



rochester teachers association

RCSD's Fiscal Deficit: A Manufactured Crisis? An Open Letter To The Board of Education

The Rochester City School District stunned this community on October 20th by announcing a sudden budget deficit of \$117M to \$199M. If that is truly so, the District is in a financial free-fall.

But it isn't quite so. The District, departing from accepted general accounting practices and precedents, inflated the projected deficit by including in the deficit the Revenue Anticipation Notes (RAN) to the tune of \$86M, the lack of Reserve Funds to the tune of \$69M and Assigned Funds to the tune of \$20.6M. There are additional millions of dollars in other irregularities in their projected deficit - including, but not limited to, their failure to account for the savings accrued during the entire remote-only learning period.

Why is the District wildly inflating their projected deficit even after making monumental cuts last year and announcing a balanced budget at the end of the year? One can only speculate. Is it an attempt to lower expectations during current negotiations with teachers and administrators as well as upcoming negotiations with paraprofessionals and non-teaching employees? Is it merely cover to justify even more layoffs and a repeat of mid-year cuts of programs and services in order to "right-size" the District? Or just lack of experience and competence on the part of Central Office fiscal decision-makers? Whatever the reason or motivation, it constitutes a reckless exaggeration of reality that further undermines the District's already fragile credibility.

As in previous years, the Rochester City School District continues to mismanage its budget and probably does have a predictable annual deficit, but not a sudden \$199M deficit. It's a manufactured crisis and our students should not have to pay the price for the District's inability to manage its finances or to accurately project their fiscal status. Nor should our students have to lose their teachers, staff, programs and services just to make the District's alternate reality stick.

As representatives of the more than 6000 Rochester City School District employees, we urge the RCSD Board of Education to reject this faulty and ridiculously exaggerated version of the projected deficit. We urge the school board to restore the cruel pandemic layoffs, to avert yet another round of mid-year layoffs and to spare any further cuts of programs and services to our students.

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