State Monitor Financial Plan Rochester City School District

FY 2020 -FY 2025

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State Monitor

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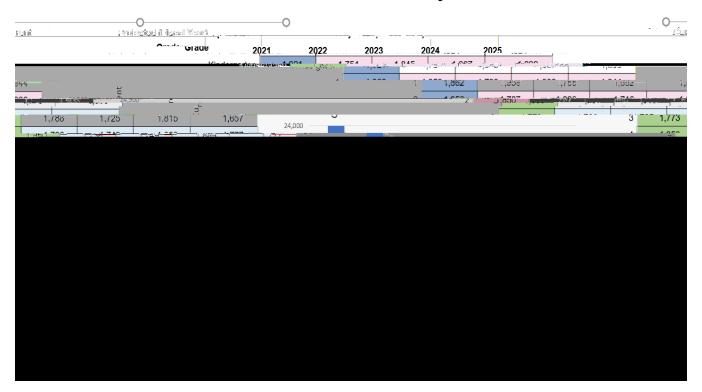
Introduction

Background Information on the Rochester Schools

The city of Rochester is located inpstate New York. The city sits on the southern shore of Lake Ontario. The Genesee River bisects the city. Rochester is the third most populous city after New York City and Buffalo. Rochester is located in Monroe County. The city is part of a region korosonience, technology, research, and development. The University of Rochester and the Rochester Institute for Technology along with notable smaller colleges like St. John Fisher College also support the economy of the city and region.

Just over 63% of the city's residents are from historically underrepresented and marginalized culturauraor

Student Forallment - Current & Praiected *



The role of the State Monitor Work Plan is to direct and guide the improverfidestignated outcomes as a coordinated effort, working with all stakeholders; especially the newly appointed DMyersli Small. Dr. Lesli Myes-Small was hired as Superintendent prior to the appointment and arrival of the State MonitorThe RochesteCity School District (RCSD), has been struggling for more than a decade, with six superintendents and ten chief financial officers in conjunction with many local and state efforts to improve its performance. As a result, Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2020ere Commissioner Shannon Tahoe to appoint a Monitor to the Rochester City School District to provide oversight, guidance, and technical assistance related to the academic and fiscal policies, practices, programs, and decisions of the District, the Board of Education, and the Superintendent. The State Megritoron May 26, 2020. The primary responsibilities of the Monitor include the following:

Serve as a nonoting exofficio member of the Board.

Assist the Board in adopting a conflict of interest policy that ensures board members and administrators act in the District's best interest.

Work with the Board to develop a proposed academic improvement plan and proposed financial plan for the District o later than November 1, 2020, for the 202021 school year and the four subsequent school years.

Beginning with the 20222 school year budget, ensure that the budget is balanced and consistent with the District's longerm financial plan.

In July 2018, Commissioner MaryEllen Elia appointed Dr. Jaime Aquino to be the Distinguished Educator to the District. He issued a report in November 2018 with 84 recommendations that the District has been working to implement. It is an expectation the Financial Plan developed by the Monitor and the Boardwill incorporate some of the work of Dr. Aquino. In June 2020, the Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) recommended RCSD work with the State Monitor to develop comprehensive multipear financial pans with structurally balanced budgets that:

Include realistic estimates of revenues and appropriations based on historical trends or other known factors.

Fiscal Improvement Plan (FIP):

Services, Chief Academic Officer, and Chief Financial Officer. Twice monthly since early June, the State Monitor has actively participated in Board deliberations.

The second data collection method used was through individual interviews and focus groups. Participants were selected based on staff recommendations, affiliation, or oversight within the District, volunteers, and references ideietif in documents from previous reviews of the District. Multiple informal interviews were conducted with **BD** employees and external partners as documented in Tables 13. Documents reviewed are in Appendix A and B.

Table 1. Summary of RCSD Interviews Conducted

STAKEHOLDER	NO. MEETINGS	STAKEHOLDER	NO. MEETINGS
Superintendent	20+	Directors	10+
Deputy Superintendent	5+	Union Leadership	4
Executive Directors	15+	Board ofEducation Commissioners	15+
Principals	6+	Chiefs	30+
Teachers	4+	Staff (e.g.,transportation, academics, technology, special education, accountability, placement, grants, legal, finance)	30+

Regent Norwood	2	BOCES, Monroe 1 and 2	5
Race, Equity, and Leadership, Howard Eagl Members and former employees	€ 2	University of Rochester, Finance Support, Dr. Finnegan, Arian, Steve	2
CFOs other NY Districts	5	Executive Leadership. other NY Districts	6
Cornhill neighborhood residents	2	ECG Engineers	1

Budget Forecast Based on State Aid Reductions

New York State is anticipating a loss in revenues in part due to the impact of the pandemic. A flurry of communications from the Department of Education stipulates the strong possibility of a reduction in funds that constitute 80% of the total revenue in the RCSD budget.

The District contracted with Forecast5, a financial consulting firm to produce three (3) scenarios based on the anticipation of various levels of state aid reduction. Each scenario includes the loss of state aid due to a reduction in reimbursable services. To explain, the onset of COVID forced RCSD students to remain home for virtual instruction. This phenomenon resulted in a reduction in transportation needed to transport students to and from school from March 13, 2020, through the fithe school year. Consequently, a reduction in transportation service one school year corresponds to a reduction in transportation aid the following school year. For RCSD the reduction in transportation aid totaled \$23,100,000 for the 20201 schoolyear. The District's response to COVID also resulted in a reduction of services to special education students learning in a virtual environment. The reduction in billable services to students in one year resulted in an estimated reduction of \$840,000 caidM reimbursements for services to students with disabilities during the same time period as transportation for the 2020/21 school year.

Major Revenue Assumptions

- 1. The current assumption is this worf Rochester will continue to contribute \$119,100,000 on an annual basis. (This amount has been consistent for the previous 8 years of forecast data.)
- 2. State Aid: The Governor of New York announced a 20% cut in aid to school districts in June. Two months of payments were reduced by 20% from various state funding sources. Full payments were restored to districts for the month of September. At the time of the writing of this document an updated announcement about the future of state aid to districts has not been forthcoming from the Governor's office. The fact % of the revenue for RCSD comes from state aid and the fact the fund balance for the District is well below a level that could withstand fluctuations in funding from the state, position the District in a vulnerable financial position.

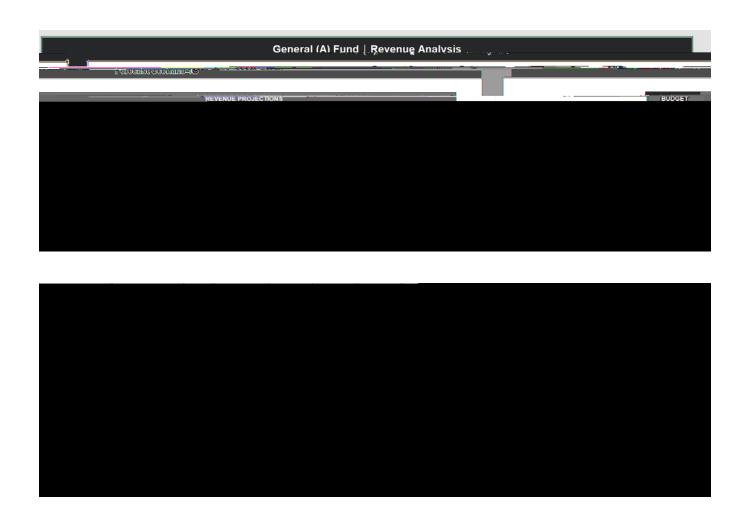
Due to the lack of information about the District's short term financial future, a conservative

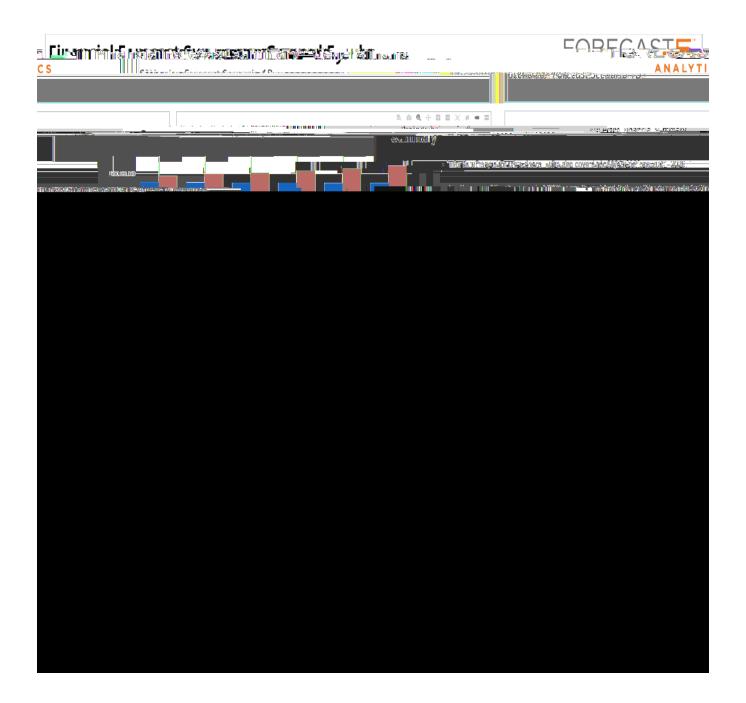
- b. Computer Software
- c. Computer Hardware
- d. Library materials

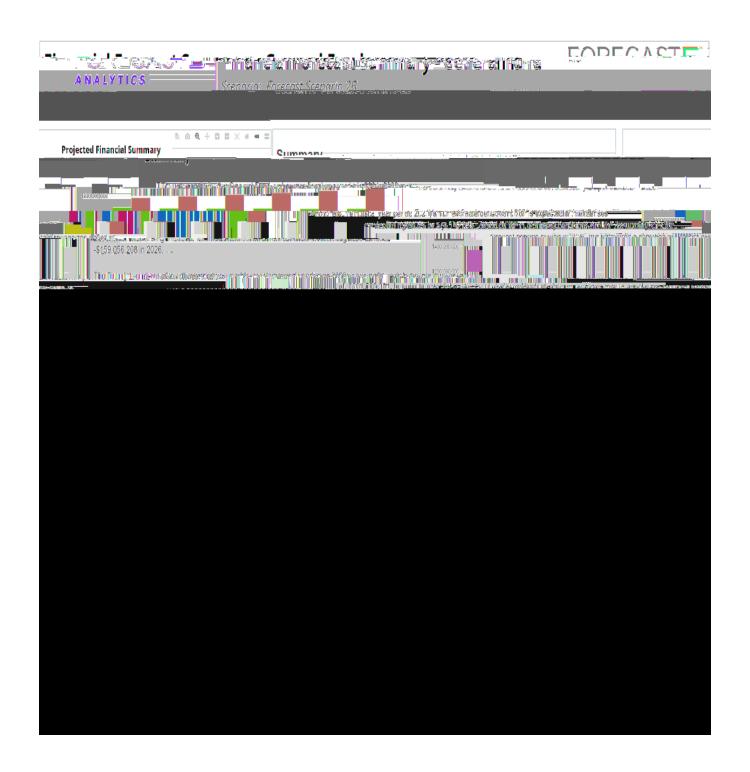
An additional \$16,198,296 has been budgeted in 2020/21 in the form of state aid. Included within this figure is approximately \$10Wh building aid based on estimates from the RCSD business office staff. Also included in this figure is Bullet Aid of \$1.2Mwhich the District has not yet received as well as

Scenario 3B - 10% State Aid Reduction which equates to 15.36% given above

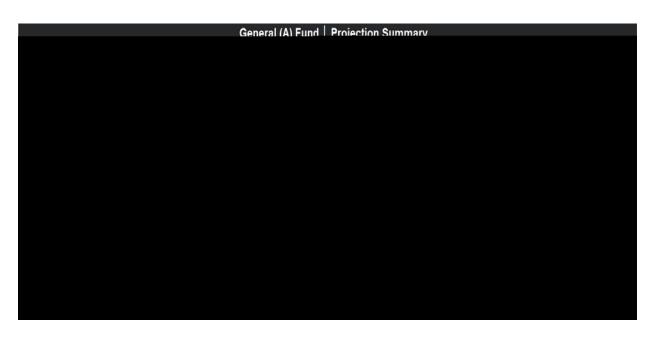
NOTE: *These budget forecast scenarios contain estimates of revenues and expenditures. The actual

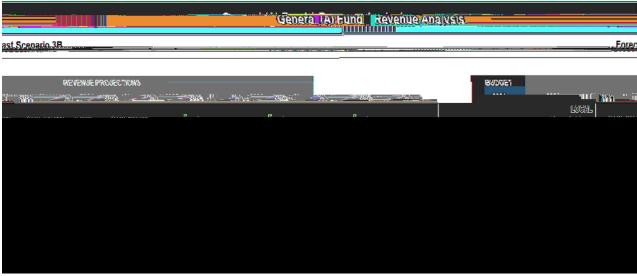




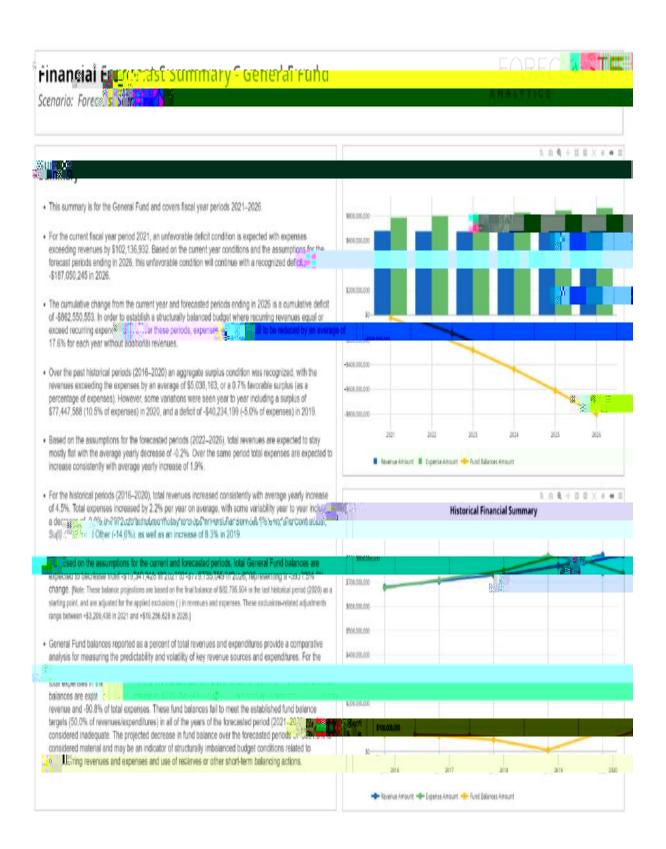


Scenario 3B 40% State Aid Reduction









RCSD Fiscal Practices

According to the State Comptroller's Office, there are three (3) central themes or goals necessary for fiscal improvement:

- 1. *Expenditure Reduction*: Recurring reductions in operating expenditures can be achieved through many actions, including more efficient service provision; at the services, or other methods.
- 2. Revenue Generation: Recurring revenue can be generated in a variety of ways, such as generating growth in the municipality's real estate property tax base, increasing the sales tax base, and bringing fees into line with the cost of providing services.
- 3. *Reserves*: Maintaining a reasonable level of unrestricted fund balances can provide insurance against unanticipated expenditures or revenue shortfalls.

General Findings

The State Monitor's 42 findings and 55 recommendations have breanized in Tables six (6) through nine (9). Recommendations have been grouped based on the estimated year of implementation and completion over the next three years. After working with staff, listening to district constituents, reviewing documents, and examining student data, the Monitor has identified seven (7) takeaways from these early experiences in the District:

- 1. RCSD at all levels of the organization should makeing term commitment to focusing resources on the acceltion of student achievement in the District.
- 2. RCSD at all levels of the organization should make a teng-commitment to redirect resources away from programs, practices, and partners that have been unable to demonstrate evidence of producing positive outcomes for students. This will be critical in order to make resources available to implement the recommendations contained in this report and priorities identified in the RCSD Strategic Plan.
- 3. RCSD should align District resources according to a declistudent population.
- 4. RCSD should make a systemic commitment to adhere to the budget constraints of the District and refrain from a culture of buying now and trying to figure out how to pay for it later.
- 5. RCSD should adopt a goal to reduce borrowing dwentext 5 years.
- 6. RCSD should optimize all processes related to the collection of money owed to the District.
- 7. RCSD should demonstrate the courage to examinestrangling beliefs, practices, and structures that may be contributing to the growing budgetitle

8. RCSD should restablish the nonegotiable practice of regularly communicating expectations and holding every level of the organization responsible and accountable for student success and financial solvency.

Tables 49 look specifically at findings related to fundamental fiscal practices contributing to the current

overstaffed. Staffing allocation data indicates administrators and teachers are assigned to schools in an inconsistent and inequitable maner.

The District shall use class size guidelines in all schools for staffing/budget development.

The District shall develop guidelines based on the documented need for related service providers for budget development.

The District shall conduct a comprehensive analysis of current enrollments and staffin in each school and central office by February 1, 2021.

Effective immediately, create a Artifacts may include crossdiscipline team with members of the human capital teaching and learning, and the finance departments specifically for staffing and budgeting.

The team shall ensure:

- 1) all staffing and contingent saff requests are in the budget,
- 2) all hired staff are appropriately placed in the District's software program including position control and budget code,
- any modifications to staffing are made in consultation with the team, principal, and chief.

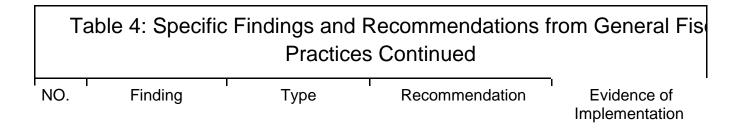
This should help maximize resources and create efficiencies throughout the District while reducing expenses.

of staffing and budgeting by February 2021 and every year thereafter.

Develop a process to revisit enrollmentsand staffing using BEDS data, after each semester and 30 days before the start of school.

Communicate staff allocation designations for gall collective bagaining unit members on a yearly basis by July 1st.

staffing reports, BEDS data, budget reports



The current I, stuetht information management system (SIMS) has not been fully implemented. All necessary staff members have not been adequately trained. There is evidence a comprehensive implementation plan was not executed with fidelity for the launch of the system in the District.

The current student information management system used for students with disabilities does not align accurately with the financial Management system and the core student information management system.

These systems are designed to provide accurate information regarding District, attendance, enrollment, staffing, revenue, and expenditures. Critical controls within the financial management system have been deactivated. Access to the system has been granted to employees in a randomfashion. District data is compromised when either one of these systems is not properly serviced by the vendor, not complemented with adequate training, not upgraded, or underfunded.

revenue. Will also increase efficiency in every department beginning July 12022, in the District.

Implement the action plan throughJuly 1, 2024.

Та	Table 4: Specific Findings and Recommendations from General Fise Practices Continued					
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation		

P-Cards and CONCUR are used in the District for Direct Pay transactions. The list of allowable direct pay purchases is extensive. P-Cards and CONCUR purchases are not encumbered in the A Fund of the budget. In many instances funds are expended prior to

expenses comingriscumiCON ired 2 Tw 9.181 0 Td (euTd [(8ed 2 Tw 9.181 0 Td (euTd [-Td (P 4.4(yp)-4 (e)]TJ 2T)

administrator regarding this program. 3. Regular Medicaid training for RCSD employees must exist. 4. A confidential disclosure mechanism must exist tænable anonymous reporting. 5. Procedures must support nonintimidation and non retaliation for good faith reporting. 6. A process to assure fair enforcement and ramifications for non compliant behavior or failure to report noncompliance must exist. 7. A process is to be defined and enacted to resolve non compliance and assure

Table 4: Specific Findings and Recommendations from General Fise Practices Continued					
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation	

Cabinet members are

not informed of the implications of collective /6 13-5.3Ty9.96 98.9 98.52 63f4.9 (i)n463f4.9/Paginac -0.003 (p)-7 (g1 (n)r7 (s 0 Tdp)-7 (Tdp)-7 (Tw 0 1 (

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Table 5: Governance and Programmatic Decision Making Findings and Recommendations from Financial Audit

Recommendations from Financial Audit					
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation	
12	Plans, initiatives, and programs are often initiated by the District but are not executed long enough to measure results. This may be due to the high turnover rate of superintendents and other key leadership positions throughout the District.	New State Monitor Finding	District priorities, goals, and major initiatives are sustained through the life of the RCSD Strategic Plan unless officially modified through a majority Board action. A multiyear commitment to the academic and financial plans will force any new leaders enteringet organization to commit to the		

Table 5: Governance and Programmatic Decision Making Findings a Recommendations from Financial Audit Continued

NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation
15	The RCSD School Board goals have been approved. They are as follows; 1) Improve the financial condition of RCSD, 2) Increase academic achievement and 3) Equity. How these goals will be defined, achieved, monitored, or measure hasyet to be determined by the RCSD School Board.	Educator Finding	The Board should adhere to a Board goals.	Artifacts might include Board agendas, minutes, district dashboards, board presentations, Superintendent evaluation materials.

Although it is considered a best practice for school board decisions to be based on data and deliberation, the RCSD Budget Book is a lengthy, cumbersome document that includes

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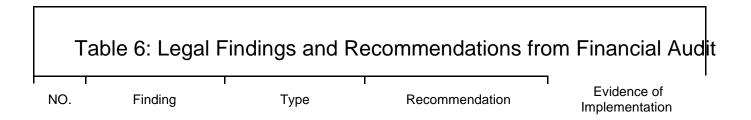
Table 5: Governance and Programmatic Decision Making Findings a Recommendations from Financial Audit Continued

	<u> </u>			
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation
18	A review of contract requests indicates a significant number of errors and omissions or contract request forms submitted to legal counsel for review prior to final contract development. Conflicting and missing fee amounts; vague and missing evaluations, vague and missing deliverables result in a long and laborious workflow.		Effective July 1, 2021, review the contract request process with chiefs, directors, and school administration Develop a mandatory mintraining online to support staff with the contract request process. Hold staff accountable for adhering to the guidelines. Updating the current financial management system should make this process more efficient. Hold all parties accountable for adhering to the guidelines for requesting and approving contracts.	the workflow for contract development at least twice a year. Random preview of contracts by the State Monitor prior to arrival to legal counsel on a monthly basis

Та	Table 5: Governance and Programmatic Decision Making Findings a Recommendations from Financial Audit Continued						
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation			
19	The Board convenes monthly for a business meeting. There are six committees: Audit, Governance, Policy, Excellence in Student Achievement, Community and Intergovernmental Relations, and Finance. A Bylaw amendment restored the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee. Since the DE's departure, the committee meetings have been changed to committees of the whole, attended by all board members. Although this increases the number of meetings per month, it as facilitated the active engagement of all members of the board in the work of the District. To reduce the number of meeting nights, some committees meet on the same night.		The Board should review this practice yearly to measure to what degree Board goals were met or surpassed.	Artifacts might include Board evaluations, self			

Most resolutions that are presented to the board do not include cost analysis to help Board determine the financial indications of the actions being requested in resolutions.	e a o the State Monitor	Effective immediately, all contracts and resolutions with financial obligation for the District should include evaluations and cost analysis. (Single (S) 9629 (Si7) compliance with this protocol. This will support the decision making process for the Board.	evaluations and cost analysis. This will support the decisiormaking process for the Board This should start INCO6 immediately and continue indefinitely.	5.1746
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Table 5: Governance and Programmatic Decision Making Findings a Recommendata herd/ucom



Т	Table 6: Legal Findings and Recommendations from Financial Aud Continued					
NO. Finding Type Recommendation Evidence Implementa						

Legal Counsel providesinadequate communication to District administration about MOAs and MOUs. An MOA with one bargaining unit, involving 6,4 employees resulted in those employees working prior to a notification to the Payroll department. The Payroll department was

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This will help with managing expenses.

All MOAs and MOUs that have an impact on the teaching and learning process and the District finances should be presented to the Board for discussion, effective immediately.

All MOAs and MOUs should be negotiated by administrators selected by the Superintendent to serve on the

28	The District has deviated from the Uniform Code System as defined by New York State for Account Codes. By doing so, the District runs the risk of not properly aligning certain expenditures with possible offsetting revenues. In addition, not using standard codes requires the expenditure of time, labor, and money to convert district codes to standard NY state account codes for state reporting purposes, like Transparency and ESSA Reports.	Budget codes musteflect intended expenditures. They are not intended to hold funds for future transfers to cover accounts that have not been budgeted. All accounts must be reconciled to have a zero positive balance at yearnd. The District will transition all budgetcodes to the Uniform Code System by June 1, 202	July 1, 2024. The practice of recording negative dollar amounts
	·		

Table 8: Organization Structure and Internal Operational Efficiency Findings and Recommendations from Financial Audit

NO.

Finding

Type

Recommendation

Evidence of Implementation

Many RCSD Board policies have not been reviewed or updated. An excerpt from the minutes of the Policy Committee of the Whole scheduled on June 2, 2020, indicated the c 0.0042, 2tio W

Table 8: Organization Structure and Internal Operational Efficiency Findings and Recommendations from Financial Audit Continued

NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation
30	There is a lack of evidence Policy 6700R is being executed with fidelity. The Board of Education shall require the Chief Legal Counsel to provide quarterly reports on any contracts for goods and services issued under \$35,000. These reports shall include the name of the vendol length of the contract, date contract was signed, amount of the contract, brief description of the services to be provided and verification that the contract was reviewed by the Department of Law and executed by the Superintendent.IA budget, finance, and information technology resolutions will go before the Finance Committee for their review and action before being submitted to the full Board of Education at a busines or special meeting for its approval. In order to adhere to this policy, all contracts must proceed through the same workflow process. Currently, the legal department does not receive or review all district contracts.		Effective immediately, the District should initiate full implementation of Policy 6700R. Help support the management of district expenses.	Artifacts may include quarterly reports of contracts issued under \$35,000shared with the Board.

-	•		and Internal Opens from Financial	rational Efficiency Audit Continued
NO.	Finding	Туре	Recommendation	Evidence of Implementation

Reports indicate significant discrepancies in documentation from service providers serving students with disabilities. This has an impact on the District's ability to claim

ability to claim srce20 a(r)3.2nd222s253n ftude we.nuv scumer (w)5.1do44th

servider we.nu9 (c)4.2 (e)4.8we(1-p)-7 (a)-2.8 4rm3i28 qu96 38ec1anm 1 Tf -0.00((i)2.9 (n)-4 ()]TJ 0.006 T2(on f)I2

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36	Transportation costs emanate from two general sources, general education and special education. Transportation services are generated by information included on IEPs during annual review meetings. The level of monitoring and supervision of IEP meetings may	State Monitor Finding	Effective immediately the District should initiate the following: 1- A review of the services andaccommodations writter on IEPS, particularly the need for transportation. 2- Consider renegotiating al contracts with transportation vendors. Help support the	Artifacts might include contracts, monthly transportation reports,
	•		Help support the management of district expenses.	

	conducive to RCSD operations.	
	Annually, by September 1	

Annually, by September 1 each year, the District shall submit to the monitor an updated fiveyear financial plan such that for each school year the annual aggregate operating expenses

There is no evidence of periodic review of long-range financial planning.

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State Monitor Finding

Table 10: Fiscal Improvement Plan Goals, Strategies, and Board Considerations

Goals	Recommended Actions for Board Consideration
Potential Strategies for Increasing Revenue	 Increase grant acquisitions Better processes for Medicaid and other reimburseme Compete for charter school students Monitor enrollment data for noresident students attending RCSD schools Shared space with charter schools
Potential Strategies for Decreasing Expenditures	 Greater employee contributions to health care Staff reductions Close and consolidate schools Review and renegotiate all contracts, particularly transportation Outsource selected services Appeal for a yearound Virtual Secondary School Eliminate all spaces leased by the District Minimize the legal requirement services to charters schools

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Documents Reviewed by State Monitor

Distinguished Educators'

APPENDIX B: ContextualReference Material Used By State Monitor

DOCUMENT	LINK
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Managing For Results in America's Great C it y