices for autistic students.
33. Develop a train-the-trainer model to expand implementation of the district’s professional development offerings.

## **Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools**

### **E. Parents as Allies**

#### ***Positive Findings***

- The team met with parents who clearly articulated their concerns about services to their children with disabilities, as well as to other children, in a very comprehensive and thoughtful manner.
- Parents expressed a willingness to mediate concerns that they have about special education services instead of requesting due process hearings.

#### ***Areas of Concern***

- Parent representatives indicated that they did not feel that they were valued contributors to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) process or that their opinions were respected.
- The comment of one parent appeared to sum up the concerns of many others: “Getting services is a function of who you know and how big your voice is; you must have social capital.”
- Parental interviewees shared their concern that there were cultural and racial biases that influenced the placement and services for disabled children of racial/ethnic minorities.

#### ***Recommendations***

34. Develop a strategy for effective, meaningful, and ongoing communications with parents of students with disabilities.
35. Use data to assess placement and services for students with disabilities from various racial and minority groups. Analyze data school-by-school and develop plans to address any disproportionality found in the data.

### Chapter 4. Summary of Recommendations

To facilitate study and discussion, below is a comprehensive summary of all the recommendations suggested by the Council of Great City Schools' Strategic Support Team.

#### Summary of Recommendations

- ★ Hire an Executive Director (ED) for Specialized Services, who would report to the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. (The position is now filled.)
- ★ Include the ED in the superintendent's cabinet.
- ★ Appoint three Specialized Services Directors with direct-line reporting to the ED and indirect-line coordination with one of the newly appointed Chiefs of Schools. Assign to each director an administrator, data analyst, and clerk.
- ★ Develop an organizational structure under the Executive Director for Specialized Services, with position titles to be determined as appropriate. See Appendix A for a suggested model, which includes the functions of various divisions.
- ★ Analyze and evaluate the current roles and responsibilities of the teacher coordinators of special education (TCOSEs) and coordinating administrators of special education (CASEs), and assess whether this or another model would provide maximum and effective support to schools.
- ★ Have the ED work closely with the professional development staff of the Office of Teaching and Learning to provide research-based training in the following areas for general education and special education teachers and staff: co-teaching strategies, reading and math tiered interventions and progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and positive behavioral supports.
- ★ Allocate funding from the Special Education Training Resource Centers (SETRCs) to the Office of Teaching and Learning's professional development unit.
- ★ Develop a phase-in plan to hold all public school Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings at the school level.
- ★ Maintain a central Committee on Special Education (CSE) process for students who do not attend district schools.
- ★ Review the current distribution of bilingual assessors to ensure maximum benefit across the school district.
- ★ Develop, implement, and provide professional development.

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- ★ Reassess roles, responsibilities, and utilization requirements for word processors and clerks.
- ★ As the Rochester City School District develops its system of accountability, consider a series of indicators to address the needs of all students at risk and students with disabilities.
- ★ Ensure that principals' evaluations include targets and indicators for how effectively they respond to behavioral issues with students with disabilities.
- ★ Reorganize the central-office special education unit in order to provide a structure that supports schools, principals, staff members, parents, and community, and that promotes accountability. (See Appendix A.)
- ★ Develop written policies and procedures to govern the district's provision of services to students with disabilities, and differentiate services according to who provides them (e.g., principals, parents, teachers, central-office staff members, and others).
- ★ Regularly generate reports for the management of special education processes to support effective decision making at the central and school levels.
- ★ Evaluate the effectiveness of IEP Direct to determine if the software has or is able to have the functionality required to meet district needs.
- ★ Develop a comprehensive Response to Intervention (RtI) model for early academic and behavioral interventions that includes universal screening, research-based interventions, and requirements for three-tiered interventions and progress monitoring with expected frequency and review procedures.
- ★ Create a mechanism to ensure that school district leadership actively promotes consideration of the needs of students with disabilities in their decision-making process in such areas as literacy, e.g., use of differentiated instruction to provide access to core curriculum.
- ★ Identify and implement research-based models of special education service delivery in order to meet the needs of all students with disabilities.
- ★ Reanalyze staffing ratios in the school district to determine whether staff roles and responsibilities might be modified to give greater support for the provision of academic and behavioral interventions for all children requiring them.
- ★ Identify and implement research-based models that provide effective supports for students with serious behavioral difficulties and strategies for using positive behavioral supports instead of suspension.
- ★ Develop a comprehensive co-teaching model, including expectations and definitions for roles and responsibilities of general and special educators.

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- ★ Analyze the current configuration of services in the school district to identify schools with disproportionately large numbers of students with disabilities.
- ★ Develop a system for students who require placement outside of their current school.
- ★ Research the instructional and service needs of students with disabilities who are currently placed in out-of-district settings, and develop and implement a strategic plan for expanding the district's ability to meet their needs within the Rochester City School District.
- ★ Develop a comprehensive model for transition planning and its implementation.
- ★ Include core performance indicators in the district's framework for special education and differentiated instruction in the district's general education program.
- ★ Continue to develop and redesign comprehensive programs for higher needs students with disabilities.
- ★ Develop and implement a districtwide phased-in professional development plan that would allow stakeholders to be more successful in all areas of accountability and program implementation.
- ★ Partner with local universities and community-based organizations to provide more effective and universal professional development. Contact the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities to provide training for the autism team on research-based practices.
- ★ Develop a train-the-trainer model to expand implementation of professional development.
- ★ Develop a strategy for effective, meaningful, and on-going communications with parents of students with disabilities.
- ★ Use data to assess placement and services for students with disabilities from various racial and minority groups.

### CHAPTER 5. SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Rochester City School District is undergoing a number of important and substantial reforms in order to improve overall effectiveness and to raise student achievement across the board, including the achievement of students with disabilities. As part of those reforms, Superintendent Jean Claude-Brizard asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the school district's special education program and make proposals for its improvement.

The Council, in turn, placed emphasis on the program's organizational structure after a series of discussions with district staff about priority areas for the review. This report has presented the organization's findings and recommendations that emerged from a site visit to the district, the review of program documents, and the analysis of relevant data. Those findings and recommendations have been presented in five broad areas: organizational functions and duties; leadership and accountability: policy, procedures, and data; program development and instruction; professional development; and parents as allies. The review did not examine every possible aspect of the district's special education program, but does provide a high-level overview that should help the school system move forward with its broader reforms in a way that will include special education students.

The Council and its team of special education experts from across the country generally found a school district staff that was committed to students with disabilities and their potential to achieve at much higher levels than they had attained in the past. The superintendent has reorganized staff, breathed new accountability into the system, developed a new theory of action for improving the district's programming, and given the school system a new sense of energy and urgency in its reform efforts. For its part, the school district has a number of staff teams—including its teacher coordinators of special education and coordinating administrators of special education—that can be used to help drive program services for students with disabilities more effectively. The district settled its consent decree some years ago and has substantially reduced the number of its due process requests. The district also has begun to improve its academic interventions, has increased the number of classes that are co-taught by general and special educators, and has used its mentor program to improve the retention of special educators. Finally, the district has committed and supportive parents who are willing and able to work with the school system to improve services.

At the same time, the Council and its team found the district's special education department working without a director. It also found a special education operation that was not well represented in district policy discussions and was fragmented and poorly organized. The unit also appeared to devote much of its time to compliance issues rather than attempting to improve services for students with disabilities. In addition, staff members with the same or similar titles were often providing widely varying functions from school to school. There was also an unusual degree of rather needless centralization in the sense that initial eligibility and subsequent IEP meetings were all conducted at the central office, a practice that undercut schools' ownership of much special education programming. There appeared, moreover, to be very little linkage of program services with the bilingual education assessment teams, and generally weak communications and coordination with other units.

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The team also saw little use of the intervention systems that the district was putting into place for students with disabilities. There was also evidence that students with disabilities did not have access to general education programs and services to the degree that they need. In addition, the team found little accountability in the district for the performance of students with disabilities, and weak policies and procedures for the identification, evaluation, placement, and safeguarding of these students. Data systems for students with disabilities appeared inadequate. Academic attainment among students with disabilities is low, compared with statewide averages. Professional development is unusually weak and restrictive in its availability. And parents did not always think that their opinions were valued.

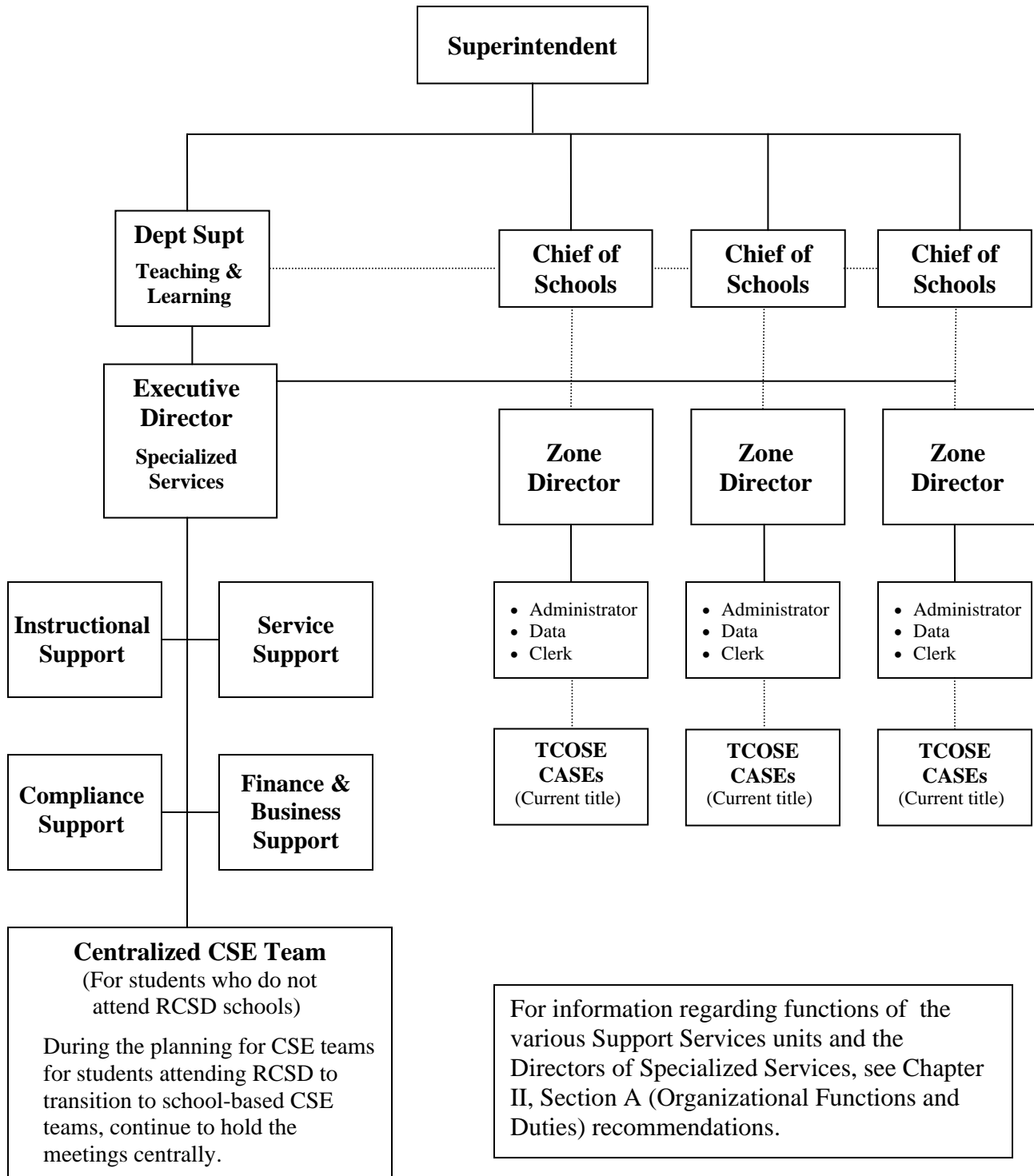
The Council and its team were confident in the ability and willingness of the district's leadership to improve programming and services for students with disabilities, and made a series of recommendations and proposals for doing so. The team also presented a series of recommendations to fill vacant special education leadership posts; elevate the status of the department; and reorganize its structure, personnel, and functioning. The superintendent has begun already to move on much of what the team proposed. The team also proposed to decentralize the central-office eligibility and placement meetings.

The report also has included a series of recommendations for bolstering accountability; strengthening data systems and how data are used to track and report performance; improving policies and procedures; enhancing the use of academic and behavioral intervention systems for students with disabilities; and expanding the use of a co-teaching approach in general education classes. In addition, the report has underscored the need to better articulate, expand, and enhance professional development in order to build personnel capacity—among many other high-level proposals.

The Council and its special education team saw no reason that the Rochester City School District could not be one of the best urban school districts in the country in a few years. And it saw no reason that its special education programming could not also be among the best. The public should understand, however, that the reforms that the Council and the superintendent have proposed will take time to implement and more time still to realize results. But there is every reason to believe that those results can be forthcoming.



**APPENDIX A. RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATION CHART**



# Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

## APPENDIX B. COMPARISON OF STAFFING RATIOS

### Comparison of Staffing Ratios: Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative Survey Special Educators, Paraeducators, Speech/Language Pathologists, Psychologists & Social Workers, 2005-06

	Incidence		Special Ed Teachers			Paraeducators			Speech/Language			Psychologists			
	% Students w/Disability	SwD Enrollment	Number	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:		Number	% S/L Licensed*	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:	
				SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment
Alexandria City, VA	17.4	900	199	10	55	201	9	54	27		70	405	21	90	520
Atlanta, GA	8.8	4200	659 <sup>7</sup>	7	79	211	20	296	55		76	945	24	175	2166
Buffalo, NY	17.8	9289	798	12	65	402	23	130	125		74	417	52	179	1003
Chicago, IL <sup>8</sup>	12.9	55050	4141	14	103	2387	24	194	339		169	1259	240	238	1778
Clark County, NV	10.9	31921	3019	11	98	2087	15	141	257		124	1145	153	209	1923
Dallas ISD, TX	8.1	13000	880	15	182	750	17	213	105	.86	124	1524	52	250	3077
Evanston, IL	19.6	1238	94	13	67	92	13	69	24		52	263	12	103	526
Hartford, CT	15.9	3883	289	13	84	240 <sup>9</sup>	16	102	46		84	531	23	168	1062
Homewd-Floss IL	9.2	267	18	15	162	23	12	127	1.6		166	1819	1.8	148	1617
Kalamazoo, MI	13.0	1462	68	22	154	63	23	167	11.5		127	913	11.5	127	913
Kyrene, AZ	10.3	1909	126	15	147	100	19	185	37		52	501	14	136	1323
Lakota, OH	8.8	1547	115	14	152	120	13	146	30.4		51	576	11	141	1593
Los Angeles, CA <sup>10</sup>	9.65	76752	4971	17	149	7490	11	100	122		700	6073	566	151	1309
Memphis, TN	15.5	18226	854	21	138	683	27	173	56	.96	325	2105	61	299	1932
Miami-Dade, FL	11.8	43208	3538	12	103	1476	29	248	100		432	3658	252	171	1452
New Bedford, MA	20.4	2778	230	12	59	305	9	45	33		84	412	10	277	1359
Newport, RI	21.6	650	22	30	136	35	19	86	6	.96	108	500	3	216	1000
NYC, NY <sup>11</sup>	11.1	137930	11810	13	105	12516	12	99	2015		75	617	1170	128	1062
Norfolk, VG	13.89	37,000	428	12	86	237	22	156	42		122	881	23	223	1608
Passaic City, NJ	17.2	13563	187			135			19				19		
Philadelphia, PA	12	26,814	1676	16	134	437	61 <sup>12</sup>	514	142		188	1582	135	109	1665
Pr. George's, MD	11.6	15362	1258	12	106	1125	14	118	67		229	1985	71	216	1873
<b>Rochester</b>	<b>17.97</b>	<b>6019</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>132</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>540</b>
South Bend, IN	26.5	5573	350	16	60	306	18	69	48	.9	116	438	19 <sup>13</sup>	293	1105

<sup>7</sup> Includes central-office administrators

<sup>8</sup> From 8/26/05 NYC, NY report (see F.N. 4) Data from Chicago Public Schools (04/05) – \*number of students with disabilities based on 6-21 year olds and total population from district Web site

<sup>9</sup> From 2004-5 Hartford School District Strategic School Profile

<sup>10</sup> From 8/26/05 NYC, NY report (see F.N. 4) Data from Los Angeles Public Schools (04/05) – \*

<sup>11</sup> 03-04 data from Tom Hehir, et. al., Report of NYC August 26, 2005 - \*

<sup>12</sup> City behavioral health agencies provide paraprofessional support in the schools

<sup>13</sup> Includes four diagnosticians

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

	Incidence		Special Ed Teachers			Paraeducators			Speech/Language				Psychologists		
	% Students w/Disability	SwD Enrollment	Number	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:		Number	% S/L Licensed*	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:	
				SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment
Stafford, TX	9.6	289	24	12	125	16	18	187	6	.16	48	500	2	144	1500
St. Louis, MO	16	5696	652	9	54	229	25	154	97	.79	59	363	35	163	1007
Sun Prairie, WI	13.5	810	63	13	95	150	5.4	40	14		57	425	5	162	1200
Trenton PS, NJ	19.5	2679	225	12	61	175	15	78	22		122	624	15	179	915
Webster, MA	17.6	349	316	17	96	28	12	71	6	.83	58	331	1.2	291	1653
Waukegan, IL	16.1	2657	171	15	96	131	20	125	33		81	503	17	156	970
Yonkers, NY	14.9	3830	326	12	79	290	13	89	30		128	857	32	120	803
<b>U. S.</b>				<b>16</b>			<b>18</b>				<b>157</b>			<b>223</b>	

# Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

## Social Workers, Nurses, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists

	Social Workers			Nurses			Occupational Therapists				Physical Therapists			
	Number	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:		Number	Licensed*	Ratio To:		Number	Lic.	Ratio To:	
		SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment
Alexandria City, VA	25	76	437	17	112	643	8		238	1366	3		633	3643
Atlanta, GA	33	127	1576	27	156	1926	6		700	8667	3		1400	17333
Buffalo, NY	36	258	1449	44	211	1186	53	.43	175	984	16.4		566	3181
Chicago, IL	357	160	1196	NA	-	-	101		556	4226	37		1548	11535
Clark County, NY	10	-	-	166	192	1773	76		420	3872	28	.89	1140	10500
Dallas ISD, TX	28	464	5714	183	71	874	16		813	10,000	1		-	-
Evanston, IL	25	50	253	18	69	351	5		248	1263	1		1238	6314
Hartford, CT	71	54	344	57 <sup>14</sup>	68	428								
Homewood-Flossmor IL	3	89	970	1	267	970	.5		534	5822	0			
Kalamazoo, MI	4.5	325	2333	2	731	5250	1.5		975	7000	1		1462	10500
Kyrene, OH	6	318	3088	4	477	4630	8	.38	239	2316	2		955	9265
Lakota, OH	2	773	8760	14.5	107	1208	8	.5	193	2190	2	.5	773	8760
Los Angeles, CA	38	-	-	NA	-	-	140		610	5293	24		3560	-
Memphis, TN	41	445	2875	46	396	2562	18	.63	1013	6548	13.5	.93	1350	8730
Miami-Dade, FL	150	288	2439	100	432	3658	62		697	5900	15		2881	24386
New Bedford, MA	38 <sup>15</sup>	73	358	29	96	469	8	.75	347	1699	3		926	4531
Newport, RI	3	217	1000	5	130	600	3	.33	217	1000	2		325	1500
NYC, NY	1440	104	863	N/A	-	-	1151		131	1080	625		241	1988
Norfolk, VG	23	223	1609	-			13	.92	395	2846	7		734	5286
Passaic City, NJ	19			30			C				C			
Philadelphia, PA	0	-	-	295	91	761	23		1165	9772	20		1340	11238
Prince George's Cty, MD	5	-	-	208 <sup>16</sup>	74	639	56		274	2375	27	.96	569	4926
<b>Rochester</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>485</b>				<b>34</b>		<b>177</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>668</b>	<b>3721</b>
South Bend, I	25	223	840	24	232	875	12	.92	464	1750	3	.33	1857	7000
Stafford, TX	0	-	-	5	57	600	1		289	3000	1		289	3000
St. Louis, MO	48	119	734	86	66	410	21		271	1678	5		1139	7048
Sun Prairie, WI	5.6	144	1071	1	810	6000	5		162	1200	2.6		311	2307
Trenton PS, NU	45	60	305	21	128	653	5		536	2744	1		2679	13720
Webster, MA	1.5	233	1322	3	116	661	2.2	.54	159	902	1		349	1984
Waukegan, IL	28	91	580	27 <sup>17</sup>	98	610	12.6	.84	211	1308	5	.8	332	3296

<sup>14</sup> Includes seven nurse practitioners  
<sup>15</sup> Refers to school adjustment counselors  
<sup>16</sup> Includes 48 vacancies  
<sup>17</sup> Includes 16 certified school nurses

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	Social Workers			Nurses			Occupational Therapists				Physical Therapists			
	Number	Ratio To:		Number	Ratio To:		Number	Licensed*	Ratio To:		Number	Lic.	Ratio To:	
		SwD	Enrollment		SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment			SwD	Enrollment
Yonkers, NY	16	239	1605	54	71	476	32		120	803	14		274	1835
<b>U. S.</b>		<b>363</b>							<b>472</b>				<b>959</b>	

Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

**APPENDIX C. INCIDENCE RATES AND STAFF RATIOS**

**Ranking of District Incidence Rates and Staff Ratios <sup>18</sup>**

Incidence Rates	Special Educators	Para-professionals	Speech Language Pathologists	Psychologists	Social Workers	OTs	PTs
8	7	5.4	<b>45</b>	90	50	120	241
9	<b>9</b>	9	48	<b>97</b>	54	131	274
9	9	9	51	103	60	159	289
9	10	11	52	109	73	162	311
10	11	12	52	120	76	175	325
10	12	12	57	127	<b>87</b>	<b>177</b>	332
10	12	12	58	128	89	193	349
11	12	<b>12.3</b>	59	136	91	211	566
11	12	13	70	141	104	217	569
12	12	13	74	144	119	238	633
12	12	13	75	148	127	239	<b>668</b>
12	12	14	76	151	144	248	734
13	12	15	81	156	160	271	773
13	13	15	84	162	217	274	926
14	13	16	84	163	223	289	955
14	13	17	108	168	223	347	1139
15	13	18	116	171	233	395	1140
16	14	18	122	175	239	420	1238
16	14	19	122	179	258	464	1340
16	15	19	124	179	288	534	1350
16	15	20	124	209	318	536	1400
17	15	20	127	216	325	556	1462
17	15	22	128	216	445	610	1548
18	16	23	166	223	464	697	1857
18	16	23	169	238	773	700	2679
<b>18</b>	17	24	188	250		813	2881
20	17	25	229	277		975	3560
20	21	27	325	291		1013	
20	22	29	432	293		1165	
22	30		700	299			
27							

<sup>18</sup> RCSD's data is in bold text

### APPENDIX D. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

- Jean-Claude Brizard
- Kirsten Barclay
- Marguerite Bates
- Christine Hill
- Joyce Schultz
- Claudia Paine
- Melissa Algarin
- Marilyn Haile
- Catherine Accordo
- Tim Smith
- Nancy Brackman
- Kenneth Kelbaugh
- Russell Stence
- Marilyn P. Grant
- Ed Yansen
- Audrey Cummings
- Wendy Verstringhe
- Amy Lyle
- Alissa Hauck
- Guy Carr
- Patricia Duryea
- Mary E. Tyndall
- Sharon Key
- Marcia Jensen
- Shawn Cropo
- Kim Vallilee
- Jenna Gramartine
- Sharon Gendron
- Valerie Christofaro
- Ellen Stewart
- Laura Larson
- Amy Bianchi
- Robin Glenn-Shuler
- Debbi Jackett
- Shannon Roth
- Chris McCoy
- Maria Petrella
- Judy Drury
- Joyce Burleson
- Susan Kaufmann
- Cheryl M. Holloway
- Ray Giamartino
- Holly Maimone

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- Allison Rioux
- Nancy Gossin
- Angela Mullally
- Gretchen Mims
- Pat Prusak
- Diane Schuman
- Paul Fiduccio
- Vicki Gouyeia
- Jeffrey Feinberg
- Dan DiClemente
- Michele Hancock
- Alpha Daly- Majors
- Jeannette C. Silvers
- Billy Anglin
- Bev Gushue
- Nyree Strong
- Michael Chan
- Lourdes Odell
- Tim Cliby
- Connie Leech
- Lynda Morris
- Kari Kittelberger
- Georgia Hall
- Tabitha Baker
- Elizabeth Li
- Gwen Thompson
- Deborah Rider
- Vicky Ramus
- Namah Abdulmateen
- Ali Abdulmateen
- Jonathon Feldman
- Susan Hetherington
- Valerie Johnson
- Jeannine Dingus-Eason
- Kimberly Willis
- Cynthia Elliott
- Sandy Watts
- Rebecca Burger
- Patty Kaiser



## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

### APPENDIX E. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- District Organizational Chart
- Original History Narrative
- Historical Perspective on Organization of Special Education
- Special Education Current Organizational Chart
- Job Descriptions-Building Ratios
- Job Description for Social Workers
- Job Description for Psychologists
- Presentation & Handbook: Developing Quality IEPs (part of Central Office Committee on Special Education Professional Development for the 2007-08 school year)
- Committee on Special Education (CSE) Manual - Part 1 and Part 2
- Description of Current Role of the Special Education Training Resource Centers ( SETRC)
- CSE Management & Expectations for Physical Space
- Role of Non-Building Based Assessment Team
- Special Program Information
- Data - RCSD Special Education Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Paraprofessionals
- Students with Disabilities Statistics for School Year 2007-08
- District in Corrective Action (DICA) Audit 2007-08
- Audit - Thomas Jefferson School
- Policies/Procedures for Implementing Special Education Programs
- NCLB Data
- Entrance/Exit Guidelines for Special Class Programs
- Role of SETRC
- Work Experience Program (WEP) Information
- RCSD Professional Development Plan 2007-10
- Contractual Agreement Between the City School District and the Rochester Teachers Association
- Professional Development (PD) for Special Education from Director of Psychology and Social Work
  - PD - Part 1 of 2
  - PD - Part 2 of 2
- State Education Department (SED) Activity - Focused Review
- Pending and New/Upcoming SED-Resisted Activities
  - SED Final Report for School No.22 - Part 1
  - SED Final Report for School No.22 - Part 2
  - SED Final Report for School No.45 - Part 2 Only
- IEP Direct Information
- Data and Information on Non-Publics (External Education)
- Sample IEPs - Part 1
- Sample IEPs - Part 2
- Sample Psychological Evaluations from Central Ass't Team
- RCSD Data Currently Available to Teachers for Students with Disabilities
- Senate Bill 8497 signed into law 8-04-08

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- Special Education Percentage of Population by Zone
- “Whatever It Takes” (Book Excerpts) Professional Learning Communities Concepts
- RCSD: A Framework for Reform [Findings and Recommendations Based on the Superintendent Brizard’s 60-90 Day Plan of Entry]
- Rochester Reform Priorities
- RCSD Framework for Reform Through Year 3
- RCSD Needs Analysis Result: Examining Challenges and Opportunities in Special Education Management (July 21, 2004)
- Strategic Review of Rochester City School District Education Resource
- Parent Reference/ Managed Choice Policy
- Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) Related Issues Sept 2008
- RCSD Special Education Service Delivery Guidelines for Programs for CSE Chairs
- Special Education Victory in Greece, NY
- Chart of CSE Clerk Responsibilities at District Level for Initial Request And Requested Review Process
- Clerk I, II, III Job Responsibilities
- Job Description of Chief Word Processor- Oversight of Elementary and Secondary Special Education Program and Development Department
- Word Processors Tasks, including 1:1 Special Education Paraprofessional Functions of one Word Processing Operator
- Clerk Typist-Support Staff to Special Education Office and CSE
- Teacher Documentation of Concerns by Union Representative
- Parent letter to Superintendent Brizard
- J.G v. RCSD, et. al. (2002)
- Summaries of J.G. Consent Decree and Michael T. and Responses for Special Education Review
- Special Education Issues Matrix
- Samples of 1:1 Aid Requests
- 2007-9 Summary of Students with Disabilities by School Type and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Setting
- Office of Accountability: 15 Year History of Initial Referrals to CSE and 15 Year History of Declassification

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

### APPENDIX F. AGENDA FOR SITE VISIT

SEPTEMBER 9-12, 2008

<b>September 9</b>	
7:00-9:00 PM	Team Dinner and Meeting with Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard and Kirsten Barclay
<b>September 10</b>	
8:30-9:15	Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard
9:15-10:30	Marguerite Bates, Director of Compliance and External Education
10:30-11:45	Christine Hill, Director of Secondary Special Education; Joyce Schultz, Director of Elementary Special Education
11:45-12:15	LUNCH
12:15-1:15	CSE Chairs and Psychologists
1:15-2:15	Marilynn Patterson-Grant, Deputy Supt. for Teaching and Learning
2:15-3:15	Ed Yansen, Dir. of Educational Support Services; Amy Lyle, Dir. of Speech; Audrey Cummings, Dir. of Social Work and Psychology; Wendy Verstringhe, Coord. of OT/PT
3:15-3:30	BREAK
3:30-4:30	Special Education Teachers
4:30-5:30	General Education Teachers
5:30 –7 PM	Team Dinner with Kirsten Barclay
7:30-11:00PM	Team Work on Organizational Issues
<b>September 11</b>	
8:30-9:30	Sue Kaufmann, Cheryl Holloway, and Ray Giamartino, Chiefs of Schools
9:30-10:30	Building-Based Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Team Members and Related Service Providers
10:30-11:15	Human Capital Chief
11:15-12:15	Union Representatives: Vicki Gouveia, Pres. of the Administrators' Union; Dan DiClemente, Pres. of the Non-Instructional Employees Union; Jeffrey Feinberg, Exec. Council Member representing Sped Teachers
12:15-1:00	Accountability Chief and Staff
1:00-2:00	General Education Executive Directors of: Literacy (Connie Leech); Science (Michael Chan); ELLs (Lourdes O'Dell); African American Studies (Nyree

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	Strong); Instructional Technology (Tim Cliby); CTE (Bev Gushue); Academic Intervention Services (AIS) (Libbi Gandy)
2:00-3:30	Coordinating Administrators of Sped (CASE) (for secondary schools) and Teachers of the CSE (TCOSE)
3:30-4:30	Principals (4 Elementary K-6th and 4 Secondary 7th-12th)
4:30-6:00	Advocates and Parents
6:00-7:00	Clerks and Word Processors
7:30 PM –1:00 AM	Dinner and Debriefing from the day; Work on Initial Findings and Areas of Concerns
<b>September 12</b>	
8:30 PM-1:30 PM	Recommendations
1:30-3PM	Debriefing of Supt. Brizard

### APPENDIX G. STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

#### Sue Gamm, Esq.

Sue Gamm, a nationally recognized expert on special education, formerly served as Chief Specialized Services Officer for the Chicago Public Schools and Division Director for the Office for Civil Rights, Region V (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). She has participated on Strategic Support Teams provided by the Council of the Great City Schools for school districts in the District of Columbia (1998), Guilford County, N.C., (2003), Richmond, Va., (2003), St. Louis (2003), Charleston, S.C., (2005), and Milwaukee (2007). Ms. Gamm recently served as consulting attorney on the Council's amicus brief in support of the New York City Board of Education in *Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York v. Tom F., On Behalf of Gilbert F., A Minor Child* (2007). Ms. Gamm currently consults with the Illinois State Board of Education on the state's monitoring of the Chicago Public Schools on least restrictive environment as part of the district's implementation of the *Corey H. v. ISBE* settlement agreement. Further, she consults with the Public Consulting Group and numerous school districts and state educational agencies and provides training at national, state and local conferences on special education matters, particularly in the area of special education disproportionality. Ms. Gamm was an expert in 2006 for the Plaintiffs in *Blackman v. District of Columbia, et al.*, Civil Action No. 97-1629 (PLF) Consolidated with Civil Action No. 97-2402 (PLF) in the areas of special education policies, procedures, and practices. In Baltimore, she completed a review of special education services in 2004-05 for the city's public schools and was an expert for plaintiffs *Vaughn G., et al. v. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, et al.*, Civil Action No. MJG-84-1911. Ms. Gamm has also done extensive special education consultation on least restrictive environment (LRE) issues for the Los Angeles County School District and is a consultant for the class action consent decree in Los Angeles. Finally, Ms. Gamm has provided expert advice over the past five years to the New York City Board of Education. This assistance included writing a *Principal's Quick Reference Guide to Special Education* (2003). She was also an author and participant on the Hehir report on Special Education Services and Processes in 2004, 2005. Ms. Gamm graduated with high honors from University of Illinois with a B.A. degree in regular and special education (1970) and earned a law degree from the De Paul College of Law (1976). She is admitted to practice before the Illinois Bar, the Federal, Bar and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar.

#### Lois Kessler

Lois Kessler has been employed by the New York City Department of Education in the area of special education since 1972. For the past 10 years, she has served as the Director of Compliance in the Office of Special Education Initiatives. This office provides direction and support to the deputy executive directors and administrators of special education and Committee on Special Education chairpersons and principals on all matters related to special education. Further, the office develops ongoing policy to implement federal and state law/regulations governing special education and assists in building the capacity of schools to serve a broad range of students with disabilities. Ms. Kessler is also the liaison with other agencies, including the Office of Mental Health and Administration for Children Services. Prior to holding her current position, Ms. Kessler acted in various capacities related to students with disabilities, including serving as a

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classroom teacher, education evaluator, chairperson of the Committees on Special Education in District 7 and District 3, and clinical administrator for the Bronx Region, where she supervised the six Committees on Special Education located in the Bronx. She has served as a member of the New York State Commissioner's Advisory Panel on Special Education since 2001. Ms. Kessler received a B. S. degree in education in the areas of elementary and special education from Ohio State University and a master's degree in special education from Fordham University.

### **Linda Williams**

Linda Williams is the Executive Director of Services and Physical Health for the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Specialized Services. She has been employed with the Philadelphia School District for more than 28 years, during which time she served as a teacher of the hearing impaired, school-to-career transition coordinator, administrative assistant to the Regional Superintendent, Regional Special Education Director, and Administrator for the District's Office of Specialized Services. In her current position as Executive Director, Ms. Williams is responsible for the provision and delivery of programs and services for more than 26,000 students with disabilities. Her duties also include oversight of the departments for physical health, gifted education, homeless and displaced students, out-of-district placements, interagency collaboration, statewide educational initiatives for special education, and districtwide professional development for initiatives in the Office of Specialized Services. She works collaboratively with the Office of General Counsel, advising on programs, services, and special education litigation. Ms. Williams is responsible for the successful implementation of school-based programs that address the needs of students with various behavioral health diagnoses. She also oversees several class action consent decrees, including *Cordero v. Commonwealth* (1992); *Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Department of Education* (2004); *LeGare v. School District of Philadelphia* (1995); and was responsible for the successful conclusion of *Kellner v. School District of Philadelphia* in 2005. Ms. Williams assisted in the initial development of the publication *Access to the Core Curriculum Strategies Guide* (2006), and its companion, *Professional Development Modules for the Strategies Guide* (2008). Earlier (1997), she received the district's Rose Lindenbaum Award for Excellence in Teaching. Ms. Williams graduated with honors from Temple University with a B.S. degree in elementary education (1978) and an M.Ed. degree in deaf education (1980), and is a candidate for an Ed.D. degree from Nova Southeastern University. She holds Pennsylvania certifications in elementary education, teacher of the hearing impaired, elementary principal, and supervisor of special education.

### **Julie Wright Halbert, Esq.**

Julie Halbert has been Legislative Counsel for the Council of the Great City Schools for more than 13 years. In that capacity, she has served as a national education legal and policy specialist, with emphasis on special education. She worked extensively on the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and 2004. Ms. Halbert is responsible for drafting numerous technical provisions in the IDEA and providing technical assistance to Congress and the U. S. Department of Education. In 1997 and, again, in 2005, she testified before the U.S. Department of Education on its proposed regulations on IDEA 2004. Ms. Halbert has directed each of the Council's special education review teams, including special education reviews in the District of Columbia, Guilford County (N.C.), Richmond (Va.), St. Louis, and

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Charleston (S.C.). She is now leading a review in New York City. Ms. Halbert was the counsel of record for the Council of the Great City Schools' amicus briefs in the Supreme Court of the United States in (a) *Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York v. Tom F., On Behalf of Gilbert F., A Minor Child* (2007); (b) *Jacob Winkelman, a Minor By and Through His Parents and Legal Guardians, Jeff and Sander Winkelman, et.al., v. Parma City School District* (2007); (c) *Brian Schaffer v. Jerry Weast, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, et.al.*, (2005); and (d) *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* (2007). Ms. Halbert graduated with honors from the University of Maryland and the University of Miami School of Law. She is admitted to practice in the Federal Bar, the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, and the Florida and Pennsylvania Bars.

### APPENDIX H. ABOUT THE COUNCIL

#### Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban public school systems, including Rochester.<sup>19</sup> The organization's Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent, CEO or Chancellor of Schools, and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization.

The composition of the organization makes it the only independent national group representing the governing and administrative leadership of urban education and the only association whose sole purpose revolves around urban schooling.

The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in their improvement and reform. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies of urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities for areas such as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, and technology. Finally, the organization informs the nation's policymakers, the media, and the public of the successes and challenges of schools in the nation's Great Cities. Urban school leaders from across the country use the organization as a source of information and an umbrella for their joint activities and concerns.

The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Since the organization's founding in 1956, geographic, ethnic, language, and cultural diversity has typified the Council's membership.

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<sup>19</sup> Albuquerque, Anchorage, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), Buffalo, Caddo Parish (Shreveport), Charleston County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Christina (Delaware), Cincinnati, Clark County (Las Vegas), Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, Duval County (Jacksonville), East Baton Rouge, Fort Worth, Fresno, Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), Hillsborough County (Tampa), Houston, Indianapolis, Jackson, Jefferson County (Louisville), Kansas City, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami-Dade County, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, New Orleans, New York City, Norfolk, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orange County (Orlando), Palm Beach County, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, Providence, Richmond, Rochester, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, St. Paul, Toledo, Washington, D.C., and Wichita



## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

### APPENDIX I. HISTORY OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAMS

The following is a history of the Strategic Support Teams provided by the Council of the Great City Schools to its member urban school districts over the last 10 years.

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005
	Legal Services	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
	Communications	2008
Birmingham		
	Organizational Structure	2007
	Operations	2008
Broward County (FL)		
	Information Technology	2000
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
Christina (DE)		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000

## Improving Special Education in the Rochester City Schools

	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Safety and Security	2008
<b>Columbus</b>		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Information Technology	2007
	Food Services	2007
<b>Dallas</b>		
	Procurement	2007
<b>Dayton</b>		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
<b>Denver</b>		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
<b>Des Moines</b>		
	Budget and Finance	2003
<b>Detroit</b>		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Food Services	2007

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	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Facilities	2008
	Finance and Budget	2008
	Information Technology	2008
Greensboro		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
Hillsborough County (FLA)		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
Indianapolis		
	Transportation	2007
Jackson (MS)		
	Bond Referendum	2006
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Program Implementation	2007
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
Memphis		

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	Information Technology	2007
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Alternative Education	2007
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Food Service	2008
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
New York City		
	Special Education	2008
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
	Budget	2008
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Human Resources	2007

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Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
	Special Education	2008
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
Seattle		
	Human Resources	2008
	Budget and Finance	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Bilingual Education	2008
	Transportation	2008
	Capital Projects	2008
	Maintenance and Operations	2008
	Procurement	2008
	Food Service	2008
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998

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	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007