



Rochester CUSD #3A

4 Rocket Drive Rochester, Illinois 62563-9282, United States

Superintendent's Report

To: Board of Education
From: Dan W. Cox, Superintendent of Schools
Date: December 11, 2024

Gratitudes and Celebrations

Last week, the Rochester High School Music Department hosted the annual Madrigal Dinner, a cherished tradition that highlights the talent and dedication of our students and staff. This event brings together the school community, with students delivering impressive performances and staff creating a welcoming and memorable atmosphere.

A special tradition during the evening invites alumni to join current students in song, fostering a meaningful connection across generations. Events like the Madrigal Dinner exemplify our school district's commitment to excellence in the arts.



Recent Actions & Highlight

Progress of Annual Audit

The District's annual audit is nearing completion and is expected to be finalized by the end of December, with a presentation to the Board planned for the next regular meeting in January. The business office has been in regular communication with the auditors to address the remaining details, and draft reports are anticipated to be available in the coming weeks.



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Of the four audit findings from the prior year, three have been fully addressed and corrected, as previously reported to the Board. The remaining finding pertains to the timely reconciliation of the main operating account due to unresolved transactions in liability accounts. Each transaction has now been investigated and resolved, and the correcting entries provided by Sikich are being finalized.

Once completed, the District will again achieve Financial Recognition, the highest designation awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education. This reflects the District's continued commitment to sound financial management and accountability.

The auditor and I will hold an exit meeting in January to review the audit in detail. Additionally, the District's auditor will attend the January Board meeting to present the audit and answer any questions from the Board.

School District Finance Briefing with ISBE

Recently, district leadership met with Dr. Matt Seaton, Chief Finance Officer for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Eileen Turanchik, Supervisor of School Business Services at ISBE. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Rochester CUSD 3A's financial landscape and our ongoing efforts to maintain transparency, oversight, and fiduciary responsibility in managing district resources.

Key Discussion Points

- **Revenue Trends:** Over the past two years, the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) revenue has decreased due to corrections by the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR). Additionally, revenues from other local sources, such as tuition, transportation fees, facility rentals, and athletic admissions, have collectively decreased compared to FY24. Federal revenues are also projected to decline significantly as ESSER funds phase out.
- **Expenditure Pressures:** Salaries increased by 4% in FY25, while employee benefit costs rose substantially by 29%. Spending on supplies and materials is expected to increase, and capital outlay expenditures will see a sharp increase reflecting essential investments in facilities and infrastructure.



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- **State Funding Volatility:** Although state funding has remained stable, the school district's position near the cutoff between Tier I and Tier II introduces potential volatility, with risks of significant funding decreases in future fiscal years.
- **Staff-to-Student Ratios:** It was noted that Rochester CUSD 3A may have a lower staff-to-student ratio compared to districts with similar demographics. This is an important area to monitor as it could impact both financial planning and the quality of educational services.

This dialogue reinforced the school district's commitment to proactive financial planning and its dedication to meeting current and future challenges with a focus on responsible stewardship. Our administrative team is diligently working to address these challenges while maintaining high-quality educational opportunities for our students.

We also emphasized the measures the school district has taken to enhance financial transparency, including regular reporting, collaborative planning, and maintaining open lines of communication with state officials and stakeholders. Dr. Seaton and Ms. Turanchik commended the district's commitment to sound financial management and its efforts to adapt to changing financial realities.

Rochester CUSD 3A remains focused on prudent financial practices, ensuring the best use of resources to support student success and community trust. Monitoring key metrics will remain a priority as we continue to navigate our financial landscape.

Partners in Education (PIE) Night Focus Group

On December 2, the school district hosted its first Partners in Education (PIE) focus group, an initiative designed to strengthen collaboration between families and schools. PIE seeks to create opportunities for parents, guardians, educators, and administrators to engage in meaningful dialogue and develop shared strategies to support student success.

The first session brought together a small focus group of parents and administrators. Invitations were extended to parents who participated in last spring's Handbook Advisory Committee, fostering continuity and leveraging their prior engagement.

The focus group discussions centered on:



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1. **Enhancing Family Engagement Through PIE Nights:** Participants explored effective ways to involve families in their children's education through consistent, meaningful engagement opportunities.
2. **Establishing a General Education Advisory Committee:** The group began drafting ideas for a formal advisory structure, including the development of a constitution. This committee would aim to represent a diverse range of family voices and perspectives, offering insights on matters that impact general education.

The focus group plans to reconvene in January to finalize their recommendations. These will include strategies for future PIE events and a proposed framework for the General Education Advisory Committee. A formal presentation of these recommendations will be shared with the Board of Education at the regular January meeting.

This initiative reflects the school district's commitment to fostering authentic partnerships with families to support student learning and well-being.

District Spotlight

After years of thoughtful planning, the staff, students and board of education members at Rochester High School celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for the High School Construction Project.

The groundbreaking also reminded us of the purpose behind this project: creating opportunities for our students. Construction crews are making significant progress on the soccer complex, Rocket Booster Stadium, and the high school's science wing. Each of these is designed to enrich our students' education, extracurricular, and co-curricular experiences, ensuring a well-rounded and engaging learning environment.





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In every sense, crews are pouring more than just concrete foundations—they are laying the groundwork for a brighter future. These new facilities will serve as a strong foundation for learning and achievement, benefitting not only generations of students but also their families and the broader community.


Positive Launch

Celebrating the First Semester

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of our first semester and share my gratitude for the collective efforts of our students, staff, and families.

This semester has shown the strength and dedication of our school community. We've seen students excel in academics, athletics, and the arts, with many achieving milestones that make us all proud.

I wish each of you a joyful holiday season filled with peace and reflection. Thank you for your support and leadership as we continue to make a difference in the lives of our students and the broader community.

It's a great day to be a Rocket!!! 

"A Tradition of Excellence!"