**Education Law §3614 School Funding Allocation Report**

**Part F - Narrative Description**

**(A) Describe the local methodology/approach used to allocate funds to each school in the district during the process of budget development and implementation. (B) Please also describe the role(s) of all relevant stakeholders in such budgetary processes and decision-making. (C) Finally, if schools are allocated a significant portion of their funds—either in part or in full—through a formula, outline the nature/mechanics of the formula and the elements impacting each school’s allocation.**

**Specifically, the Division of Budget and the State Education Department would consider a complete response to this question to include explicit answers to the questions included in the rubric below, including a substantive discussion on the translation of students needs into the district's budget (at least 1 sentence per question, when applicable).**

(A) The Syracuse City School District (SCSD) allocates and budgets resources (staff, goods, services) in a way that aligns the resources available to the District to schools based on the unique school offerings and the needs of the school population and the community served. The District aligns budget priorities and investments with strategic goals and explicitly aligns budgetary spending with improving student achievement, providing dynamic rigorous curriculum, increasing student attendance, reading to learn by third grade, ensuring culturally relevant practices, increasing family engagement, enhancing teacher practices, and improving student behavior.

The budget department conducts needs-based assessment meetings with instructional leaders and prepares various reports that seek to continuously improve the alignment of budgetary resources to need.

These reports include:

• Enrollment projection

• Department/school needs assessment meetings held by budget team with budget owners and documented via meeting notes and budget line item detail reports

• Budget request documents prepared by budget team and budget owners for each functional area

• Staffing analysis reports by school type and grade level. Staffing categories reviewed during the resource allocation process include teachers, teaching assistants, academic intervention support teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, security personnel, clerical support, health services, custodial staff, and student support staff such as psychologists, social workers, school counselors, and family support services staff. Realignment of staffing occurs when student to staff ratios indicate areas for realignment.

• Resource allocations by student need across different types of schools to show patterns and the possible impact of such allocations

• Weighted student funding allocations for instructional supplies.

In addition to the considerations above, the District must also comply with statutory requirements that restrict 19.7% of state funding in the 2021-22 budget. These statutory requirements include the following:

• $ 63,306,005 Maintenance of Effort for Special Education

• $ 14,607,303 Community Schools Set-Aside

• $ 12,688,952 Contracts For Excellence (C4E)

The level of funding received by the District through the Special Aid Fund for early childhood programs does not cover the entire amount expensed for those programs in total. As a result, the District anticipates providing $3,444,240 of Pre-K local share funding. This equates to 18% of overall Pre-K spend, excluding payments to community-based sites. This is reflected in the per pupil funding at each building with Pre-K programs.

When planning budget allocations related to the Special Aid Fund, grant managers must also consider additional criteria based on the individual grant guidelines as they apply to each funding stream or award. These include the following factors:

• School Status

• Program Specific Grant Awards

• School Specific Grant Awards

• Demographics of the Student Population by School

• Free and Reduced Priced Lunch Rates

(B) The Superintendent held virtual meetings throughout the year with students, staff, parents and community members to get their insight on budget priorities using an interactive budget modeling tool. Balancing Act simulations were used with the various groups allowing participants to rebalance the budget and submit input for areas to be prioritized for additional spending and areas to be considered for potential spending reduction. This data was shared with the Board of Education and was incorporated into budget decisions and allocations. The feedback from these meetings informed and guided decisions during the budget preparations process.

During the budget development process, the District utilizes a variety of tools to engage stakeholders and ensure equitable resource allocation across school sites. These tools include:

• Reports to verify that staff support is aligned to program and student needs across schools

• Comprehensive, all-funds resource allocation reporting by school and student need

• Survey results and/or budget requests from department heads and school building leaders that align with the District's strategic plan and needs of the school community

(C) Rather than using a formulaic process for school resource allocations, the District allocates resources to schools based on the unique school offerings and the needs of the school population and the community served. The major expense in each of the District’s schools is teacher salaries and the longer that a teacher works in the District, the higher their salary. There is a focus on placing the right teachers in our schools and classrooms regardless of their years of experience and salary.

**If applicable, is there anything unique about certain schools which explain why per pupil spending at these locations may be significantly higher/lower than the district average?**

For various reasons, per pupil funding for several of the schools in the District fall outside the “average” range for that metric. A significant factor in the ‘per pupil spending’ range is merely the size of the school because the fixed costs such as principal salary are divided by a large or small number of students depending on the school. Below please see explanations of the factors contributing to those variances.

Elementary Schools:

The Syracuse City School District operates thirteen elementary schools. Twelve are neighborhood schools reflective of their surrounding communities. The Montessori Education Model at LeMoyne Elementary offers differentiated curriculum Districtwide through an application process attracting students from all four quadrants of Syracuse.

When comparing elementary schools, three have lower spending per pupil as noted below:

Dr. Weeks Elementary School: Dr. Weeks Elementary School is our largest Pre-K-5 elementary school with enrollment of approximately 700 students in grades K through 5. Nearly 85% of the students are eligible for Free & Reduced Price Lunch, and 16% are children with special needs. The instructional staff at Dr. Weeks are relatively new teachers with 31% having taught for three or fewer years resulting in a lower teaching salary cost per pupil. Dr. Weeks is eligible for Title and IDEA funds to support students living in poverty and students with special needs. The combination of a large building, accommodating nearly 700 students, and a younger teaching staff are the primary drivers of Dr. Weeks spending per pupil less than the average.

Franklin Elementary School: Franklin Elementary School is our second largest Pre-K-5 elementary school with enrollment of approximately 680 students in grades K through 5. 85% of the students attending Franklin are eligible for Free & Reduced-Price Lunch and 37% of the students are English Language Learners. Franklin is a well-established extended day school in good standing. Nearly 76% of instructional staff have more than 3 years teaching experience. The lower than average spend per pupil is primarily attributable to the significant enrollment, an efficient higher student to instructional staff ratio of 8:1 as compared to smaller schools with lower ratios, and a stable extended day model with little turnover of staff in recent years.

Seymour Dual Language Academy: Seymour is located on the Westside of Syracuse serving one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city with nearly 90% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch students. Seymour has operated for many years with multi-lingual enrollment of nearly 35% or more. Several teachers are dual-certified providing an instructional model where ELL services are woven into the curriculum and lesson plans throughout the school day. This school serves over 500 students in grades Pre-K to 5. Seymour students receive many supports from a long list of community partners providing support people throughout the school day at minimal or no cost to the district. Onondaga County provides 2 Family and Student Support Specialists that work with families connected to Seymour, 1 Promise Zone staff member, 1 Social Worker Assistant, 1 Brownell Mental Health Counselor, and 2 Peacemaker staff members who support Peace Circles weekly. Other community agencies partner with Seymour providing 15 Syracuse University Literacy Corps students who provide literacy and who support our science curriculum in conjunction with Baltimore Woods for mini-lessons and field experiences aligned to grade level curriculum.

When comparing elementary schools, three have higher spending per pupil compared to the average as noted below:

Meachem Elementary School: This school is the smallest elementary school with one of the lowest student to staff ratios when compared to other elementary schools in the District. Meachem receives grant funds including Title funding and IDEA grant funds. The teaching staff at Meachem are among the District’s more senior teaching staff with over 82% of teachers with 3 or more years of experience adding to a higher cost when compared to other elementary schools. The demographics at Meachem include over 31% students with disabilities and 79% of students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch. Meachem’s low enrollment served by a senior teaching staff are the primary factors contributing to higher than average per pupil spend at this school. Additionally, Onondaga Community College provides in-kind leadership training to the students and staff at Meachem which is not reflected in the budget as no fee is charged for this service.

LeMoyne Elementary School: This school is one of the smallest Pre-K-5 elementary schools, with K through 5 enrollment of 272, and a lower student to staff ratio. In 2017, the district began the phase-in of the Montessori Education Model at LeMoyne Elementary where children learn by exploring and manipulating specially designed materials one concept or skill at a time. Implementation of this model requires the use of specialized instructional materials and furniture, a higher ratio of staff to students and additional professional development. 71.2% of the students attending Lemoyne are eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Lunch and 21% are students with disabilities. These rates are somewhat favorable when compared to other elementary schools across the District. Small class size, specialized professional development and materials aligned to the Montessori Model are the primary factors driving the higher per pupil spend at Lemoyne Elementary as compared to other elementary schools in the District.

STEAM at Dr. King Elementary: In 2019-20 Dr. King Elementary School was required to close and reopen as a result of past low academic performance. STEAM at Dr. King Pre-K-5 was opened in September 2019 with a new Principal and leadership team and new staff exceeding 50%, as required by New York State Education Department, when implementing a turnaround school model. The community served by the new school is the poorest of all Syracuse Elementary Schools with a Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch rate of over 92%. The demographics of the student body is comprised of 21.6% English Language Learners and 14.5% students with disabilities.

This whole school turnaround and renewal initiative is a cornerstone of two community efforts underway by the City of Syracuse;

a. Blueprint15 is a neighborhood revitalization program underway in the community served by Dr. King

b. Syracuse Surge is a City initiative poised to reinvigorate the south side of the City of Syracuse

Additionally, STEAM at Dr. King is supported with additional staff including instructional coaches, academic intervention specialists, early reading specialists, additional teaching assistants in early grade levels, additional administrative team members and an independent monitor. The school has a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math focus, offering instruction in all five disciplines throughout the curriculum and lesson plans. The class sizes are lowered to 20 for grades K through 3 and 22 for grades 4 and 5 from the traditional 26 in grades K-2 and 28 in grades 3-5.

The school is supported by robust partnerships with local universities and community-based organizations. The additional staff, smaller class size, and STEAM at Dr. King educational supports have resulted in a higher per pupil cost when compared with the average spend per pupil in elementary schools across the District. As a result, spending per pupil at STEAM at Dr. King is among the highest of all elementary schools.

K-8 Schools:

The District operates six K-8 schools with enrollment in grades K through 8 located throughout Syracuse. Syracuse Latin offers differentiated curriculum Districtwide through an application process attracting students from all four quadrants of Syracuse. Syracuse Latin continues to phase in additional grade levels, serving students in grades K through 8 in 2021-22. The District has begun the process of establishing a Middle Years International Baccalaureate program at Roberts Pre-K-8.

Huntington K-8 School: The per pupil spending at Huntington is lower than average mainly due to it being the school with the highest enrollment of all Pre-K-8 schools, serving 882 students in grades K through 8, and minimal Title funds based on a Free and Reduced-Price Lunch rate of 72.4%. Huntington students also receive additional supports from our community partners paid for and provided by Onondaga County including Promise Zone, Family Support for Student Success, Mental Health Clinicians and Child Welfare Liaisons. The large number of students, lower Title I eligible students and myriad of community funded supports all contribute to the lower per pupil spend when compared to other K-8 schools districtwide.

Edward Smith K-8 School: With enrollment of 667 students in grades K through 8 and the lowest student to staff ratio of the Pre-K-8 schools in the District, average spend per pupil is higher than average at Edward Smith. Additionally, 87.1% of teaching staff at the school have three or more years of experience, and Edward Smith has the highest percentage of enrollment of students with disabilities at the K-8 schools at 25.5%. Additionally, Edward Smith partners with many community agencies to offer After School programs for all grade levels. All of these factors contribute to higher spending per pupil at Edward Smith as compared to the other K-8 schools.

Middle Schools:

The Syracuse City School District operates six middle schools serving grades 6, 7 and 8. The District is in the early stages of offering middle school choice with a well-established Expeditionary Learning Middle School (ELMS), the opening of Brighton Academy as an Expeditionary Learning School, and the opening of Syracuse STEM at Blodgett as a school focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The District has begun the process of establishing a Middle Years International Baccalaureate program at Clary Middle School. The remaining middle schools are neighborhood schools reflective of their neighborhood communities.

There are two middle schools with higher than average spending per pupil when compared to the average middle school spending per pupil:

Clary Middle School: Clary Middle School is the smallest neighborhood middle school and has one of the highest concentration of students with disabilities at 22.6%. This school also has a lower student to staff ratio compared to the other middle schools. Additional resources have been allocated to this school due to the building’s Comprehensive Support and Improvement school status.

Expeditionary Learning Middle School: Expeditionary Learning Middle School offers a middle school choice program and has a higher percentage of teachers (93.4%) with more than 3 years of experience compared to the other middle schools. This school is the smallest middle school in the District. At the Syracuse Expeditionary Learning Middle School (ELMS), students benefit from a personalized, yet academically rigorous atmosphere. Curriculum is organized into interdisciplinary “expeditions” and teachers often use the greater Syracuse community as their classroom.

There are two middle schools with lower than average spending per pupil when compared to the average middle school spending per pupil:

Grant Middle School: Grant Middle School is located in the northern quadrant of the City of Syracuse, where many settlement communities have been established in recent years. The availability of affordable housing and the establishment of community resources serving a variety of nationalities settling on the Northside of Syracuse has increased the need for middle school seats. As a result, Grant Middle School has experienced increased enrollment of middle school students in recent years. As such, Grant is the largest middle school serving approximately 700 students in grades 6 through 8 with enrollment 33% higher than the next largest middle school. Grant has a higher student to staff ratio resulting in a lower cost per pupil when compared to the other middle schools in the District.

Grant Middle School students receive additional supports from our community partners paid for and provided by Onondaga County including Promise Zone, Family Support for Student Success, Mental Health Clinicians, Restorative Coaches and Child Welfare Liaisons. The District operates a School Based Health Center at Grant Middle School that is staffed by community professionals providing in-kind medical services to students.

Lincoln Middle School: Lincoln is the second largest middle school, serving more than 525 students, with the highest student to staff ratio contributing to lower than average spending per pupil when compared to other middle schools in the District. To better serve the students in this school, staff added over the past year included instructional coaches, academic intervention specialists and reading instruction teachers. The Lincoln Middle School staff is comprised of 48% of teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience, resulting in lower than average staffing costs.

High Schools:

The Syracuse City School District operates five high schools. The District began transitioning to a high school choice model in 2007-08 with the opening of a technical high school – ITC with 9th grade only and a 4-year phase-in plan adding grades 10, 11, and 12. We have increased the number of CTE Pathways at high schools across the District from 4 to 27 in recent years.

Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central (ITC): ITC underwent significant renovations during the transition of their campus to a Career & Technical Education school. The renovations included classrooms and space for cutting edge technology and career simulation to thrive allowing significant growth in pathways for high school choice options.

ITC is above the average spend, at $23,981 per pupil, in part due to lower enrollment, the higher cost of four specialty CTE pathways and grant funding associated with Smart Scholars and two P-Tech offerings.

Henninger High School: In contrast to ITC, Henninger per pupil spending is below the average , at $20,853 per pupil. Henninger enrollment is projected to be the highest of all high schools - 264 more students than the second largest high school and nearly three times the enrollment of the smallest high school. With higher enrollment, fixed cost items such as school administration and building maintenance, result in a lower spend per pupil. Henninger offers a P-Tech program for Pathways in Technology including clinical lab and health information technology strands, as well as, health professions career and technical education programs for interested students.

This recent year, through Joint Schools Construction Board special legislation, the District began renovations at Henninger, Nottingham and Corcoran High Schools providing more space for CTE specialty pathways for students across the District. Additionally, the District added a welding classroom and lab at Corcoran High School as a choice to students Districtwide. Over time, this should result in more equitable spending per pupil among the five high schools and an alignment of enrollment among each high school aligned to pathways.

Summary:

The City of Syracuse is among the poorest cities nationwide and certainly within Onondaga County. Providing equitable educational opportunities for a diverse, poor population of students is a systemic effort. Poverty in Syracuse is pervasive and to call out one school as poorer than or as wealthier than another for comparison is telling only part of story. Tremendous effort goes into planning, implementing and executing efforts to utilize the funding available to the District to equitably allocate resources among our schools and the communities they serve. Comparing one school to another from a financial resource lens alone does not tell the whole story. The local community partners provide an abundance of resources and services in the schools. Year to year, schools progress through change and in any single year several factors may result in spending per pupil that is higher or lower than the average of like schools.

**If applicable, describe any items which the district feels are anomalous in nature and require additional description.**

Continuation of Question 2:

The funds spent Districtwide and by school and per pupil tell only part of the story of the supports and programs offered to the students of the Syracuse City School District. In many ways our District operates as a Community District partnering with City and County agencies, higher education institutions, local not-for-profits and businesses to provide services to the families and students we serve. When the District joined the Say Yes to Education program the entire community joined in to what is now called the School Based Collaborative.

Onondaga County provided over $14.5 million of supports in our school buildings in 2020-21 and plans to continue this level of support in 2021-22. Only a fraction of this funding or spending is included in the School District budget, however, the investment is provided directly to our students in their respective school buildings.

The County receives state and local funding as local share that leverages Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) federal funds to provide over 160 full-time support employees in all Syracuse City School District school locations. Services provided by the County include:

• Family Support for Student Success (to address barriers to learning, provision for intervention as needed and activities to improve skill development)

• Promise Zone (which matches students emotional / behavioral needs with effective interventions)

• Student Assistance Counselors (in high schools for ‘first line’ mental health and substance abuse counseling)

• Mental Health Clinics in 28 schools (providing on-site mental health clinics staffed full-time making connections to various providers such as Arise, Liberty Resources, Upstate and St. Joseph’s Hospitals, and Syracuse Community Health Center allowing for on-going care of students minimizing missed instructional time)

Additionally, Onondaga County provides direct funding for various other programs including School Liaisons, Seeds of Peace, Building Men, Primary Project and Peacemaking Project for students.

Question 3:

Debt Service: The amounts reported in Part A Section II-A represent the amount of Debt Service recorded specifically in the Debt Service Fund for the District. Part A II-B excludes amounts recorded on the General Fund for debt service payments in addition to Debt Service Fund amounts.

Urban Education: The population in Syracuse is fluid. Syracuse has become a settlement community for many refugees and throughout the year relatively large groups may move to Syracuse with multiple families and children of varying ages. These children are placed in our schools and resources are provided to accommodate their needs accordingly throughout the year.

Syracuse City School District serves an urban city population with relatively low property wealth and low income wealth. As such, none of our schools are wealthy or serve a wealthy population. Poverty is systemic across the City of Syracuse and each school reflects the communities where their students live. To compare one school against another based on relative wealth or poverty measures alone is not the only or best measure of equity.

  