

One Team. One Mission. One Rock Hill.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



ROCK HILL
Schools

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Dear Rock Hill Team,

With Thanksgiving fast approaching, 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. 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.

Our Focus Five for the 2018-19 year will serve as the foundation for our work, and will be embedded into our continuous improvement efforts, our Strategic Plan, and our district's AdvancED accreditation.

Rock Hill's Focus Five

Safety & Security

Recruitment & Retention

Student Achievement

Organizational Culture & Effectiveness

Communication with All Stakeholders



Aligned with the focus on communication and as an essential part of my entry plan as superintendent, I am hosting monthly Listen & Learn sessions with teachers representing each school in our district. We have held two 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.

In addition, teachers submitted questions from their respective schools. With support and input from district staff and leadership, we have worked to provide responses for each question. 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.

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. Please continue to submit questions to your school's representatives. Our next Teacher Listen and Learn session with teachers will take place on Friday, November 16 with questions due to your teacher representative by Friday, November 9.

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

Technology: How will waiver eligibility for tech fees be determined at the school level? Who at the school level will be responsible? Is it possible for grades 3-8 tech fees to be paid online?

There is no clear direction since Free and Reduce lunch status cannot be used to determine the eligibility (as a result of new federal guidelines). Thus each waiver request was approved. We are working on this new process.

The payment of fees online is possible for the elementary and middle school level. However, there are costs associated with implementing this process which have not been built into the budget this year.

Math: Is there any consideration or push to adopt a math curriculum that will bring consistency to math instruction regardless of teacher expertise? Math Out of the Box, Everyday Math, and Singapore Math are great products that mirror Rock Hill learning goals.

Our district always chooses math resources which align with the standards adopted by the state of South Carolina. Each school is asked to send a K-2 and a 3-5 teacher representative to the textbook caravan to hear the presentations by the textbook publishers. Those representatives are asked to return to their schools, meet with all grade level teachers, and to discuss the best resource for the teachers in their buildings.

The district then holds a meeting where each school provides one vote for its top resource. The resource with the most votes is considered for final selection. Because the schools' representatives choose the resource through an open voting process, teacher needs and abilities are considered when math resources are adopted.

Technology: How can we bring consistency to technology instruction for students at the elementary level?

This is one of the goals of our Modern Learner focus: Provide consistency in resources and instructional support that equate to optimal student-centered learning. Our technology specialists and instructional coaches are working on plans that will make this direction more clear and support stronger.

How do we (teachers) request capital improvement funds and what should be the expected turnaround time for those funds after approval?

When capital funds are available, Finance will reach out to principals for equipment requests. Principals will seek input from the appropriate individual(s) at the school and will forward the equipment needs to Finance. Capital requests will then be evaluated. Once approved, Finance will send the principal and bookkeeper instructions on how to procure the approved items. Funds are available once the requests are approved.

I loved the Reunification drill at the beginning of the year. However, as a parent to a 5th grader in the district, I kept wondering what the procedure is for me to get my child, while ensuring the safety of the students in my care at the same time. Was that considered? If so, what is the procedure?

We share your feelings about our District's plans in place and are glad that you were able to participate in our exercise. As a parent let us reassure you that your child will be cared for in the same manner that you care for all of your students. We are very fortunate that we have loving and caring teachers in our District. However, in the event that the situation is too traumatic for you or your student, arrangements will be made to provide relief for you and your child to be reunited. The great thing about our plan is that we truly unify under one team structure to support each other and will make it through the crisis stronger and safer.

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Are there any plans to incorporate make-up days to first semester for the upcoming year since we have lost days during first semester this year and last? Teachers (specifically EOC teachers) are worried about days being lost during first semester and not being able to make those days up until second semester.

A committee of teachers, parents, students, and administrators representing each school are currently working on calendar options for the next two school years. The placement of make up days is part of the process.

We lost a lot of special needs teacher last year. What is the district doing to keep the teachers and staff that we currently have?

This year there are layers of support for special education teachers, general education teachers, as well as administrators. The behavior management assistants at all elementary schools, including CCDC, have been an asset in working with our young children in crisis. The ESE Itinerant staff are in classrooms daily, assisting with behavior management techniques, modeling best practices, and working with PACE teachers as well as seasoned teachers as everyone learns how best to work with our children going through ACE's. Professional Development has been added, in the form of PLC's, for our UNIQUE Pathways teachers to work on alternative assessments, curriculum, etc. Our new Transition Coordinator has been working with each high school ESE teacher to assist with the new Occupational Credential program as well as reorganizing the job coaches role to better assist our students working towards employability in paid and unpaid jobs. There are also on-line resources for every certified and non-certified staff in the District to better equip all staff towards working with our children in crisis and having an awareness as well as hands-on strategies for our children facing challenges in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). This includes 321 Insights – the modules have been distributed to all schools. Also included are ACE's awareness training as well as a district-wide book study using "Teaching to Strengths: Supporting Students Living with Trauma, Violence, and Chronic Stress."

We have students in kindergarten that would benefit from a Trans-P class. Are there any plans to reinstate this class?

The Trans-P classes were inconsistent at best. There were no eligibility requirements, and the original intent of the Trans-P classes no longer had foundation. Students that are now 4 years old and meet eligibility requirements are participating in the ESE full-day K-Prep programs and are following the 4K curriculum, with alignments towards their IEP's. They are more prepared for kindergarten than ever before. There will be students that will need more supports after the K-Prep full day classes. That is up to the IEP teams for each of our children with unique needs. The K-Prep classes work in collaboration with the 4K programs, use the same curriculum, and are part of the 4K PLC's. The students will continue to be more prepared for kindergarten each year.

What are some strategies for dealing with students' defiant behavior?

There are a variety of strategies to work with students with defiant behaviors; however, the most important strategies are the approaches from the teacher: (Safe Schools modules has excellent short modules on these areas).

- Build a Positive Teacher-Student Relationship.
- Reinforce Progress and Effort.
- Teach How to Disagree Respectfully.
- Channel Children's Energy in Positive Directions.
- When Using Consequences, Offer Limited Choices.
- Intervene Early with a Respectful Reminder or Redirection.
- Avoid Negotiating in the Moment.
- Avoid doing anything that will heighten the child's stress and invite more resistance, don't push their buttons.
- Don't try to reason or make an emotional appeal to win the child over. While in the midst of defiance

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The first Listen and Learn's Q&A asked about large class sizes and burned out teachers in the Unique Pathways (previously called Multi-cat) classes. The answer given referenced "daily support" for these teachers. As one of these teachers at a school that houses 3 of these classes, I do not get "daily support from people who have specific expertise in working with this population." What supports will RHSD ESE department plan on implementing to give us daily support in behavior and instruction, and how does ESE define "daily support?" I believe the answer to this question will make a positive impact on retention among Unique Pathways teachers. At Unique Pathways PLCS, we feel that we are coming up constructive plans of actions and ideas for the district and our classrooms. However, we do not have the authority to implement any of these changes. Can Dr. Turner and Mr. Kosko attend our once a month PLC to collaborate on our ideas and put them into action in order improve the education of our Unique Pathway students? Not all Unique Pathways teachers get planning periods (or a break at all) during the school day. What will RHSD ESE do to solve this problem? Based on my conversations with Unique Pathways teachers at all levels, this would greatly increase the rate of retention in Rock Hill among these teachers.

The UNIQUE Pathways (multi-cat) classrooms all have 2 teacher assistants this school year. All self-contained programs in elementary, middle and high school now have a second teacher assistant in each classroom. There are a few UNIQUE Pathways III classrooms that have additional supports as well.

The elementary schools, as well as CCDC, have a behavior management assistant each day, every day, as part of the staff at the school. Specifically for our UNIQUE Pathways programming, we have a specialist, Ms. Deb Polisenio, that is available to come to your classes, recommend instruction, model instruction and share in the successes of your students. She cannot be with all programs every day, but is available and accessible. Teachers should contact Ms. Polisenio to schedule times for assistance.

All ESE teachers, whether in the UNIQUE Pathways or other specialized programs, resource, etc. can recommend changes, materials, etc. to your ESE Itinerant staff and/or Peter Kosko and Dr. Nancy Turner. Please know that we would LOVE to be at all the PLC's. Although there are a variety of PLC's going on during that time, we will do our best to participate in the UNIQUE Pathways PLC time slots. However, please send, as a collective group, your ideas and recommendations to Peter and Dr. Nancy Turner. We will be able to work through email and phone conferences, if that will expedite the process.

Taking a planning period, as a self-contained ESE teacher, is always a challenge. There are creative scheduling and planning that you can look at. Best practice is to have your teacher assistants work with groups while the ESE teacher takes a well-deserved break each day. It might be broken up into small segments as opposed to a full 55 minutes at one time. We can talk more about this as well.

Will teachers get paid for any unused sick leave days over 90 next year? If so, how much will they receive for each day?

It is included in this year's budget. \$30/day

Due to overall student numbers at RRMS, most all special education aids were reassigned to other schools. When we had the aids, they could pull small groups and read to them in Science and Social Studies classes. When will Science and social studies receive some help meeting the needs of special education students?

Teacher assistants, in special education are required in self-contained or "specialized settings". Teacher assistants providing services in a resource classroom are no longer a service delivery model in Rock Hill Schools.

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With the increased accountability in lower grades (due to initiatives such as Read to Succeed), are there any plans to put academic interventionists in all elementary schools in the district?

We currently have only eight District Academic Interventionists at the elementary level. Any additional District Academic Interventionist positions for the 2019-2020 school year will need to be part of the budget consideration process. Principals from each level discuss and recommend their respective group needs.

Questions about the K-2 Report Card

It seems like some of the indicators are similar skills - would it be possible to consolidate those in Powerschool? - Some of the power standards don't match the indicators (ex. The Kindergarten standard about the five senses is in the power standard about understanding organisms and how they depend on the environment) - can those power standards be changed to make more sense to parents? - Teachers have worked really hard on our Essential Standards, but we're unable to place as much focus on those as we still have to mark a grade for every standard. Is it possible to color-code the standards in Powerschool by each nine weeks? That would be a big help as it takes a long time to find every indicator.

We are currently investigating the capability of PowerSchool in relation to the K-2 Report Card for the 2019-2020 school year. Any changes to the K-2 Report Card would include input from all stakeholders before moving forward. Our goal is to begin this process with stakeholders in the near future. As we begin this process, all of the items listed can be considered moving forward with stakeholder input. PowerSchool does not have the capability of color coding at this time.

The Montessori classes in the new building at Ebenezer are still having difficulty adjusting to the noise level with having no walls or ceilings. It was mentioned that a noise study might be done to see if something could be changed to help - do you know if a noise study is going to be done? If yes, do you know when?

Yes, we have targeted an audio levels study for the middle of the semester. We will be launching the study by the middle of next week and should be complete by November 9, 2018. Recommendations from our consultant will follow later next month. We will keep the school's leadership informed at each step.

Are there currently any plans in place for any kind of technology upgrades/implementations at the K-2 level for students?

There are currently no defined strategic plans for next steps with K-2. The system will be developing these through the Technology Council which should direct the Technology Department on the appropriate K-2 technology. Questions such as the type of devices, the amount per classroom, etc. need to be explored and then implemented.

What is the current rollout plan for the Cleartouch Panels for all teachers? I ask because I believe there is the potential for some amazing collaboration among grade levels/PLCs once everyone on a team is sharing the same technology.

The Cleartouch panel rollout plan is to equip 20% of classrooms each year. Location of the panels is determined by an application process by teachers to the Instruction Division to determine the assignment.

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With the use of technology in schools today, has our district considered "make-up" assignments to replace "make-up days" on the calendar? If so, what does this look like for required seat time for high school requirements?

Yes, this has been considered. However, current state law does not allow for "online make up days". There were five districts approved statewide to pilot an online make up day process. We submitted a request to participate in the pilot, but we were not accepted.

Will the severe weather days be made up?

Yes. By law, the 2018-2019 calendar includes three make-up days: February 15, February 18, and April 22. The three days missed so far will be made up on the three days indicated on the district calendar. Should we miss additional days, state law establishes a process to allow the superintendent to request a waiver for up to three additional missed days. In the event we miss more than three additional days, state law allows the district to seek a waiver for an additional three days to be waived by the State Board of Education. Should we miss 10 or more days during an academic year, state law establishes that the South Carolina General Assembly can vote to waive days missed beyond 10.

Will Report Cards ever change to be easier for teachers to input grades and parents to read?

We are reviewing report cards and related processes at this time. Please e-mail any specific feedback to John Jones (jajones@rhmail.org).

Will SC state ELA standards ever be adjusted to become something that is more manageable OR will we be able to assess only essentials?

Standards are adjusted from the state level according to the department's schedule (DOE). Although we are not sure when the next standards renewal will take place, usually there is a process for input from districts and teachers. We will communicate with our teachers if we see that ELA standards will be revised for input.

What plans, short and long term, are in place to update teacher technology (laptops, Promethean Boards) and online resources (Canvas)?

Online resources are updated each year. Teacher input surveys and review of usage will be valued and considered when it is time to renew digital resources. Long-term plans for renewal of laptops will be handled through the Technology Council. Information will be shared at our meeting on 10/19.

RRMS needs a 3rd AP, regardless of our numbers. Is this being considered?

We will continue to work with administration at RRMS to address the support they need in the absence of a 3rd administrator.

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What is your philosophy on class size? Is there additional support coming to every school in the form of interventionist? How are the schools that house special education programs selected?(Is size considered?)

We have 8 elementary academic interventionist. They are assigned to the elementary schools based on need. Each middle school has an assigned Reading Interventionist. Adding additional support in the form of interventionist is always a consideration when we begin our budgetary conversations.

In regards to class size, our district maintains class size ratios that are below the state mandated class size ratios.

What is the district doing to attract more special needs teachers?

The District has put into place Layers of Support for our ESE teachers of all levels.

The itinerant ESE staff now have assigned schools that they are attached to, getting to know the ESE teachers, students as well as parental concerns. The Itinerant ESE staff assigned to the schools will be available to observe, model instruction, behavior management, and other strategies needed in the classroom.

Professional development has been provided for areas of math (IReady), Reading (Lindamood-Bell) and Social Skills (TeachTown). Training continues throughout the year. PLC's for all groups meet monthly as well. Both the ESE Director and Assistant Director are available to contact for information as well as to come to the school for assistance.

Is the district considering any incentives to try and retain teachers?

The district is continuously evaluating our recruitment and retention plan. One of the strategies implemented last year for teacher retention was our Learning to Rock orientation for all new certified teachers in the district. We hired an additional .5 teacher support specialist to support our first year teachers in addition to assigning each first year teacher a mentor. Last year, we administered our first job satisfaction survey. Data from that survey will be used to guide school and district leaders in retention efforts. Each school has been asked to consider having a retention and recruitment team that will work all year on school specific retention and recruitment strategies. If you are interested on serving on that team, please let your administrator know. Dr. Campbell also has a district retention and recruitment committee if you have interested or have suggestions for that team, please reach out to her.

Most teacher accountability measures seem to be done through observations and paperwork that are planned in advance. Now every five years we have to do formal lesson plans and ADEPT observations, which are again, planned in advance. Most teachers can be prepared for those few days, and perform satisfactorily. However, wouldn't teacher accountability be more effective if the required paperwork was randomly checked (for timeliness and accuracy)? Wouldn't teacher accountability be more effective if they are observed randomly to see that they are teaching engaging, research-based lessons? That may eliminate some of the accountability paperwork that we have to do, which takes our time and attention away from the actual work of teaching the children

The planned teacher observations are those observations that are in place for summative evaluation instruments designed by the state. The expectation is that school leadership is continuously working with teachers, observing (announced and unannounced), and providing feedback. Last year principals were charged with completing 100 classroom observations with quality feedback for the teachers in their building. This year, principals have been charged to ensure that each teacher and each PLC team are observed, and given quality feedback, at least once by them or an AP before the end of the first semester.

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As far as security at the high school level, are there any long term plans to make schools safer besides a security entrance (metal detectors, clear book bags, etc.)?

In recent weeks, a heightened awareness and vigilance by students and staff has resulted in weapons being found on high school campuses. This is alarming, yet comforting to recognize our students and staff feel safe to share information that helps to make our campuses more secure. You are likely aware it is against South Carolina law to bring a weapon onto school property. The consequence is severe, including possible expulsion, arrest, and prosecution. Beginning this week (October 23), we are adapting our procedures to be even more proactive to ensure the safety of our students, staff, and guests. As allowed by state law and board policy, we will begin random on-campus weapons screenings as a means to help deter or prevent weapons from being brought on to school grounds.

Additionally, we are improving several other aspects of our overall campus safety and security efforts, including a relaunch of our "See Something / Do Something" campaign. More information will be shared soon about the various ways tips can be submitted, including anonymous two-way text messages, phone, and online through school websites. As we prepare to host a district safety and security summit next month that will include law enforcement and other community partners. Please share your questions and concerns with us at www.rock-hill.k12.sc.us/safety.

Why are students who are going into a choice program, that has vacancies, screened or tested and accepted or denied enrollment if they are a mid-year enrollee when traditional schools don't have the luxury of denying a student access because they are not a good "fit."

We only screen in Immersion, and we screen every child for language proficiency so that struggling with language doesn't hinder a student from learning the content.

As the representative for our school this session, I have asked my colleagues to share areas of concern. The biggest concern we have right now is assaulting of teachers from students. As a first grade teacher, one would think this doesn't happen often, but it has occurred recently multiple times in our hallway. How do we handle these situations as professionals, and how should we expect our administrators to handle this moving forward? Along those same lines, how do we notify our administrators of help from more than one person? If the situation has escalated that much, what is the professional way to notify multiple people if calling over the radio isn't working?

Teachers and staff should expect to feel and be safe. We know that students have various developmental needs and these should be addressed as such by those who work most closely with each student. In certain situations, behavior plans may be needed and should be developed. Our district has several supports in place to address behavior. Teachers are encouraged to work directly with school administration and school security committee to address site safety for specific needs.

Mr. Kevin Wren, Director of Safety, Security, and Emergency Management, may also be contacted to support school's and team members to address specific needs and questions.

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GENERAL FEEDBACK

"I appreciate you giving us opportunities to build relationships within our district."

"I just wanted to say thank you ALL so much for a wonderful morning. I truly enjoyed the Listen & Learn event, and I am so excited to know these will continue through the school year. I am proud and thankful to be a part of a district that is making a point to not only communicate to us out in the "field" so to speak, but who also values our input and concerns."



NEXT TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

WILL BE HELD FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16

SUBMIT QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TO YOUR SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE

STAY CONNECTED



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