

## WRONG

### RCSD

#### RCSD AND SPECIAL ED: WHAT WENT

**Justin Murphy** Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

A decision by the Rochester City School District to eliminate 20 positions this year is at the root of the district's special education problems.

Essentially, the district took 20 very busy administrators and dispersed their myriad responsibilities to the winds.

There are a few dozen coordinating administrators of special education (CASEs) in the district. Until this year, their job was largely twofold: to help special education

See RCSD, Page [20A](#)

---

## WRONG

### RCSD

Continued from Page 1A

teachers and staff tailor supports to individual students, and to manage students' annual meetings along with the voluminous paperwork they generate.

Twenty CASE positions were eliminated in the 2017-18 budget. The hands-on part of their job was supposed to be taken up by 20 newly created teacher coach positions, but people with those qualifications are in short supply and the district was only able to hire one teacher out of the projected 20.

The administrative part of the job, meanwhile, was supposed to be taken over by principals or assistant principals in every school. The training for those people, though, was woefully inadequate, and the job fell mostly to already-overburdened school psychologists who had some understanding of the process.

'They underestimated what the CASEs did,' said the Rev. Marilyn Cunningham, grandmother of two children with disabilities and president of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council. 'And I don't blame the schools. I put the blame on the district, because the teachers were disrespected, the administrators were disrespected, the parents and the students were disrespected. It was such a callous, reckless move.'

The district scrambled to rehire CASEs, luring former employees out of retirement. Only two CASE positions were unfilled by March, but another reshuffling of the hierarchy left open positions elsewhere.

The 2018-19 budget proposal includes funding for the CASEs but not for the instructional coaches, though the administration said it will be the first thing restored if more money becomes available.

[JMURPHY7@Gannett.com](mailto:JMURPHY7@Gannett.com)



**RCSD Board Vice President Willa Powell speaks to Van White, board president, during a board meeting.**  
MAX SCHULTE/@MAXROCPHOTO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER