One Team. One Mission. One Rock Hill.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN







Dear Team Rock Hill,

Our first semester will soon draw to a close, and in this holiday season, I remain thankful for our Board of Trustees, cabinet, administration, teachers, support staff, and all who are part of the Rock Hill team. We are each blessed to work with and love our 17,654 students. Your passion and commitment to improving student outcomes each and every day continue to impress me. Thank you for helping to make a difference in our community as we work together as One Team on One Mission for One Rock Hill. Each of you continue to use your gifts to make this an amazing place that remains focused on doing what is best for our students every day. It has been a joy to observe the level of student engagement during my visits to each school during the first semester, and I continue to be impressed by the outstanding educators and staff in our school district. I encourage you to continue focusing on our shared vision to improve learning outcomes for all students.

THE FOCUS FIVE

- 1. Safety & Security
- 2. Recruitment & Retention
- 3. Student Achievement
- 4. Organizational Culture & Effectiveness
- 5. Communication with All Stakeholders

Aligned with the focus on communication with all stakeholders, I, along with the administrative team, continue to host the monthly Listen & Learn sessions with teachers representing each school in our district. Each session allows everyone to hear about successes and areas for continued growth for our district. Cabinet members also have an opportunity to share important information about what is taking place across our district. Responses to questions from our December 2019 session can be found on the following pages.

These responses are not all-inclusive, and we would certainly welcome the opportunity to further discuss these questions and other relevant topics in more detail within specific levels and school settings. If you have follow up questions or desire more information, please contact one of our Cabinet team members. You may find an organizational chart with contact information on the next page.

I am confident our district and schools will benefit from this open dialogue regarding the needs that exist for our students, staff, and organization overall. If you would like to represent your school at an upcoming session, you are encouraged to talk with your principal. The full schedule of future Listen & Learn sessions and past response documents are available on our website, www.rock-hill.k12.sc/tll.

Working together as One Team on One Mission for One Rock Hill, we will move our district forward to be the best in our state! I wish for you and your family to have a joyous holiday season and winter break!

Sincerely,

Superintendent

Bie Cok

ROCK HILL SCHOOLS DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM



DR. BILL COOK SUPERINTENDENT WCOOK@RHMAIL.ORG

In the following pages, questions raised at the most recent Teacher Listen & Learn are answered. Due to the nature of some questions, we are not able to provide a complete response since we may not be aware of the context in which the question or concern is shared. If you desire additional information or have additional questions, please contact a member of Cabinet. Our team members are ready to assist you with more information.



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Since we have a shortage of math, science and Special Education teachers, could the district consider offering tuition grants to seniors at Winthrop if they go ahead and sign a contract with the district. Each year they stay with the district would pay off the grant/loan.

We are open to exploring all options. This is something we will have further discussions about.

Can teachers elect to forgo their planning to tutor students and be paid to tutor during their planning?

Teachers cannot tutor students for pay during their planning period. While it may be a teacher's planning, a student would have to be pulled from a class period to participate in the tutoring. The district has set aside funds to pay teachers to tutor before and after school.

How are we currently helping third grade teachers and students with Read 2 Succeed requirements? The list of students, the conferences, the additional MTSS groups, and the pressure is overwhelming on top of all the other duties.

Based on feedback from the 2018-2019 school year, we made adjustments for this school year. In the past, there were many Read to Succeed documents required at different points in the school year. We have streamlined the information into a single comprehensive document that has been approved by the SC Department of Education for teachers, coaches, parents and administrators. Additionally, we worked to reduce the number of required face-to-face conferences after being notified that a student is eligible for a Good Cause Exemption status approval from the SC Department of Education. Further, funding is now available for before and after school tutors to assist with targeted students.



When will teachers who applied for ClearTouch boards last summer be informed about receiving one in their classroom?

We are planning to start the panel install in January. The panel purchase plan is part of the five-year technology plan with the goal to have a panel in every appropriate classroom within five years. We have been using this time to negotiate with our vendors, and we should be able to purchase and place more panels than originally planned.

What technology is available in a standard classroom for teachers to use?

A standard classroom should include laptops (for the students and the teacher), display (either projection or panel), and network connectivity (Wi-Fi and hard-wired). We are working on a plan that would develop a five-year replacement strategy for the teacher laptops. Another goal is to have a panel in every appropriate classroom within five years. Our network is constantly being upgraded to meet current demand and prepare for future needs. Each middle and high school were recently upgraded. At the secondary site, bandwidth for all networking equipment was increased to be 10 times faster. The remaining schools will be upgraded over the next couple of years.

Will Parent Smart/The Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center, be getting a School Security Officer and a part-time nurse?

The ParentSmart and T3 programs at the Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center will be served by Mr. Steve Thompson, SSO. Mr. Thompson, of Allied Universal Security, is currently coordinating with our leadership at this location.

We at The Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center would like to say how much we appreciate this opportunity to speak with you. We would also like to take this time to thank Dr. Cook and Rock Hill Schools for the kind and generous bonuses that were given last month.

Thank you for your feedback

When older schools are renovated will new, matching furnishings be ordered for the classrooms. In the past teachers have received non-matching, miscellaneous furniture from the warehouse. Although these items are appreciated, it would be great if all schools could be uniformed the same across the district.

New district-standard furniture, fixtures and equipment (FFE) will be part of all major renovation and modernization projects, and will be included in all buildings which are replaced, or built as additions to a campus. The main FFE project in the Master Plan provides for a systematic replacement of 4-6% of the total district inventory per year. This project may be planned for either a certain number of classrooms at all schools, or all classrooms at a limited number of schools.

On behalf of ATC Staff/Administration, at the school board business meeting Monday 11/25/19, the master plan presentation had \$4 million allocated for renovations and additions to the Applied Technology Center. What are the specific plans for the \$4 million allocated to ATC should the board proceed to move forward?

The project is the first phase of renovations for ATC and is planned across the entire ten year plan, which includes a building addition for expanded Career and Technical Education programming or "academies". The project is envisioned to also provide a new facade for the school to update and modernize the campus.

I believe that each middle school has hired a full-time reading interventionist. In recent years, the district has emphasized that middle schoolers are not performing at expected levels in mathematics, and our instructional department has provided us with a curriculum specifically for math remediation at the middle level, called "Number Worlds." Will each middle school be able to hire a math interventionist in order that the Number Worlds curriculum can be used to fidelity?

Thank you for your support with our intervention programming. The district has provided funding for 2 math tutors per middle school per year for this current year and last year to support students in math. We certainly would like to provide more interventionists to assist with all schools. This would need to be a budget request item as funding for these positions are also applied to classroom teaching positions and other critical staffing. We suggest relaying this to your principal so that he/she may provide this during budget planning season. Meanwhile, we will look at providing any direction related to Number Worlds. Please contact Lukas Hopper or Jen Morrison for further assistance.

What are the requirements for students with special needs and the time spent in a least restrictive environment in the state of South Carolina? Students that transfer from other school districts in York County are in a special education/self-contained classroom, but they are mainstreamed in Rock Hill Schools. Teachers want to make sure the special education students' needs are being met while also meeting the needs of the regular education students.

The state of South Carolina is aligned with federal laws for students with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004). The IEP is considered a "contract" and should be followed, whether the student is a transfer from another district within the state of South Carolina, out-of-state, or even the U.S. Territories American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Island, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligibility criteria to determine if a student qualifies as a child with a disability may differ slightly from state to state, however, the amount of minutes for special education instruction and support services is determined by the IEP team. To discuss individual students please contact school administrators and Dr. Nancy Turner or Mr. Peter Kosko.

How will the Panther expansion to Rock Hill effect Rock Hill Schools? Will it add enough tax base to offset some of the capital campaign that Rock Hill schools is pushing for?

The Panthers expansion to Rock Hill has not been finalized yet. Due to continued negotiations with the Panthers organization and other governmental entities, the district is unable to comment further regarding any potential arrangement that could assist or offset our district's capital needs. However, we do remain in conversation with the Panthers about potential partnership opportunities. We will provide additional updates as details become available.

How can we effectively decrease the amount of extra things that our teachers are asked to do so they can effectively plan and meet the needs of our students. (i.e., meetings, PD's that don't count towards our PD hours, 504's, IEP's, new initiatives, etc.)

Our jobs in Rock Hill Schools are certainly busy ones, and there are "extra things" teachers at all schools encounter each day for the goal of success within instruction. Some of these "things" are school-driven, district-diven, state-driven, and even federal-driven. From Central Office, we feel that feedback from teachers is crucial and should be received in an on-going basis so we are aware of the demands of teachers' work, and listening is evident through increased teacher listen and learn sessions, surveys, discussions with PLCs, and more. To address this question, we will share with our Cabinet to see if there are other ways that we can assist in monitoring. If you have ideas, please relay them to Dr. Missy Brakefield, Ms. Jennifer Morrison, or Dr. John Jones. We welcome our teachers' input.



Is it possible to take a serious look at and consideration of the inequities built into the current school calendar. Teachers are seriously concerned about 83 days for 1st semester, and 97 days for 2nd semester. Especially for EOC classes, this is really a problem for our teachers to cover all of the necessary material in efforts to assure our students perform well on these high-stakes tests. Why is there SUCH a push to end the semester before Christmas break, when it isn't necessarily in the best interests of our students.

The current scheduling for exams to take place during the final week of school in December is purely based upon teacher, parent, and student input. Even beyond Rock Hill Schools, when designing calendars in other districts, this is a debatable topic as many want exams prior to Winter Break and others desire them at the end of a 90-day semester even if it means extending the semester into January. There is a concern regarding equity of time, and teachers serving on the calendar committee should make sure that all questions and concerns about calendars are expressed. We will monitor this more closely in future school calendar committee planning sessions.

We've heard that the MTSS Initiative is coming our way. Are there teachers represented in the decision making process of this initiative?

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is mandated by the state of South Carolina. MTSS is a framework to ensure successful education for all students.



This includes academics, behavior and social emotional learning. There is an MTSS District Team that includes school counselors, classroom teachers, administrators, literacy/math coaches, and Central Office staff. The elementary schools have been trained and are in the process of implementing the first step - Universal Screening for our kindergarten and first grade students. Teachers will be represented in all discussions.

Why don't we have Social Workers in our schools to support our struggling students and families? The vulnerable families need to know where to find resources and many of their basic needs are not being met.

During the downturn of the economy in 2008, the number of social workers decreased by three positions. Through the budget prioritization process for 2020-2021, we will explore opportunities to enhance or expand our social services. Our recent focus has been increasing mental health and safety services.

Why did the district decide to eliminate their school building level self-contained special education classrooms?

Rock Hill Schools has not eliminated school-level self-contained special education classrooms. There are several specialized programs throughout the district on all levels from preschool to high school. In the last two years, students with disabilities in our elementary and middle school self-contained programs transitioned to programs newly located at their home school or the school closest to the child's home. This movement was aligned with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) stating that all school-aged students with disabilities must be educated in the school that he or she would attend if non-disabled [§300 .116(c)] or as close as possible to the child's home. (§300.116(b)]. Self-contained classrooms are necessary for those students who require them.

When will our district create special classrooms at the elementary level for moderate to severe autistic students?

Specialized programming is no longer based on a category or "label" of students with disabilities. All services, specialized programs, support services, and therapies are based on the unique needs and circumstances of our students with disabilities. It is important for the IEP team to consider the "whole" child when determining the comprehensive needs while always considering the least restrictive environment for each child.

Why did the district eliminate autistic support?

As stated in the above question and answer, services provided for students with disabilities are not based on category alone. A student may have autism spectrum disorder, however, his or her individual needs may vary. There may be behavioral, social emotional needs or specific academic needs. This may be true for many other students with disabilities. It is the level of significance, the intensity, duration and frequency of behaviors or specific areas of academic delays in ELA or Math that the IEP team determines student goals and services. Once again, service and programming are no longer category driven.

How does the district justify the fact that general education teachers, who do not have degrees in special education from an accredited college, now have special education/needs students in their classes and are at times at a loss for how to work with them?



By law, schools are required to provide special education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means the starting point for discussion should be the supports a student needs to succeed in a general education classroom. There are federal and state laws and local policies schools must follow in deciding to place a child in one type of classroom rather than another (termed as "placement"). General education classes are the most common placement for students with learning disabilities. The IEP team which consists of school based administrators, general teachers, special ed teachers and parents should determine final placement for students with special needs.

Offering student supports is key in these efforts, and our school and district staff are available to assist with specific needs in providing curriculum and instruction. Our itinerant teachers are available to meet and assist with any questions or issues. If someone is at a loss on how to appropriately meet the needs of a student, the suggested pathway is for the teacher to reach out to the principal, itinerant teacher, or Dr. Nancy Turner for assistance. We stand ready to offer support and direction.

When will teachers have professional days to plan with other schools on the same grade level?

In recent years, the feedback for using Professional Development Days for district PLCs to meet has been mixed; however, if this is the desire of the majority of teachers, we can certainly consider it as an option for the upcoming year.

What are the plans for K-2 students to have access to technology in the classroom?

We are gathering input from K-2 teachers to help determine which device can best support instruction. We have a representative from each elementary school, and more details will follow soon. Again, we are currently working on this in order to implement a plan for technology acquisition in K-2.

Is there a plan for our district literacy coaches and/or school coaches to offer the Read to Succeed classes that will fulfill our responsibilities to obtain the endorsement?

Both our district elementary and secondary literacy coaches/specialists have offered the required Read to Succeed courses. The Content Area Reading and Writing course was offered on both levels during the fall semester. This coming spring, Foundations in Reading will be offered for elementary educators, and the Content Area Reading and Writing course will be offered again for secondary educators. This year, we offered registration priority to those with certificates that expire at the end of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years.

How many kids have to be in each classroom before a school reaches capacity? Is there a plan to look at the zoning lines for elementary schools?

Capacity of a classroom is set by the building standards such as the capacity of core spaces (i.e. cafeterias, media centers, etc.). There are no class size limits in South Carolina. However, we consistently monitor our school attendance zones as we make plans for current and future needs of Rock Hill Schools.

Classroom size ratios:

K5-3 1:24

4-5 1:25

6-8 1:27

9-12 1:30 (could be a little higher in certain situations)

How is the district monitoring and assessing school level administrators' performances (discipline, faculty and staff morale, academic achievement, etc.)?

The school district uses various metrics to monitor school performance as well as strategies to observe, engage, monitor, and provide continuous improvement for school-level administrators. We work in these efforts year-round in supporting our administrators for continuous improvement. All school level principals have midyear and end-of-year evaluation conferences. Those who are on full cycle have a beginning-of-year conference as well. Principals are responsible for evaluating APs.

Syncing grades from Canvas to powerschool is super confusing and requires a teacher to look through 10 pages of directions. Is there a way we can enter the grades straight into powerschool, instead of Canvas, so we don't have to do several tedious and time consuming steps? Or is there an easier way?

We are sorry this current process is "super confusing". We are going to assess our approaches and see what hurdles and barriers exist in this process. Please be sure to consult with your building's Instructional Technology Specialist for any support you need until we work through this.

When a classroom has a student that demonstrates physical behaviors, what is being done to assure safety to the teacher and other students?

In the last few years, our Board of Trustees has approved a number of positions, specifically in our elementary schools to assist our students in crisis. Behavior Management Assistants -- one in each elementary school -- have been a tremendous help to our students in crisis as well as assisting our classroom staff in redirecting and de-escalating children to assure safety. We continue to provide training for all school staff in areas of Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI), 321 Insights (on-line modules to teach avoiding power struggles, best practices in approaching upset and angry children) as well as ACE's awareness. The District has also partnered with the National Center for School of Mental Health, and we have provided an evidence-based Social Emotional Learning Curriculum (SELF) that is available for teachers. New this school year, we have employed 5 full time licensed mental health services providers in addition to the services provided through Catawba Mental Health. As of December, 2019, all 21 mental health providers are providing mental health therapy to over 650 students in Rock Hill Schools from preschool through high school. We are exploring the option of adding day-treatment services. Please continue to work with school administrators and consider alternative services and programming as appropriate.



Where does liability end when teachers oversee students who walk home? Is it once they are off school property?

We do not know of any procedure or practice which includes teachers overseeing students walking home beyond school property lines. School district employees are prohibited from transporting students in private vehicles (Policy EEAG). For students who are registered as walkers and given parental permission to walk home, school district liability ends at the edge of school property.

With third grade being the Read 2 Succeed year, are there plans to:

- 1) Reduce class size for third grade classes?
- 2) Hire additional teachers to work with targeted students?
- 3) Hire additional support staff to work with the students who are targeted for retention?

Class size does matter, and reduced class size and hiring additional teachers is a consideration that administrators and district leaders seek. However, limited funding does impact these possibilities. In order to reduce some class sizes in a building, other class student/teacher ratios may increase as there is an overall financial allocation to each school based on school enrollment. Additional funding from the district has been provided for teachers to offer tutoring to work with targeted students, and the district will continue to explore ways that class size may be reduced as well as examine the current class sizes in existing master schedules.

What is our school policy on vaping (students) in schools? How is our district addressing this for the well being of our students, especially those with health concerns?

Vaping is handled through our School Board Policy below, and it was updated in September 2019. We have collaborated with community agencies to provide informational sessions for parents and students at Winthrop, Piedmont Medical Center, and in our school district and neighboring school districts.

Policy JICG Tobacco Use by Students Issued 9/19

The board affirms that tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke (environmental tobacco smoke) are hazardous to the health of human beings, especially children. Therefore, the board believes that it is essential to maintain a 100 percent tobacco-free environment in order to ensure students and staff have access to the healthiest, most productive learning environment possible.

For purposes of this policy:

Tobacco product means a substance that contains tobacco and is intended for human consumption, including but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and snuff.

Alternative nicotine product means any vaping product, whether or not it contains nicotine, including but not limited to, electronic smoking devices or products that can be ingested into the body by chewing, smoking, absorbing, dissolving, inhaling, or by any other means.

We very much appreciate the Mental Health Counselors assigned to the schools. However, IF they are district employees why do we have to have paperwork and a parent consent completed to have them talk to a child in crisis? We do not do this process with our Guidance counselors. When children are in crisis, getting in contact with a parent is unrealistic. These kids ultimately end up in Administration, with the nurse or Guidance which is what we were supposed to be helping with the mental health counselors at the schools.

Rock Hill Schools' Mental Health Service providers support our children, teachers and families. The mental health "arena" has an ethical, legal instrument similar to the directive for a physician or a school psychologist. It allows individuals/parents to dictate their wishes for mental health care for a child, and parental approval is required for one-on-one services. It is important to ask, "Does the activity provided by the Rock Hill School Mental Health Provider include direct student services?" If the answer is "ves", then the service should be considered a "a therapeutic, mental health service," which would require informed parental consent.

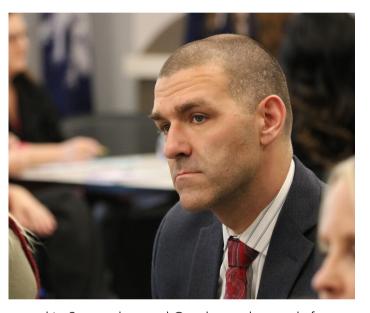


What is the district's plan to replace students' damaged or lost laptops so that these students can continue to receive access to their technological resources without having to wait an extended period for a new laptop?

Loaner devices should be available at each school. Occasionally, we experience a high volume of repairs at a school that requires loaner devices to be reassigned from another location. We are working with the contractor that manages our 1:1 inventory in the secondary schools to improve the efficiency in this process. Please contact your school tech or Mr. John James if there is a student that is without a laptop for more than 2 days.

For the past few years we have been told there will be no news initiatives, but then things like eLearning are rolled out at one of the busiest times of the year. It may not be an initiative, but it is certainly new and something added at a very difficult time for teachers to take on additional tasks. This was also rolled out to us with the understanding that the district is still working through the plan. Why could we not wait until the plan was thoroughly developed over the course of this year then implemented at the beginning of next year?

Thank you for your question. Regarding eLearning, we were approved by the Education Oversight Committee for this pilot during last summer. Once approved, we were to develop this plan as we progressed through the year. We would not be able to participate in the pilot work until we were approved, and there were no opportunities to apply beyond this current school year. Knowing there are many busy times during the year for all employees (beginning, middle, and end), we only sought approval to be able to use two days in the spring semester so teachers and staff would not be rushed in development for this opportunity. In addition, our Instructional Technology Specialists are working closely with schools to provide time-saving tools such as a template for the lesson, samples and materials for mock



day participation. Please note that other school districts prepared in September and October to be ready for any disruptions during the fall, but we have purposely waited to take time for planning and support.

As we have stressed, this opportunity is a pilot, and we will certainly take teacher input during the process and use this data to determine if we will apply for any future eLearning opportunities afforded by the state. It is our hope that allowing flexibility in making up time will be positive for students, teachers, families, and staff as the make-up days arrive and we are able to hold as true to the district calendar as possible. If any further support or assistance can be provided, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Instructional Technology Specialist, coaches, or Dr. John Jones.

Certified and non-certified staff members were offered a retention bonus this year. Does the district intend to offer the bonuses again next year? What other incentives will be given to teachers to encourage retention?

The recruitment and retention bonuses are dependent on the development of the 2020-2021 budget. Any bonuses for next year will be determined in June. The district offers many PD opportunities that can be used towards recertification. There are also PD opportunities available that allow teachers to receive graduate credit.

What are you able to tell us about the referendum? When will the district be able to build a new facility for Sullivan Middle School?

A project to replace the current Sullivan Middle School has been proposed as part of the first five years of the Master Plan. The Board is set to discuss the Master Plan and potential resolution for a five year bond program on Monday night, December 9, 2019.

Will additional support/funding be offered for schools that have the priority status so that these schools may be able to provide more targeted resources for students?

The district has budgeted and provided additional funding for tutoring in Grades 4, 7, and after school tutoring for schools that have priority status from the state as well as all other Rock Hill Schools. These funds are currently available for student support. Priority schools have also received additional funding from the state to address their needs.

A limited number of applicants were accepted into the Leadership Academy. What other district level supports and opportunities will be provided for aspiring administrators and instructional leaders to enhance their personal and professional strengths so that they are able to accomplish their intended goals?

Our plan is to continue to offer opportunities for aspiring leaders such as the Leadership Academy. We encourage teachers to take advantage of other existing leadership opportunities such as presenting at the summer Professional Learning Conference, participating in district curriculum and benchmark development, along with school level leadership opportunities like team and department leaders. Our goal is to continue to create opportunities for teachers to receive leadership training and opportunities to lead. If you have additional suggestions, please contact Dr. Joya Holmes, Dr. Missy Brakefield or Ms. Jennifer Morrision.



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