

One Team. One Mission. One Rock Hill.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



JANUARY 18, 2019
CENTRAL OFFICE



ROCK HILL
Schools

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Dear Rock Hill Team,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Rock Hill Schools employees for the work you do each and every day to benefit students in our community. 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, and I continue to be impressed by the outstanding educators in our school district.

We continue our Focus Five for the 2018-19 year which serves as the foundation for our work, and will be embedded into our continuous improvement efforts, our Strategic Plan, and our district's AdvancED accreditation. 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 and as an essential part of my entry plan as superintendent, I continue hosting monthly Listen & Learn sessions with teachers representing each school in our district. We have held five sessions, and I have enjoyed being able to hear from our teachers about successes and areas for continued growth for our district, as well as share important information about what is taking place across our district. Responses to questions 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.

Our schools and district will benefit from this open dialog regarding the needs that exist for our students, staff, and organization overall. District leaders and I look forward to continuing this Listen & Learn series each month throughout the year, meeting with representatives chosen by the principals of each school. Our next Teacher Listen and Learn session with teachers will take place on Friday, February 15 with questions due from your teacher representative by February 8.

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,
Bill Cook



TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

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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For teachers with many accrued absences past 90, are there any conversations about increasing the compensation in order to encourage attendance each year?

For the current fiscal year, the rate for sick leave over 90 days is \$30 which would be paid to eligible employees in September 2019. Increasing the rate for a future fiscal year would require additional budget in the General Fund and would need to be discussed and prioritized during the development of the budget.

Many teachers have found themselves without the ability to run copies they need for class. Once copy totals have been depleted, teachers are told to ask the grade level administrator to use his/her keycard to allow us to make the copies we need. This is problematic because teachers will need to meet up with the administrator at the office copy machine. Second, it prevents teachers from making one or two copies quickly. Copies will also need to be made in advance of the unit being taught. Sometimes the need for materials change. In that case, copies would be wasted or not provided. How can we ensure teachers have the ability to run copies as needed?

While one-to-one technology used in our Modern Learning Environment typically means less reliance on paper, we recognize that the need for copies remains. Our goal is to fully support all teachers with materials needed. We offer two ways to print: through the school's RICOH multi-function devices (MFD's) and through our Print Center. Because it is 2.5 times more expensive per page to print on the school devices, each school is given an allocation of copies for these devices. These allocations do not apply to any pages ordered from the Print Center. Allocations are managed solely by the school and may be further allotted to each teacher or team as building administration chooses. Schools have the ability to increase allotments during the year as required to support you, either through the school's reserve or district reserve. For better quality and lower cost, using the Print Center is encouraged for print jobs over 30 pages, and strongly recommend for jobs over 100 pages. No order for the Print Center, however, will be rejected. This year our Print Center has easier ordering and faster delivery service, now fulfilling your order in less than two days. "Rush" jobs (determined by the teacher) can be fulfilled on the same day if ordered before 9:30 a.m. (otherwise, next day).

Will a stipend, reward, or a pat on the back return for National Board winners Certified Teachers? What is being done by the district to provide incentives for NBCTs? They once received a stipend from the district and that has been discontinued. Is there a plan to reinstate this incentive or anything along the lines of a monetary stipend?

The National Board Certification supplement was funded 100% by the State. The district did not provide an additional supplement. Only NBCTs who applied before July 1, 2010, are eligible to receive the National Board supplement for a total of 20 years. Supplement eligibility is determined by the National Board Certified Teacher's position in the school district.

When employees work two jobs (like Homebound) can we return to being paid twice a month? When we are paid once a month extra work is taxed at 45%.

Per Board Policy DKA, all employees will be paid monthly. The 2019 Income Tax Withholding Tables can be found at www.irs.gov.



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How is the district going to deal with the teacher shortage in the coming year? This year our teachers have been asked to go to other schools, leaving subs in core classes. This has had a profound effect on our students, teachers, and programs.

The district is aggressively working to recruit and retain. Unfortunately we faced a situation at the beginning of the year requiring us to move teachers from the alternative school to other schools in the district. This was done with the mindset that the alternative school enrollment typically starts off low and increases as the year progresses. We felt that with smaller enrollment moving the teachers was less impactful than leaving a school with much higher enrollment without a teacher.

Third Grade class sizes are too large. With the demands for Read to Succeed, Including: documentation, implementation, and continuing other curriculum. It makes it impossible to provide quality instruction to all students within the room. Are there any plans to address this?

As we begin our budget process and conversations, we will engage in class size conversations. With a limited budget, we don't always get to implement all that we would like to.

One teacher at my school questioned why the teacher/student ratio in a classroom varies from school to school and vary within schools per grade level?

Schools are allocated teachers based on the district class size ratio. Principals have discretion, based on school goals/priorities and using the total number of teacher allocated from the district, to make adjustment to their grade levels. Also keep in mind, as the year progresses and students move in and out of schools, this may skew class size ratios. Please speak with your principal regarding your specific concern.

Our school/middle schools had a secretary support position cut years ago and we have had to absorb these responsibilities; is there any possibility that we may get this needed help and position back?

There was a staffing committee that worked last year and middle school secretarial support did not come up as a priority for this group. This is something we can and will discuss with the middle school principal group.

When I was first hired in 2008, there were talks about a new building for the ATC but with the economy issues, that was put aside. The question I have is; are there any talks about the possibility of a new building for the ATC in the near future? The updates that were done during the renovations are great (Thank you) but we are still running into technology issues that come from a building that was built in the early 70's and not setup for technology. I know some classrooms got major overhauls and some received minimum but it has been a question on some minds over the last few years.

We could find no record of discussions at the district level on replacement of the ATC. The building complex is 46 years old, and has just finished a renovation which has extended its "service life", as is typically done with our school building inventory. Additional capacity due to rising enrollment may have been discussed, but the district's growth rate has changed since then.

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Some concern about 1/4/19 PD was expressed by several teachers. Specifically, the relevance of information presented and "best use" of teachers' time away from doing classroom/preparing learning environment and lesson materials preparation time or school-specific PD to prepare for student arrival on 1/7, Monday.

One of several instructional goals for teachers in Rock Hill Schools is to have a sound understanding of how to implement the Essential Learnings that we identified as a district during the 2017 PLC Conference. Implementation of the Essentials included differentiating instructional strategies, resources, etc for students on varying levels of understanding. Although the work began at the PLC Conference in 2018, none of the elementary group had an opportunity to reflect on this practice for all of the identified Essentials; therefore, the time on Jan. 4th was designed to serve as an opportunity to continue and finish the work that was started during the PLC Conference. The district PD dates are the only time that can be designated for such large scale curriculum work; however, as this was a half-day of PD, the remainder of the day was designated for work such as classroom prep or school specific PD. If there are specific suggestions on how to improve relevance, please contact Dr. Joya Holmes.

Several teachers expressed concern about work orders not being filled/ requested repairs being made. Our front office has explained the new/current process for School Dude, but several concerns arose before this "suggested correction" information reached us today (1/9/19).

At Facilities, we have three teams set up that service our elementary schools on a weekly basis. They are responsible for completing work orders and checking in with staff to ensure that the schools needs are met. Unfortunately for the team at one of our schools, one of the two members has been out for several months due to health issues. Currently, his position has been filled so our team is now back to 100%. This was the reason that the work orders were not being completed as fast as normal. Please let Facilities know if you still have concerns.

Additionally, one homeroom teacher voiced a concern about feeling like she is not afforded "enough planning" for her week when PD/grade-level meetings are scheduled during the times when her students are in Specials. Is there a district expectation for PD hours weekly/monthly that teachers are expected/required to do and how much weekly planning time should a teacher expect during working hours 7:30-3:30?

There is not a district expectation for PD or planning hours, except that each teacher has planning time daily. The scheduling of school level planning and PD is at the discretion of individual schools.

Is there a way we could get standards by quarter together on the PowerSchool report card?

We are working on this now to make it possible for the 2019-2020 school year.

Is there a plan in place to address the noise in the Montessori building at EBES?

The district had a sound study conducted from an outside consultant and the findings and recommendations were discussed with Mrs. Jones and Mr. Kirell on January 16th.

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What can our district do to make sure our Schools of Choice reflect the demographics of our school district? Many “at risk” families are struggling to meet their basic needs and having a choice for their child’s education is not “on their radar”. These are good families but have many struggles that come before school choice.

We continue to explore new marketing options that allow us to share Choice with all of our Rock Hill families. This year, information about Choice was shared with over 45 childcare centers in various parts of the city of Rock Hill. We continue to focus on means to share information about all schools and programs with diverse audiences. Suggestions about additional ways to share information may be submitted to Mr. Mychal Frost or Dr. Joya Holmes.

Many families enrolling their children in a School of Choice program are under the impression that this is a better option than a traditional kindergarten classroom. What can we do to promote our elementary schools that are not part of our Schools of Choice?

Within our Choice process, parents are encouraged to explore all options which include their zoned school. Our plan is to include our traditional schools in the District Expo moving forward. This would allow parents to inquire about traditional schools, as well as Choice.

The ESE model currently in the middle schools keeps ESE teachers in their own classrooms. They are unable to assist in content classes with ESE students who struggle but are not pull-out students. What is the outlook for this model next year? How can ESE teachers provide support to students on their caseload if they do not have the flexibility to assist students with their needs?

The current ESE service delivery model is based on the academic achievement data for students with disabilities, reviewed at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. This was discussed with the ESE teachers as well as the administration. Although co-teaching is one of many service delivery models, the outcome must be student academic growth. As a reflection of data, it was then determined that a direct instruction model, for students with disabilities at certain schools require intensive academic support ,was the most appropriate service delivery model that reflected the academic needs for students with disabilities.

ELA classes received money for new novels this year, can other departments receive something similar?

As a part of Title 4 funding, middle schools did receive funding for books to use in ELA core classrooms to increase support for tier 1 instruction including independent reading and the workshop model. Although there currently is no further funding for books from the district, we are seeking ways and opportunities for providing books for students at the classroom level. Some schools allocate instructional funds for the purchase of books (this is a site decision).

What are the contingency plans for make-up days if we miss days this winter?

In the event additional days are missed due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, district administration would follow the process outlined in Policy IC - School Year. As allowed by state law, the board of trustees is permitted to waive up to three days (missed days 4-6) after the make-up days on the calendar have been exhausted. In the event, additional days are missed, a request can be made to the State Board of Education to waive up to three days (missed days 7-9). In the event 10 or more days are missed, a request can be made to the General Assembly for days to be waived.

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Why must we have report cards finished before Christmas break when they aren't due until our workday and aren't sent home until January 15?

Grades were to be completed at the school level by 4:00 p.m. on January 4th. While grades were due on this date, some schools required them to be due prior to Christmas break to allow more time for review at the school level. Completing reports after reviewing grades at the school level is a multi-step process at the Central Office to complete grades. This is why there is a gap between when grades are submitted and when Report Cards go home.

How can we put assistants back at every grade level? Can it be explained how 4th grade was targeted to receive the tutoring services?

Funding for tutoring is available through non-recurring funds provided in the general fund from state allocations. This funding may not return from the state next year; however, these funds are provided this year based upon feedback from principals and schools indicating that additional teacher support for intervention and remediation is needed. based on district-wide student achievement data, grades 4 and 7 are being targeted for additional support.

Why was the 2020-2021 calendar passed even though we weren't given the opportunity to give feedback on it? On the survey we were only asked about the three calendar options for 2019-2020.

This year, the committee was comprised of students, teachers, parents, and administrators representing all schools. The survey is used to influence the development of the calendars, and the work of the calendar committee. Survey results for three consecutive years have been favorable with more than 64% of respondents supporting a two year approach to calendar development. In creating the calendars, committee members developed the 2020-2021 based on results and feedback offered in the survey.

I have worked in large elementary schools in Rock Hill – one that is Title 1 and one that is not. The Title 1 school has approximately 540 students is blessed with 5 different individuals who work either part or full time to provide interventions for struggling learners who do not have special education services. These individuals work directly with students and also within Rtl teams to problem solve ways to help students who are not on grade level. The other school is large (currently has over 630 students) and does not have any extra support staff to provide interventions to struggling learners. This leaves Rtl services solely up to regular education teachers. Several teachers have explained that it is very difficult to meet the needs of students who are severely below grade level within their regular schedule. Being that our school is large in numbers, most classes are large. Teachers are not able to provide consistent, intensive interventions that the struggling students need to improve their skills. This eventually leads to many parents getting frustrated and typically seeking testing for special education. While some students may have severe learning issues and truly need special education services, many others really need intensive, targeted interventions that they are not consistently receiving. This leaves the school psychologist and special education teachers completely overwhelmed with referrals for testing and case management. We truly need more resources to provide struggling students with the help they deserve at EVERY school. Also, I am excited to hear about the new tutoring initiative that the district is going to be offering soon. I recently heard that the tutoring will only be offered to the "bubble" students performing at the 30-45th percentile on MAP. We have students performing well below this level who desperately need help. Why are they being left out?

Tutoring funding for 4th grade is provided for all students, not just the 30-45th percentile. Tutoring funds are also available to elementary schools through a federal programs allotment this year, and schools do have flexibility in targeting the needs of all students (of course, making sure students who are not meeting expectations are supported). We are glad you are excited about this. The district continues to seek funding to provide all schools with resources as best possible. Schools who receive Title 1 funding are under specific guidelines as to how funding can be used for positions.

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Is there any chance that our district will hire an early childhood coordinator to support and strengthen kindergarten?

Damon Ward, Principal of Central Child Development Center, assists in facilitating PLCs among our 3K and 4K programs across the District on a regular basis. Mr. Ward works closely with Dr. Brakefield and the Central Office Instructional Team to support our Early Childhood efforts. Our District Literacy and Math Coaches are available to support Early Childhood within their work in schools. Any additional positions to the budget moving forward, for example, Early Childhood Coordinator, would need to be a budget consideration item for 2019-2020 provided funding is available.



With recent changes to Special Education and the absence of Transitional Primary classrooms, is it possible to have our itinerant folks follow-up or track these students to see if these placements are appropriate and/or to support the newest classroom teacher with strategies specific to student needs without us having to ask for it?

The Trans-P model has been dissolved since 2016-2017. Students with disabilities rising to kindergarten are now offered a continuum of services determined by the IEP teams. As each team determines the most appropriate service delivery model, the case manager then has the responsibility to offer specialized instruction, assessment and monitor progress throughout the course of the school year. When there are questions about specific student concerns, service delivery model, accommodations and placements, the ESE itinerant teacher is always available to be part of the IEP team as well as to sit with individual staff to review the student information. The ESE Itinerant staff are also available to observe the student and model strategies in instruction and/or behavior in the classroom.

Several teachers had concerns about our meeting on January 4, 2019. We originally thought we had a full workday to prepare for the new school. Besides that, all of elementary met at one school - many of us had to park on the street and at the bank near Heckle Blvd and walk in the rain. It may seem minor to some, but it goes to how teachers are treated and respected.

It was communicated in all district Professional Learning newsletters beginning in May 2018 that January 4, 2019 would be a half-day for Professional Development/half-day Work Day for elementary teachers. The concerns about parking and distance from the school are noted and will absolutely be taken into consideration for future planning.

The teachers at my school are wondering when/if we are making up the last day we missed for inclement weather. One teacher posed this question: If we come for half a day and it counts as a full day, why can't a full day that is a make-up day count for 2 days that are lost?

First, three of the four days missed are being made up as designated on the 2018-2019 district calendar. Make up days are designated as Friday, February 15, Monday, February 18, and Monday, April 22. Board Policy IC - School Year outlines the process to make-up additional time or request a waiver from the school board to forgive missed days 4-6. Employees are bound by contractual days, and teachers have a 190-day contract. If two halves were combined to form one day, there is a loss of one day.

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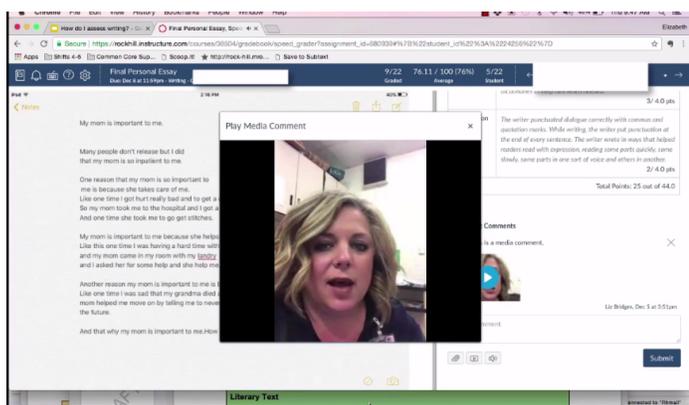
Does the district have any additional information about the potential pay raise for teachers that the South Carolina state government has been discussing?

Gov. McMaster held a press conference on Tuesday, January 15 to outline his budget priorities and spending plan for this legislative session. Included in his priority spending list is a 5% pay increase for teachers in an effort to bring the state's average teacher pay above the Southeastern average. The requested increase is aligned with the request made by State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman. For context, since 1984, state law has set the expectation that average teacher pay be aligned with the Southeastern average.

In previous information, it was mentioned that when a new elementary school opened school boundary lines can be redrawn. Why did this not happen with the Cherry Park Elementary School opening?

Lines are redrawn if we are populating a new school from neighborhoods by changing the designated attendance zone for a student. This was not the case for Cherry Park Elementary School of Language Immersion as the students attending do not have a designated attendance zone. Cherry Park was not populated by the district, it was populated by students from throughout the district participating in the school choice program.

If grammar is tested on SC Ready, why is it not allowed to be counted as part of a summative assessment?



It was decided that assignments which graded isolated writing components (introductions, conclusions, organization, elaboration, grammar, conventions, etc.) would be put in the Formative Grade Book, and authentic pieces of completed writing would be reported in the Summative Grade Book. These could include on-demand performance assessments or final drafts of writing completed over time during writing workshop. Please view the video (click picture to open video) created by the District Literacy Coaches to help explain the rationale behind the decision. In addition, it is important to note that this video was shared during a Monthly Literacy

Coaches' meeting last year to help facilitate conversations at the school level. Please touch base with your school level Literacy Coach for additional information as needed.

Students often complain that laptops that they receive are often more damaged than the ones they turned in for the summer. In order to create a greater sense of ownership and encourage students to handle their technology with care, could it be possible to have students retain the same laptop throughout their time in school?

Yes, we are working on the 2019-2020 plan to provide 9th graders with a new device that they will retain throughout their high school career specifically to address this issue.

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A request for information regarding due dates for report card grades. It seems that this date varies from school to school as to when grades are due in the system. Is the intent of teacher work days at the end of the marking period to allow us to work on grades?

Consistent dates for grades are provided by the district and given to PowerSchool SIS clerks and schools. Schools are asked to comply with dates so that there is enough time for report card processing. These dates are available from each school's SIS clerk. If variance in reporting takes place, this does not occur at the direction of the district.

With the number of risk assessments many school counselors are having to do, I am not sure if we are adequately trained and have the same procedures in place across the district.

We want to make certain all counselors feel as comfortable with the risk to self protocol and district reporting guidelines. Thank you for drawing our attention to the possible need for consistency and training. The executive directors for Elementary and Secondary Education will consult with the counselors at both levels to ascertain needs and plan.

Teachers are concerned that devices for grades K-2 don't always work or are very slow, because they are old and outdated.

The newly formed Technology Council will be looking into the appropriate next generation devices for K-2. The first meeting will be in early February and the K-2 device issue is a high priority one.

Has there been any discussion on benchmark testing in Reading and Writing?

At this time, we currently use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System twice a year to assess reading. In addition to Fountas and Pinnell, our students take the MAP test two to three times per year. This assessment gives strengths and needs for each student and can be used to predict student performance on SC Ready. Finally, we also have the following resource available for our use: On-Demand Performance Assessments for Writing, which are included with the Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing. Those teachers who are implementing the Calkins Units of Study in Reading have On-Demand Performance Assessments in Reading, as well. Additional benchmarks have not been created thus far, given the abundant resources listed above. Any additional benchmark testing in these areas would involve further discussion with multiple stakeholders as well as reviewing current assessments in place for these content areas.

Is there any chance of allowing students to count alternate courses in high school towards the math requirement?

We are seeking ways to personalize learning for our students. South Carolina graduation requirements include four math credits for all students. College-bound students should follow minimum standards established by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education which include Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and a fourth higher-level mathematics unit taken before or during the senior year. High school counselors work during annual Individual Growth Plan (IGP) conferences to make certain all students are making course selections based on their interests and college or career plans. For many students in the district, this does mean they take alternate courses in high school that count toward the math graduation requirements.

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Are there district plans for allowing an opportunity for middle level kids to attend a WU sporting event like elementary?

For the past two years, Winthrop University Athletics has partnered with the district to offer an "Education Day" game day experience for students as a field study opportunity. The event has been open to all elementary and middle schools. More than 4,000 students from elementary and middle schools have participated in each of the past two years. Including additional students and schools in future years is largely limited to the district's ability to transport students to and from the Winthrop Coliseum without negatively impacting afternoon transportation at all schools.

Do we have an anticipated launch date for HP Classroom Manager to upper level teachers/students?

There is not a specific date, but this will eventually be rolled out to all teachers and schools. Our understanding is that there will be an upgrade in the product that will be of benefit for high schools. Mr. John James, Director of Technology Services, can explain this further .



NEXT TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN WILL BE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2019
SUBMIT QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TO YOUR SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE

STAY CONNECTED



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