

One Team. One Mission. One Rock Hill.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



SEPTEMBER 26, 2019
CHERRY PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE IMMERSION



ROCK HILL
Schools

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Dear Team Rock Hill,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Rock Hill Schools employees for the work that you have accomplished to help us all start the 2019-2020 school year successfully. 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 quarter, and I continue to be impressed by the outstanding educators in our school district.

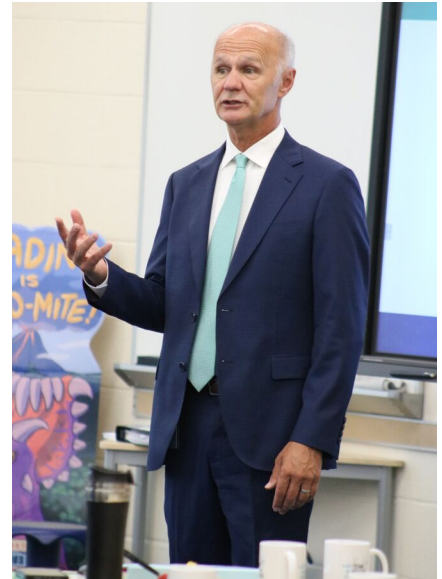
Introduced last year, we will continue our commitment to the Focus Five this school year and use each area as the foundation for our work. A shared vision for 2020 will enable each of us to strive for continuous improvement. The areas are:

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 my administrative team, look forward to again hosting the monthly Listen & Learn sessions with teachers representing each school in our district. We will hold eight sessions that will allow everyone to hear about successes and areas for continued growth for our district. Cabinet members will also share important information about what is taking place across our district. Responses to questions from our September 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 schools and district 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.

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!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Cook
Superintendent

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ROCK HILL SCHOOLS DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM

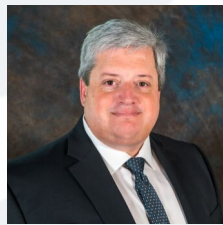


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In the following pages, questions raised at the most recent Teacher Listen & Learn are answered. Due to the nature of some questions, we are not able to provide a complete response since we may not be aware of the context in which the question or concern 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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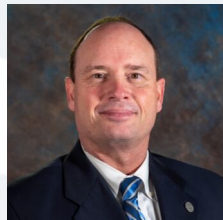
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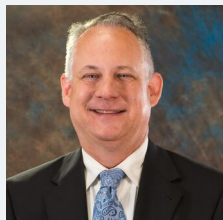
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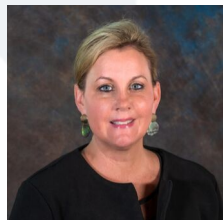
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If possible more support for the full day 4K teachers, possible funds, more field trip opportunities and opportunities to plan together as a team.

We currently support our 4K teachers with monthly PLC meetings and quarterly planning days for the teachers to meet and develop instructional plans. Our new to 4K teachers are being provided opportunities to observe other 4K classrooms within the district.

Our full day 4K classrooms are primarily funded through Title I federal funds. Additional Title I funding could be considered at the school level during the planning stage at individual schools when developing their Title I Plan. Other full day 4K programs are tuition based across the district. Please reach out to your building level administrator for further discussion related to possible funding sources.

When will HP Classroom Manager be rolled out to all teachers and when will training be provided?

The program has been pushed to all of the student machines. The teacher version is being placed on Software Center. The school techs will be trained on Friday on how to setup the software for the teachers and will communicate the details with the principals. We are working on updating to the next version that will be able to populate the classes automatically. We have completed step one by setting up a name server. The rest of the steps should be completed in the next few weeks and the new version would be pushed to all devices. For the training, principals should reach out to their school's assigned instructional tech for training dates.

While we understand the importance of graduation rate, teachers feel that the 51/40 (51% for Q1/Q3 and 40% for Q2/Q4) rule is hindering student learning as students game the system. Is there a better way to ensure student success without the integrity of the education they receive?

The 51/40 limit was put in place in 2017 to ensure a student who fails one or more quarters or a semester receive an F while not making it impossible for the student to work back up to a passing grade if he/she makes the necessary effort. In an average-based system, zeros have an amplified effect on a student's average. Teachers may certainly give failing grades on individual assignments as feedback to students and indicators of student performance in Canvas. Regarding averaged grades on report cards, students still fail overall courses because of failing quarter, semester, and even final exam grades, but these grades are not so low to ensure a student cannot pass a class after an F in the class's first quarter.

For advanced level students, there are numerous course paths they can select (IB, AP, Honors, and Dual Credit). However, with the collapse of Tech Prep level, the College Prep Course seems to encompass a much wider range of abilities. Will the district consider bringing back an option for core classes with a career-readiness focus?

Teachers are welcome to submit course proposals for the next year's high school catalog through the catalog review process conducted in the fall. Please contact your principal regarding this process. The South Carolina Department of Education also allows districts to develop and offer innovative courses and course sequences using an application process as part of the state's Diploma Pathways program. The district is open to any discussion about new pathways that will better serve Rock Hill Schools students. If teachers feel a new pathway is needed, let's think it through. Please contact Jen Morrison, Executive Director of Secondary Education, to discuss.



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The early childhood number of children with special needs is increasing weekly and will continue to increase throughout the school year as they turn 3 years old or otherwise become identified. Will another preschool special needs teacher be hired if the numbers become too high?

The ESE Department continues to monitor not only the amount of students ages 3 and 4 years old with disabilities but closely monitor “to what extent is their disability significantly impacting their access to general education, the school environment and their daily living skills”. There has been an additional assistant, placed at CCDC for the 2019-2020 school year to assist students and staff with many students that are not ambulatory and/or require assistance with feeding and toileting. We are also looking at the K-Prep classes, monitoring the number of students and TA’s as well.

In the next month or so, there will be 4-year-old students with disabilities that may demonstrate enough progress to transition to the full-day K-prep program at Ebinport Elementary School. Our itinerant ESE staff as well as the special education and general education preschool staff at CCDC are also assisting us with their needs as students enroll each week or are ready to transition to a full day at the K-prep program.

Are elementary teachers expected to use the literacy guide templates for teaching guided reading groups in our district?

The Guided Reading Templates were created as a support tool for teachers as they are planning for guided reading groups. These templates were developed by teams of teachers along with District Literacy Coaches. The templates are helpful for knowing what components should be a part of a Guided Reading lesson and they also provide a model for the flow of a lesson. As teachers become more experienced with guided reading and receive additional training, they may not always need these templates. Also, teachers in the upper grades may begin to do some small group work that looks more like a Strategy Group or Literature Circle, and they may not use the templates in these situations. School based Literacy Coaches can continue to support the use of templates in all grades.

Will updated technology for our lower elementary students be implemented soon? Will they ever be one-to-one?

The Rock Hill Schools Technology Council meets monthly during the school year and consists of teachers, administrative, and technology staff and has the responsibility of providing feedback and input regarding technology programming within the district. For the 2019-2020 School Year, a focus of this group will be to oversee input from K-2 teachers regarding the most-appropriate device to utilize in the classroom in order to support instruction. At this time, K-2 is not designated for 1:1 deployment (1 device per student); however, it is a goal that we provide access to devices in the classroom that can forward student-centered learning for all students.

Is there talk about smaller class sizes in K-3 in order to target R2S students? Are there any plans for additional help for the 3rd grade retained students?

There are R2S requirements for mandatory participation for identified students to attend Summer Reading Camp. It is important to note that after the completion of the Summer Reading Camp this past school year, only one student was actually retained. One of the considerations for the 2020 Summer Reading Camp, is to target identified second grade students to be proactive prior to entry into third grade. In addition, we will continue to serve third grade students mandated to attend based on R2S criteria.

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Will second grade ever be included in the Read 2 Succeed program?

There have been no other changes at the state level regarding mandated retention and R2S related to any other grades than grade 3 at this time. Please see previous question/response related to looking at serving identified grade 2 students during Summer Reading Camp to be proactive to entry into third grade.

What is the plan to decrease our Unique Pathways class size? What is the plan for addressing the needs of special education students who are in regular education classrooms, but need a self-contained classroom environment?

The RHSD approved 3 new Unique Pathways classes for the 2019-2020 school year specifically to reduce class size. There was also a district reorganization of students with disabilities currently in the Unique Pathway Programs to go to either a Unique Pathways program at their home school or a school closest to their home address. The Unique Pathway classes started the school year with student numbers far below the recommended teacher-student ratio for a self-contained program including a certified special education teacher and two teacher assistants for all classes.. Since school started, there have been a lot of students with moderate to significant/profound disabilities transferring to Rock Hill Schools from other Districts in SC as well as outside the state of South Carolina. Many of those transfers have been students requiring a Unique Pathways Program. With 1 ESE Teacher and 2 Teacher assistants, we are still under the recommended "cap", however, the student - teacher ratio has increased since August, 2019. We are continuing to monitor the programs and will make adjustments as needed throughout the school year.

The plan for students with disabilities that are in the regular education classroom, commonly referred to as the "least restrictive environment" are to access the standard course of study and receive instruction with their typically developing peers whenever possible determined by their IEP team. Students with disabilities are "general education students" first. The IEP team, for each student with disabilities, will meet at least once a year, many times more often, to review the IEP goals, academic, behavioral, adaptive and functional progress and determine how best to serve each student due to their unique needs and circumstances.



Is there a process in place for the district on how and when to mainstream SPED students into general education?

All students with disabilities that have become eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have an IEP team. The IEP team determines the how and when to mainstream sped students into general education. The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a foundational piece of IDEA. All students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, should have access to the LRE depending on their unique needs and circumstances. It is the IEP team that will make the determination about the how and when to have access to the least restrictive environment.

Many teachers and staff members are disappointed that York Road did not get painted over the summer as scheduled. The classroom walls and cabinets have peeling paint. Some built-ins are splintered from age. Technology, like student devices, is important, but all students in Rock Hill deserve a welcoming and modern classroom environment.

We agree that the rooms need to be painted. Unfortunately last year when we bid out painting, we did not have anyone bid on the work. We are now under contract with one painting contractor and we hope to be able to expand to several contractors. We are planning on painting York Road classrooms next summer.

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Teacher assistants did not receive the district raise that we were informed that all support staff would receive at the District Pep Rally. Teaching assistants do not make enough for the job that they do and should receive a raise every year just like the teachers do.

All employees, including teacher assistants, received a 4% cost of living increase. All fiscal year 2019-2020 salary schedules were increased by 4% above fiscal year 2018-2019 salary schedules. All eligible employees received a step increase as well. Please contact the Finance department if you have questions.

With many of our schools seeming to be at or near practical capacity, and the population growing as it is in Rock Hill, what are the possibilities for adding new schools, as is currently happening across the river?

We are currently proposing a Master Plan to our community that could lead to a bond resolution. In this presentation, you will see the plan for additions to some of our schools as well as the possibilities of adding new facilities. A presentation of the Master Plan will be shared with each school.



Is it a possibility to restore Reading Recovery in all elementary schools? Reading Recovery teachers are knowledgeable about district literacy expectations and skilled in observing and teaching early literacy behaviors to the most tangled students. They are able to teach individual students and meet with small groups in such a way that they touch at least as many students per day as a classroom teacher. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has found that when intervention is delayed until fourth grade, it takes four times as long to intervene as in late kindergarten. If we can find the funds for fourth grade tutors in all schools, can we also invest in the proven long-term results of Reading Recovery teachers to increase student achievement?

Reading Recovery (RR) is a valued intervention program in our school system, and currently Title I funds pay for a program teacher for those schools who qualify. To implement this program back into all schools, a request for this to be placed into next year's budget would need to take place. There is currently not enough funding in the at-risk student allocations to be able to place RR in the remaining 9 schools (not funded by Title 1). Principal input in this process would also be very important (especially during budget season), so it is important to discuss this need with your principal as well so that he/she can include in discussion during budget development. Additionally, in order for the RR program to be considered "fully implemented", some schools may also require a second teacher as well.

Teachers at the Pre-K and kindergarten level at my school are concerned about playground safety. Our play area is surrounded by a raised black border and filled with wood chips. Our students often trip over the black border and injure themselves. Our question is if the playground renovations that have been done at several schools are going to continue throughout the district? If so, what schedule is being used to determine which schools receive the new turf ground covering and other renovations?

We are planning to continue the playground renovations in the district. In our Master Plan presentation, safety and security is a priority and this includes our playgrounds. Our grounds department has surveyed our playgrounds and our priority list is determined from these surveys. If you would like to specifically discuss your playground, please contact Mr. Vaughan at bvaughan@rhmail.org.

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We have concerns about the amount of time young students, especially ESE students, are spending on the bus in the mornings and afternoons. Students are having to get on the bus as early as 5:45 in the morning. In the afternoon, students are spending over an hour on the bus before getting home. This is certainly not to the benefit of students and we are hoping there could be a solution that would allow more reasonable transportation times.

We are currently conducting an efficiency study for our Transportation department. During this study, we will be addressing the amount of time that our students are on our buses and we will continue to monitor and make changes to be as efficient as possible. Our goal is to minimize the time amount of time riding the bus.

With the district's continued focus on the workshop model across content areas, will the district be investing in new and modern classroom furniture for secondary schools to meet those needs? Circular, rectangular, and kidney tables allow students to collaborate and teachers to work with small groups easier than the traditional desk most teachers have.

Our district's new Master Plan, "ONE" has a large project specifically planned for furniture, fixtures and equipment, or "FFE". Our project will particularly target investments in the modern learning environment such as those mentioned above. If approved, almost all classrooms would benefit over the span of the plan.



One of our ESE teachers was recently moved to another school, which will limit the services available for the students in our Alternative Programs. We now have only one ESE teacher who serves our campus. (Phoenix Academy, Renaissance Academy, Raven Academy, and Adult Ed.) What will be done to make sure that we are well-staffed to continue providing the required services for our students?

As the District grows, we must constantly monitor not only the students with disabilities in all preschool, elementary, middle, high schools and alternative programs but the specific special education services and accommodations that are stated on each individual students' IEP. It is important to understand that a majority of currently enrolled students with disabilities at the Alternative Schools Programs have "indirect" minutes or consultative services on their IEP.s There are currently very few with direct services. The students and their specific services on their IEPs will be monitored closely to make sure that all students with an IEP have the direct and indirect services that the IEP team determined appropriate depending on their unique needs and circumstances.

Many students have chosen Phoenix Academy for the smaller class sizes and nurturing environment. With the increased growth of Rock Hill, many parents and students are wanting more flexible learning options (especially high school age). How will our district address this need?

Flexible learning, both within our schools and those seeking learning opportunities outside of the school, will continue to be both an opportunity and challenge for all schools (not just in Rock Hill). With the emergence of technology devices, access to information systems and on-line curricula, availability of virtual schools, increased dual credit options, and other new and innovative educational sources, Rock Hill Schools will continue to seek the means and options available in education that promotes a "my size fits me" model. Options will continue to increase, and our system must adjust the mindset of learning beyond the classroom as viable considerations for students.

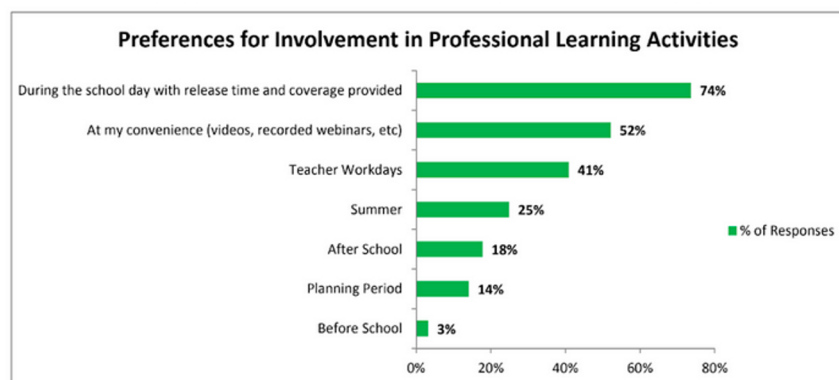
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Regarding the Listen and Learn format, is there a time when discussions are topic-specific with the task of problem solving? Ex. Topic: PBIS, all discussion related to implementing/ strengths/ areas of improvement. Or, is the purpose simply to provide answers/responses to questions and concerns?

The Teacher Listen and Learn provides a space for teachers to interact directly with district administrators. Including eight sessions during the past school year, our aim is to hear concerns representative of our school system. One of our sessions last year was focused on special education issues; schools were asked to send a representative who would be able to speak on issues impacting special education. However, the two-hour time block is generally filled with discussion related to a presentation in which district administrators are seeking feedback from employees. You have made a good suggestion to designate a portion of the time to high-level problem solving, and that is something we can consider moving forward.

There continue to be concerns regarding the number of classes teachers are being asked to miss so they may participate in PD. We all recognize the importance of instructional time and efforts are made to keep students in class and engaged. Because of logistics, there are many days when multiple teachers are out of the building for a portion of the school day. Is there any other format that could be used to deliver training/professional development? At least a hybrid of online/face-to-face to decrease the number of days out of the building?

We continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development that is offered by the district as well as the delivery methods used. Additionally, we have attempted to be mindful of teacher feedback, primarily the Professional Learning Needs Assessment issued last year. The results of that survey showed that 74% of teachers preferred to participate in professional learning offered during the school day with coverage. We will continue to explore means and opportunities to provide more digital professional learning options.



There are times when various office staff may be in need of support with technology. Is there an individual they can go to when questions/problems come up? Can they use the same technology support that faculty use?

Your school tech that supports faculty also supports office staff with their technology needs. Faculty and staff should submit a tech ticket when support is needed which will alert the school tech. One way to connect to the site is by visiting Quick Links located on the Technology Department webpage of our district's website. The tickets range from malfunctioning projectors to asking for opinions on technology equipment. Since the tickets are being monitored in the Technology Department, additional help can be assigned if there is a backlog at a certain location.

Are there any plans for more professional development in the fine arts departments?

Yes, the district has recognized the need to have more professional development for our fine arts teachers. We have recently hired a district Fine Arts Specialist, Ms. Kim Grant, who is working to assess needs and support fine arts teachers.

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ParentSMART Parenting Partnership program is one of the alternative programs in RHSD. We are housed at the Sylvia Circle Learning Center along with T3 Elementary, and the ESOL welcome center. How can we be better identified on the RHSD Notifications app and be included in other notifications?

Our mobile app is one piece of a more robust communications and outreach effort and is tied directly to our schools. In the example of ParentSMART, T3 and other programs housed at the Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center, formerly known as The Children's School at Sylvia Circle, the populations served can vary daily and T3 students are associated with and assigned to their home school for the purpose of notifications. Presently, we are not able to assign a program as a destination for push notifications, staff listings, news feeds, or social media feeds in the district's mobile app. Starting with PowerSchool, multiple databases provide the source information that establishes the structure of the app. As you may be aware, students are assigned to schools in PowerSchool, not programs. This raises a bigger question about notifications to our staff located on support sites, whether it is ParentSMART at Sylvia Circle or Adult Education located at the Flexible Learning Center. As we move forward, our first layer of notification could include automated calls or text messages to staff in addition to emails.

After some conversations around the school with being mandated to meet with Ward Services, on the expectation to update beneficiaries, the majority felt there was, in fact, a sales pitch to purchase various products, and when we asked about updating beneficiaries, we were told we could do that from home. How can this be addressed with Ward Services in the difference of truly informing us on product vs the feeling of an attempt at selling? Also, if we need to update our beneficiaries, and are mandated, or expected to meet with Ward Services again, after being told we can do this at home, will this continue to be a mandated, or expected meeting for all district employees each year?

Starting this fiscal year, open enrollment meetings will be required for all employees every other year. The reasons for the meetings are as follows:

- Dental / dental plus open enrollment year (only allowed every other year)
- Review and discuss benefit options available to staff & family members
- Better understand benefits to make educated decisions
- Learn about affordable voluntary benefits to enhance coverage and to meet staff & family needs
- This year only, Trustmark and Allstate are offering guaranteed issuance on voluntary benefits. With having required meetings, our employees are allowed to enroll in an enhanced benefit instead of the basic benefit. The enhanced offer allows employees to purchase a higher coverage amount. Employees will be able to enroll in these benefits, up to the maximum, without any health or medical questions impacting their ability to receive the benefit. The guaranteed issuance is not applicable to employees that may have cancelled their benefit in the past or have been declined for the benefit.
- Confirm beneficiaries and dependents
- Enroll/re-enroll in Flexible Spending accounts
- Ask specific questions about individual situations

Ward Services benefit counselors do not receive a commission on any voluntary product.



NEXT TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23



SUBMIT QUESTIONS & CONCERNS TO YOUR SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 16.

STAY CONNECTED



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