

State eyes \$35 million RCSD bailout

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A state bailout of the Rochester City School District appears likely with word on Wednesday that lawmakers would authorize a \$35 million spin-up in aid.

That is essentially an advance on future allocations, repayable over a period of years, and would apply to the 2019-20 budget.

State funding to all districts will be flat from 2019-20, said Assemblyman Harry Bronson, D-Rochester.

That plan, if adopted, would appear to address the district’s immediate financial shortfall and deliver a victory to Superintendent Terry Dade, who lobbied intensively for the funding. The state budget also appears likely to include a fiscal and academic monitor for three years, with approval and veto power over money and programmatic decisions, to be appointed by the state education commissioner without input from Mayor Lovely Warren.

Still, the coming budget year remains somewhat uncertain. If the state budget keeps school aid flat, it would fall far short of what the district had anticipated. But there is also federal aid to be accounted for, and the district said it did not have a full understanding

by Wednesday evening of where it stood.

A draft budget outlined by Dade last week would slash 236 positions. Among other proposals:

- Deep cuts in special education, including \$7 million worth of staff reductions.
- Closing the Bilingual Language and Literacy Academy, serving students arriving from Puerto Rico, as well as the Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy.
- Removing grades K-5 from Rochester International Academy, which serves newly arriving refugees.

The district is holding a budget explainer session Thursday evening via video conference.