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

**Part F - Narrative Description**

1. **(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 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 25.5% of state funding in the 2020-21 budget. These statutory requirements include the following:

• $ 63,688,543 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 $2,158,342 of Pre-K local share funding. This equates to 16% 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 District held meetings throughout the year with students, staff, parents and community member 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

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.

1. **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 serving grades Pre-K through 5. Eleven 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 elementary school serving almost700 students in grades K-5. Although nearly 90% of the students are eligible for Free & Reduced Price Lunch, and16.1% are children with special needs. The instructional staff at Dr. Weeks are relatively new teachers with 35% 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. Dr. Weeks Elementary School was previously funded by a Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) and the loss of these federal dollars and a reduction in Community Schools Grant funding available to the school in 2019-20 are additional factors in a lower per pupil spend.

Franklin Elementary School: Franklin Elementary School is our second largest elementary school educating nearly 670 students in grades K through 5. Slightly more than 90% of the students attending Franklin are eligible for Free & Reduced-Price Lunch and over 30% of the students are English Language Learners. Franklin is a well-established extended day school in good standing. Nearly 80% 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 west side of Syracuse serving one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city with over 90% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch rate. Seymour has operated for many years with multi-lingual enrollment of over 35%. 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 525 students. Seymour students receive many supports from a long list of community partners providing 50 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 20 Book Buddies Volunteers with the Early Childhood Alliance who read with students in school weekly, 8 Foster Grand Parents from Peace Incorporated, 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.

Seymour provides a longer school day for all students and because of the larger school capacity and extensive community partner involvement, the school can deliver educational services efficiently yielding a lower cost per pupil.

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

McKinley-Brighton Elementary School: This school is an established extended day school with a lower student to staff ratio than many of the other elementary schools in the District. While nearly 95% of the students attending McKinley-Brighton are eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Lunch and nearly 20% are students with disabilities, and 9.3% of the students are English Language Learners. These rates are somewhat favorable when compared to other elementary schools across the District. Relatively small class size and an experienced staff, with over 75% having more than 3 years of experience are the primary factors driving the higher per pupil spend at McKinley-Brighton Elementary as compared to other elementary schools in the District.

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 Extended Day School Violence Prevention, Title funding and IDEA grant funds. The teaching staff at Meachem are among the District’s more senior teaching staff with over 68% 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 25% students with disabilities and 91% 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.

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 is 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 95%. The demographics of the student body is comprised of 23.3% English Language Learners and 16.5% 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 in 2020-21 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 new 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 new school is supported by robust partnerships with local universities, community-based organizations and Purposeful Built Schools. 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 7 in 2020-21. The District has begun the process of establishing a Middle Years International Baccalaureate program at Roberts K-8.

Edward Smith: With enrollment of 649 students and the lowest student to staff ratio of the K-8 schools in the District, average spend per pupil is higher than average. Additionally, 86% 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 24.3%. Additionally, Edward Smith partners with many community agencies to offer After School programs for all grade levels. These factors contribute to higher spending per pupil at Edward Smith as compared to the other K-8 schools.

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 K-8 schools, serving 909 students, and minimal Title funds based on a Free and Reduced-Price Lunch rate of 74%. 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.

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:

Syracuse STEM at Blodgett: Syracuse STEM at Blodgett is one of three receivership schools in the District that was closed at the end of June 2019 and reopened as a new school in September 2019. This school is located on the west side of Syracuse, a neighborhood with the highest concentrations of poverty. Enrollment at the school is limited to 375 students and class size is capped at 25 students as compared to 28 students in most middle schools across the District.

As part of this change, an Independent Monitor was added in 2019-20 as required by New York State Education Department. Additionally, staffing for academic intervention services and special education was increased. Staff also receive additional funding for instructional supplies, curriculum writing, and professional development aligned to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

Syracuse STEM at Blodgett is partnering with LeMoyne College to ensure a robust Science, Technology, Engineering and Math curriculum and supporting professional development for teachers. The student demographics are 91.9% eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch, 26.9% English Language Learners and 16.9% students with disabilities. In compliance with New York State Education Department guidelines and requirements, the newly opened Syracuse STEM at Blodgett school has smaller class sizes and additional staffing and services which all contribute to higher than average spending at the school when compared to middle schools districtwide.

Additionally, Syracuse STEM at Blodgett students receive enhanced 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 the building that is staffed by community professionals providing in-kind medical services to students.

Not included in this reporting is a $3.3 million dollar investment in capital improvements funded by the Community Schools Grant (see question 3 below for more details) for this building. Once the renovations in the building are complete more programs for families, community members and students will be operational. Syracuse STEM at Blodgett is also in the planning phase for more extensive renovations in JSCB Phase II which will allow for expanded program offerings.

Brighton Academy: Brighton Academy, formerly Danforth Middle, is one of three receivership schools in the District that closed at the end of June 2019 and reopened as a new school in September 2019. As part of the turnaround model requirements of the New York State Education Department, resources have been added to the school to expand services and supports for teachers and students as well as efforts for certification in the Expeditionary Learning model. Enrollment at Brighton Academy in 2020-21 will be limited to 400 students, an Independent Monitor has been added to the school as required by New York State Education Department, academic intervention and special education staffing have been increased to provide robust student support, and staff receive professional development related to the Expeditionary Learning Model as part of the certification process. Staff at Brighton Academy also receive additional funding for instructional supplies and curriculum writing.

The demographics for Brighton Academy include 93.4% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch, 11.4% English Language Learners, and 20.1% students with disabilities. Smaller school population, smaller class sizes, increased field experiences, and enhanced staffing and services aligned to Expeditionary Learning and in compliance with New York State Education Department turnaround models, all contribute to higher spending per pupil when compared to the average at middle schools districtwide.

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, 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 north side 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 nearly 700 students in grades 6 through 8 with enrollment 24% 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. Additionally, Grant Middle School previously received a higher level of funding under IZone and the Community Schools Grant. The dissolution of these grant funds has contributed to the lower spend per pupil at Grant Middle School as well.

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 550 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 43% of teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience, resulting in lower than average staffing costs. Lincoln Middle School was previously funded by a Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) and the loss of these federal dollars in 2019-20 is an additional factor in a lower per pupil spend.

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 $21,879 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 $18,274 per pupil. Henninger enrollment is projected to be the highest of all high schools - 176 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 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,

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.

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 2019-20 and plans to continue this level of support in 2020-21. 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.

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

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.

Community Schools Grant Capital Funding: The District was the recipient of Community Schools grant funds in 2017-18 that were extended through 2019-20. A component of that funding was an apportionment for capital projects use. These funds will be used for renovations a Syracuse STEM at Blodgett (formerly known as Westside Academy at Blodgett). For SCSD this represents significant capital expenditures for general construction to be reported in the Special Aid Fund, not the Capital Projects Fund. Based on guidance received from NYS DOB, the capital projects portion of this grant funding has been excluded from this reporting.

Calculated Benefits: Again this year, there is an anomaly when using the blended benefits rate for calculations in the report versus the actual benefits rates in our General Fund and Special Aid Fund budgets. The calculated benefits rate in Part A Section IV is lower than the District’s total projected General Fund benefits rate and higher than our total projected Special Aid Fund rate.

Part A Section II-A is reported with actual projected/budgeted benefits amounts. We are using the Section IV rate for all benefits calculated and reported in Part C and all other section of Part A. While the use of the blended rate allows for us to report the total amount of benefits correctly, it causes an insignificant shift (less than .2%) in the split between state/local and federal funding.

Receivership Schools: Last year three schools were identified in the spring as receivership schools required by the state to close. In order to close and reopen new schools in these facilities, tremendous effort in a short period of time was required. All were renamed with community input, new leadership teams were put in place, thematic focus was identified for each school and more than ½ of the instructional staff was replaced. To support the programs in these new school the District has allocated General Fund dollars to supplement services for students attending the new schools - STEAM at Dr. King, Brighton Academy and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the District will be using both all virtual and hybrid models for student attendance at least through the end of December. To support those who do not have the resources to obtain technology necessary to participate in those models, we have purchased laptops and WiFi connectivity devices to be distributed to students. The District is also working with community partners to obtain donations of technology. The full cost of these supports is not reflected in this reporting but is another way the District seeks to support our students during these unprecedented times.

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.

As a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, New York State flat funded school district budgets and has begun withholding 20% of state aid payments. The delayed receipt of these funds, and the possible elimination of these funds, will have a tremendous impact on the District budget. The possibility of further reduction on top a flat funded budget would be devastating to this community and to the children we serve. In difficult financial times, difficult choices need to be made and if State Aid is further reduced for 2020-21 by the State, then this budget will be amended reducing the spend per pupil Districtwide.