

2024-25 Contract for Excellence Narratives

Program Narrative - Please address changes in your existing C4E programs, including any redesign or reallocation. Also, describe how activities support the Regents Reform Agenda.

This District set-aside was increased \$5.4 million from 2023-24. This increased allocation not only supports the contractual increases for settled bargaining unit contracts in salaries and benefits for existing staff and programming but also provides for the expansion of supports in the following manner:

Time on Task – is being increased by approximately \$2.6m for expanding the number of Academic Intervention Service (AIS) Teachers in several schools where student achievement is below level and where students are experiencing learning difficulties. Along with this additional support, the District is also increasing the number of Teaching Assistants who provide additional learning support to general education and special education students with a focus on mathematics and reading.

The District will maintain Time on Task efforts by focusing on aspects of the instructional core and providing targeted instruction and intervention to students. Teaching assistants will continue to enhance our ability to provide targeted small group tutoring as well as individual instruction, and we will continue to support literacy and numeracy skills for students who are underperforming in all middle schools via ELA, Mathematics, and Reading Teachers. This will also include supports provided to us through the implementation of Say Yes to Education programming.

High School Restructuring – The District will implement restructuring in 2024-25 in our High Schools by transitioning to an Academy model whereby students will be provided with more intensive supports and guidance as they transition from Middle School to High School. One component of this restructuring is creating and hiring the position of a High School Dean at each of our five High Schools. The Deans will be responsible for a cadre of students and will provide guidance and support in the areas of academics, behavior, and student attendance. This increase of approximately \$600,000 in funding will be one of the many High School restructuring efforts which will also be supported by the District's General Fund budget. This plan will address disparities and achievement gaps for our high school students. The District believes that the Academy model will effectively increase our graduation outcomes and student performance based on the observations in other districts, as well as creating stronger school and community connection.

We have also restructured Fowler High School to open a school focused on challenging academic content and learning opportunities through career and technical education (CTE) programs. The Public Service Leadership Academy at Fowler serves students in grades nine through twelve, and new special education and ENL staff have been added to support ELLs and students with disabilities engaged in the 14 different CTE programs in the school.

Teacher/Principal Quality – is being increased by approximately \$1.5 million to improve the number and quality of Teachers and Principals. The District has experiencing difficulties in hiring and placing qualified Teachers and Administrators and well as providing them the supports to be successful. This increase in funding will support our efforts to increase the number of Administrative Interns and Vice Principals to ensure that our schools are safe learning environments, address our chronic absenteeism issues and provide the District with the ability to build a leadership pipeline of highly qualified administrators.

ELL Programming – is being increased by approximately \$1.1 million. The City of Syracuse continues to experience an influx of refugees from throughout the world and there are now over 80 languages spoken in our schools. Over 20% of our 19,000 students are English Language Learners (ELL). We are utilizing these funds to hire additional ENL teachers and provide professional development to them to address the growing needs of this student population. These funds will ensure that the class sizes for these students are equitable in those schools with a high concentration of ELL students and ensure that the District can hire and support teachers who can address the various languages of these students. In addition, these students will require additional academic support due to their language barriers and these funds will be leveraged with Time on Task funding to ensure that these students can excel.

The District is implementing a full dual language bilingual education model at Seymour, including a new bilingual special education strand. We opened Delaware Primary school at Delaware's campus to offer sheltered ENL instructional programming for students, and this year we are continuing the phase in of Montessori programming, to be grown grade by grade for the next six years until the entire school is implementing Montessori. These schools both feed into Syracuse STEM at Blodgett, where secondary bilingual programming support continues. In addition, our sheltered approach to ENL instruction will provide more support to students in need of English language development so that we are graduating a higher percentage of our English Language Learners.

Full-day Kindergarten and PreK programs will be maintained. We are adjusting our kindergarten model of specialized support to provide enhanced ratios of teaching assistants as preschoolers transition to school-age programs. This additional staffing allows for a more inclusive model for kindergarten students who were unable to access services in preschool.

*Please note that these increases are greater than the overall C4E increased allocation and this is offset by a decrease in funding allocated towards Prekindergarten programming due to lower Pre-K enrollment and the availability of grant funding for prekindergarten students.

Targeting Narrative - Please address both student educational need and building-level accountability status as reflected in the attached Targeting Matrix. Explain how the district and school Comprehensive Plan supports the program.

All C4E funds have been targeted to C4E identified schools following the Educational Need Matrix. We are targeting ELL students and literacy and numeracy initiatives with school-based instructional coaches and additional ELA and math teachers. We are targeting PreK-12 students with the implementation of our Say Yes to Education program to address social-emotional needs and wraparound supports in all quadrants of the District. In addition, we will still maintain full-day PreK classes added since 2007. Additional staff to support students with disabilities and ELLs have also been placed in our high schools to support CTE program success.

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Performance Narrative - Describe the district's expected performance targets for the accountability criteria and disaggregated groups for those schools within the district not in good standing.

The Syracuse City School District was identified in 2004 as a District in Need of Improvement for English Language Arts achievement for the student with disabilities (SWDs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) subgroups. Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was approved, our district has been identified as a Target District with sixteen schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools (CSI), four schools identified as Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools (ATSI), two schools identified as Targeted Support and Improvement Schools (TSI), and two State-determined Receivership Schools. We are working to put systemic improvements in place to address the large numbers of students with disabilities not graduating in four or five years and/or dropping out, including adjusting our continuum of services at the high school level and supporting a continuum model by quadrant for grades PreK-12. We are working to increase four and five-year graduation rates for students with disabilities by five percentage points in 2024-25.

The percentage of students living in poverty continues to increase each year with nearly 80% of our students qualifying for free or reduced meals during the 2023-24 year. More than 21% of our K-12 students are identified as students with disabilities and over 16% of our students are English Language Learners. These high-risk factors are challenges faced by all our schools and our community as a whole. As a result, many interventions or initiatives that are implemented are done so Districtwide to improve student achievement in all classrooms. In addition to the systematic effort, additional supports are provided to our most underperforming schools where there are high percentages of struggling students.

Our schools in highest academic need also have a high level of poverty and in many cases high numbers of ELLs and students with disabilities, who at times account for more than a third of a school's overall student population. Our struggling students need more time and intervention to close achievement gaps through after school programs, summer school, specialized ELA and math courses designed to catch students up, and individual and small group tutoring and instruction. The increase of ELA and math teachers who use differentiated instruction to meet the needs of these at-risk students, including those with disabilities and ELLs, will better support all students toward graduating from high school to be college and career ready. SCSD utilizes the NWEA assessment three times a year to measure student growth and progress, are we are looking to reduce the number of students (including students with disabilities and ELLs) scoring Level 1 in math and ELA by ten percentage points.

Our Say Yes to Education Project will assist in supporting afterschool programs, summer programs, tutorials, and higher education incentives to encourage students to stay in school, graduate and go on to college. Say Yes will also provide social-emotional supports for students in the primary grades as well as legal services for families, mentoring for our middle level students, mental health services, increased social workers in our buildings and a new student assessment system.

We are working to increase student sense of belonging based on questions in our Panorama survey by five percentage points in 2024-25. Additionally, we are working to decrease chronic student absenteeism from 47% chronically absent in 2023-24 to 40% in 2024-25.

Experimental or District-wide Programs Narrative - If applicable.

N/A