

One Team One Mission One Rock Hill

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



ROCK HILL
Schools

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Dear Team Rock Hill,

This school year, we have sharpened our focus to set a clear vision and have worked to be clear along the way. In four weeks, we have a tremendous opportunity to realize significant progress toward our collective goal and vision for 2020 and beyond. On March 31, our community will vote on the \$294.8 million bond referendum. Over the past 18 months, we have listened to you and have incorporated your input and feedback into The ONE Plan. As we move toward March 31st, I remind all employees of our responsibility and limitations in how we share information about the plan and the projects that will help to transform our community and school district. Please be aware of the "Referendum Do's and Don'ts", which are provided on the next page, to ensure we all remain in compliance with South Carolina state ethics laws. Please vote March 31.

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 February 2020 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.



THE FOCUS FIVE

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



Click to watch an overview video of why we believe The ONE Plan is best for students, teachers, and the entire Rock Hill community.

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. All past response documents are available on our website, www.rock-hill.k12.sc.us/tll.

Working together as One Team on One Mission for One Rock Hill, we will move our district forward to be the best!

Sincerely,

Bill Cook
Superintendent

Referendum Do's & Don'ts

Guidance for Rock Hill Schools Employees

When it comes to referenda, the School District, its Board members and employees have the same fundamental civic responsibilities and privileges as any other citizen when they are "off the clock". When "on the clock," however, state law does regulate certain conduct of employees surrounding elections, i.e. referenda. According to section 8-13-1346 of the South Carolina Ethics Reform Act of 1991, employees and Board members are strictly prohibited from using public funds, property, or time to influence an election. The key word to keep in mind is "influence." In other words, public employees "on the clock" are prohibited from telling people how to vote -- yes or no -- or from soliciting support or opposition. However, the law does not prevent employees from using funds, property or time to provide information about the referendum and the importance of voting.

✓ What you CAN do ✓

- Explain the School District's planning process and rationale for the referendum. How did the School District determine its financial needs? How will the money be used?
- Provide a description of the ballot measure, including the question, the cost, the tax impact, and the scope of proposals.
- Answer questions about the potential impact of passage or failure.
- Develop, print, and distribute fact sheets.
- Sponsor and hold information sessions.
- Provide voter registration support and information.
- Provide polling place information.
- Remind employees and citizens to vote in all elections.
- Board members can advocate as aggressively as possible - so long as no public resources are directly or indirectly used in the process.

✗ What you CAN'T do ✗

- Promote the support for or against the ballot measure.
- Collect funds to support a vote yes or no campaign.
- Print, copy, email, or mail any materials advocating a particular vote, i.e. "Vote Yes March 31."
- Send emails or make phone calls which either support or oppose the ballot measure on School District time.
- Use drivers to advocate a particular vote.
- Wear T-shirts or buttons that advocate a yes or no vote while on the clock.
- Display signs on buses that advocate a yes or no vote.
- Organize "Vote Yes" or "Vote No" rallies.

Be Careful of the Pitfalls

- Using School District computers, e-mails, phones to organize support for the referendum.
- Remember that communications using official devices can be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Based on the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, SECTION 8-13-765 and SECTION 8-13-1346.

Adapted from Francenia B. Heizer, Esquire of the McNair Law Firm,, P.A.

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ROCK HILL SCHOOLS DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM



DR. BILL COOK
SUPERINTENDENT
WCOOK@RHMAIL.ORG



DR. TANYA CAMPBELL
CHIEF OF PERSONNEL
TCAMPBEL@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.



DR. JOHN JONES
CHIEF OF ACADEMICS
& ACCOUNTABILITY
JAJONES@RHMAIL.ORG



DR. LUANNE KOKOLIS
CHIEF OF STRATEGIC PLANNING,
ENGAGEMENT, & PROGRAM
SUPPORT
LKOKOLIS@RHMAIL.ORG



TONY COX
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS
ACOX@RHMAIL.ORG



TERRI SMITH
CHIEF OF FINANCE
TRSMITH@RHMAIL.ORG



JOHN JAMES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF TECHNOLOGY
JJAMES@RHMAIL.ORG



BRIAN VAUGHAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF FACILITIES
BVAUGHN@RHMAIL.ORG



DR. KEITH WILKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
STUDENT SERVICES
VWILKS@RHMAIL.ORG



DR. JOYA HOLMES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
& SCHOOL CHOICE
JHOLMES@RHMAIL.ORG



DR. MISSY BRAKEFIELD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
MBRAKEFI@RHMAIL.ORG



JENNIFER MORRISON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
JLMORRISON@RHMAIL.ORG



JAMES BROWN, JR.
DIRECTOR OF SAFETY & SECURITY
JEBROWN@RHMAIL.ORG



MYCHAL FROST
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
& COMMUNICATIONS
MFROST@RHMAIL.ORG

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What steps are being implemented so that students coming from other countries have a smooth transition? Is there a liaison in every school to help these families with said transitions? Are the dynamics of these new families taken into consideration?

We made advancement in this area during the 2019-2020 school year by establishing an International Welcome Center, which is located at the Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center (formerly The Children's School at Sylvia Circle). We have an assistant there who is bi-lingual in Spanish and sets up meetings with international families that are enrolling in Rock Hill Schools. Registration, resources, and other assistance is provided to assist with the assimilation of students and families into their learning environments in Rock Hill Schools. We do look at how we can use our resources to support families in this process.

In reviewing our South Carolina KRA test scores from this year, we are concerned about our class size and how we meet the needs of our students. In our Title 1 school, data shows that 85% of our current Kindergarten students are performing at an approaching or emerging level for beginning Kindergarten, meaning that they are only demonstrating minimal or some foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for a curriculum based on Kindergarten standards. Our classes have maintained an average of 25 students since the beginning of school. Does the district have a plan to support smaller class sizes in Kindergarten, especially in Title 1 schools, to better prepare our students for school?

District leadership reviews projected school enrollment numbers and staffing needs at the beginning of each school year. In addition, class sizes are monitored throughout the year and adjustments are made as needed related to staffing. Title I Schools have the opportunity to develop a detailed Title I plan each school year based on stakeholder input and a needs assessment review. Through stakeholder input and support, the leadership teams at Title I Schools can discuss strategies for reducing class sizes where needed, such as using Title I funds to pay for additional teachers to reduce class sizes. Through the ONE Plan, Rock Hill Schools is exploring opportunities to expand Pre-K programs in our district to allow us to serve more students prior to entering kindergarten.

Will any changes be made to the 2020 - 2021 calendar if the education bill passes and allows for schools to start earlier?

It remains early in the legislative session and it is difficult to know what the education reform bill will evolve into once the Senate and House convene a conference committee to work through variances in each chamber's wording. Should any start date flexibility remain in the final bill, there is uncertainty as to when the change would be implemented. We are supportive of increased local flexibility for school start dates and remain optimistic there will be positive outcomes this year in the General Assembly.

We know that the district has developed specific plans to update/improve each school if the bond referendum is passed and we receive the necessary funds. Has the district also already prioritized which schools will be the first to receive these funds - and, if so, what factors determined which schools are first priority?

The projects list in part 6 of the ONE Plan were prioritized by the Pathfinders Master Planning Team of community stakeholders, school and district personnel according to:

- The priority of the investment areas: Safety, Security and Savings investments first, Modern Learner's Environment projects next, and then projects for Building Life Ready Students.
- Within each investment area, individual projects were prioritized, in general, according to the importance of the project to the One Mission of Rock Hill Schools, the urgency of the work itself due to price stability and market factors, and the capability of the district's construction forces to execute the work in a five year period.
- Particular renovation, modernization or replacement projects were also prioritized according to the campus's condition, age, state of codes compliance and program needs (relative to the other school campuses).

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Is there anyway to make the report card process easier as it pertains to putting in grades.

Our grading processes are guided by the capabilities and limitations we have within our systems. Each step is critical to ensuring everything works properly. We are constantly looking at ways within the systems to improve our processes where feasible. Our revision of the K-2 district report card has been completed, and PowerSchool is in the process of refining the copying/processing part of the document. We have received overall positive feedback on the revisions. We will continue to review our processes based on feedback with our instructional technology staff regarding all our K-5 report cards to see if there are ways to make this easier in Canvas and/or PowerSchool. If you have any specific suggestions or concerns, please email Chris Odom (codom@rhmail.org) or John Jones (jajones@rhmail.org).



I have a huge concern regarding our lower level readers in 4th and 5th grade. We have too many students coming who are significantly below grade level. We provide reading recovery for younger students but not higher students? Every year, I have a child who I send for eval and do not qualify for special services. Then, when our tutor or interventionists pull students, they are only allowed to pull certain students (seems like the bubble kids mostly). I get that those children have a shot at making mastery on state testing, but I think it is a disservice to those struggling students to not provide services especially in reading. I easily have 6 children reading below grade level. 2 of them now have a reading tutor...great! But what about the others? We need more reading intervention at our school. We have amazing interventionists and tutors! Mrs. ---, Mrs. ---, Mrs. ---, and Mrs. --- have helped make huge gains for our students. But reading intervention for reading in the upper grades.... is few and far between which is ridiculous for a title one school. I understand that we are putting the majority of our man power into K-2, but we need more support in our upper elementary grades

Schools with additional support, such as Title I Academic Interventionists or Reading Recovery, must have a Title I plan inclusive of positions funded based on a needs assessment at the school level. The Title I plan is a document that is developed based on stakeholder input and is needs assessment driven. All positions within the plan must have detailed documentation collected throughout the school year related to students served, services received and assessment results to denote impact instructionally. Please contact your building administrator for additional information related to specifics pertaining to the Title I plan.

For schools receiving a District Academic Interventionist, meetings are held in the fall with administrators and Central Office Instructional staff to review MAP Reading data and Fountas and Pinnell data to further identify areas of need for schools. To identify the areas of most need, we focus on the number and percent of students at or below the 45th percentile on MAP and scoring "Approaches Expectations" or "Does Not Meet Expectations" on Fountas and Pinnell, based on the Instructional Level Expectations for Reading guidelines published by Heinemann. Referenced F&P Document <http://www.fountasandpinnell.com/resourcelibrary/id/334>. As a priority item, elementary principals have requested that all schools receive a District Academic Interventionist for the 2020-2021 school year. This request has been submitted as part of the budget consideration process.

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I have asked this question each time and nobody has been given an answer about our district vaping policy. I have concerns that it has been going on for sometime in high school but know of 2 cases in elementary schools this year. What is the district's plan for disciplinary action other than just taking the vapes from students?

The following response was provided in December for a similar question about vaping. 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. District staff will be reviewing and revising policies and consider making additional suggestions to ensure the safety of students.

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.

Years ago we were paid twice a month but the district changed it to once a month to save money. For those of us with one income it is difficult to budget so far out, especially on a razor thin teacher salary. Can we investigate going to biweekly paychecks? According to the Bureau of Labor only 10% of American employers pay monthly. Approximately 35% are paid weekly, another 35% paid biweekly, and the remainder are paid in hybrid/semimonthly model (Note: source of statistics not included as it is for private sector employee groups, which we are not).



All four York County school districts pay employees monthly. Teachers have been paid monthly for more than 40 years. Other employee groups have been paid at different intervals, but in 2018, all pay periods were aligned to be monthly. At that time, personal budgeting sessions were offered to impacted groups.

When teachers are moved from school to school to cover shortages on short notice can we give them a stipend as a thank you? As it stands now it's move or lose your job. A brief apologetic phone call from the CO and \$250-\$500 stipend would go a long way towards keeping teachers.

Unfortunately due to circumstances out of our control, we may have no other option but to move a staff member prior to and after school begins. Employees are reminded they are district employees and as such, their job location can change to meet the needs of the students in our district. At this time, there is no budget set aside to pay a stipend when staff members are moved. This is something that we can consider during the 2020-2021 budget process. It is a reasonable request and expectation to have a district representative to call and discuss. We will work to improve in this area.

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What are the plans moving forward with the school district's Unique Pathway programs? The number of students in each level and every age is incredibly high, resulting in poor morale and therefore poor retention of qualified special education teachers.

During the last few years, our students with disabilities requiring the Unique Pathways programming and services have increased rapidly. There are a variety of legal and logistical concerns that we must consider as the district determines where to house the programs. A few considerations include how many UP programs will be housed in one school and the ages/grades of the students with disabilities that require this placement. Also, under IDEA, we must offer education and services to students with disabilities at their home school or school closest to their residence. For the 2019-2020 school year, we looked at each child in our Unique Pathways Programs, with a specific focus on Unique Pathways 1, and determined that more programs were needed to reduce overcrowding. In reviewing all students' home addresses, we were able to find appropriate spaces at elementary schools throughout the district and successfully reduced student bus ride times to and from school each day. We are now reviewing other Unique Pathways Programming (pre-K to 12) and students requiring these programs for the 2020-2021 school year. The same process will be followed to find appropriate space in schools that are close to or at the home school of each student served.



When our schools are rented out to community groups, we understand that the money raised does not go back to the individual school, but goes into a general fund operated by the district. What allowances are being made for wear and tear on equipment such as sound systems, lighting boards, projectors, scoreboards, etc. Would it be possible for a portion of the proceeds to go back to the school being rented to help defer the costs of updating equipment when replacements need to be ordered?

Any proceeds that the district receives from facility rentals pays for salaries and benefits for employees working the event and for utilities. Replacement of equipment such as sound systems, lighting boards, projectors, scoreboards, etc. are items that would be purchased with capital funding provided by the district. Principals should include these items when providing budget needs to the Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer during budget season.

According to the employee handbook, elementary teachers are required to work a total of 39.5 hours a week and middle/high school teachers are required to work a total of 37.5 hours a week. Why are elementary teachers required to work 2 extra hours a week and also have a shorter planning time?

The work day is based on the length of the school day. To adjust the work hours, there would need to be a change in the length of the school day for either elementary or secondary. Further conversation will be had to address this questions

Some of the retired teachers who come in and tutor wonder if there is a way to be paid so that retirement does not have to be taken out of their already small check? These are people that come in for just a few hours a week.

Due to the nature of this position, tutors cannot go through Kelly Services. All district employees must have retirement withheld per legislative and PEBA requirements.

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Why are the middle schools and high schools not being monitored by district math coaches and reading coaches, and other content areas like elementary? Elementary teachers are slammed with weekly walk-throughs and observations. Secondary needs to have the same expectations as elementary as far as accountability and student engagement. Look at their scores!

Secondary teachers have the same expectations that are based on the curriculum and instruction at the middle and high school levels. District-level coaches work with school-based instructional coaches, assistant principals, and principals to support high expectations for classroom teaching and learning. Elementary and secondary schools are engaged with instructional rounds and formative assessments that are accomplished cooperatively through the Instruction Department. We continue to review student performance scores at each level and offer professional development, coaching, and access to district resources at each level.

When will the next round of Clear Touch boards be given out? Some teachers have been promised a board, but have yet to receive it. Last spring teachers were asked to fill out a form if they were interested in getting a ClearTouch Panel yet none have been issued. Why have no more ClearTouch Panels been issued to teachers?



Two panels (Promethean ActivPanel and ClearTouch) were evaluated in the fall with a goal of selecting one of the panels for purchase. In January, principals sent representatives to participate in presentations with representatives of both companies. Feedback was collected and was shared with the Technology Council, and a recommendation will be made to purchase by next week.

If the referendum is approved and Sullivan is replaced, any idea where it will be built, and will all of our Athletic facilities be on site?

At this time, no decisions have been about where the new middle school would be built. Possibilities include demolishing the current school and rebuilding on site or purchasing property on which we could build the new middle school. If the bond referendum is approved, then immediate work by our facilities department will begin to discuss and decide with input from stakeholders.

Why does Rock Hill Schools require high school students to take a math course every year, while the state simply requires 4 math credits? Based on the failure rate of students enrolled in a fifth math course, Is there a plan to discuss and modify the math requirements within our district?

RHS Board Policy IKE and Administrative Rule IKE-R (revised 2015) require that students be enrolled in at least one English and one math course each of the four years of high school. This policy was put in place to ensure Rock Hill Schools graduates do not leave the district with a significant gap in mathematics, reading, and writing as they enter postsecondary education or the workforce. Further, district policy supports requirements provided by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in South Carolina for entering college freshmen, which indicate graduates should have at least four units of English and math, including a higher-level math taken before or during the senior year. At this point in time, there is no plan to modify this policy in our district.

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Can we establish a district policy for duties before 7:30 for teachers since the classroom demands have increased?

Our district policy states that we provide adequate supervision of students. Based on factors such as arrival time of buses, it may be necessary for administration to require staff members to come early to assist with student supervision.

Is showing students grades in a data chart a FERPA violation? This puts teachers with their own children at the same school in a compromising position.

If there is no way to identify which grades belong to individual students, there should not be a violation of FERPA. To further discuss this concern, please contact Dr. Wilks, Executive Director of Student Services.

How was 4th grade chosen to be the grade with tutors...wouldn't it be better to catch them earlier?

Based upon district test data, 4th grade is identified across the district as an area tutoring can support in helping students catch up on core skills from previous grades and provide remediation. Early intervention and remediation is necessary as well.



I am concerned that Speech-Language Pathologist and Resource Teachers caseloads are too high, based on service time, complexity, and number of students that we are having to carry per person. Paperwork and meetings are becoming the forefront rather than having adequate time to plan and serve the diverse needs of our students.

The ESE Department, along with Personnel is closely scrutinizing the caseloads of our resource teachers and our SLP's. The state of South Carolina has guidance on a "cap" for resource teachers per "head count", however, in Rock Hill Schools, the ESE Department considers both headcount and "workload". Resource teachers are then allocated to schools based on the higher number. Recommendations for the 2020-2021 school year are in motion based on current and projected student count, as well as workload. Throughout the school year, we monitor the caseloads of each resource teacher and speech therapist in elementary, middle and high school as students transfer in and out. The ESE department monitors the caseloads of our SLP's guided by ASHA. Recommendations for the 2020-2021 school year are in motion based on current and projected student count requiring speech and language services.

Has the district considered the addition of reading tutors similar to the math tutor positions?

Yes. Providing tutors is a budgetary request for 2020-2021. Tutoring and intervention are always needed; however, allocating funding falls within the priorities for supporting all needs within the district. If funding becomes available through the budget, we certainly could consider expansion of tutoring and intervention services.

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How are the eLearning dates determined, and could more clarification be provided for K-2 teachers as to when packets should be sent home? What is the procedure for eLearning and make-up days?

eLearning is used on designated make-up days, or if we have the time to prepare for a school closure due to weather, emergency, etc., the eLearning day can be used on the actual day missed. If an eLearning Day takes place, teachers, parents, and students will be informed during the closing announcements made by Mr. Frost via district communication systems. Thank you for requesting more clarification. As a result, we have produced a teacher information sheet in addition to the FAQ that is on our current webpage, www.rock-hill.k12.sc.us/elearning.



What support other than itinerant teachers does the district provide to assist with students with Autism in the general education classroom? Does the district have plans to develop programs that help target the needs of students with Autism at the elementary level?

Students with autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have a variety of needs and are as unique and individual as all other students with disabilities. However, there are common challenges such as limited social skills and sensory issues. The Behavior Management Assistants (BMA's), in all elementary schools and Central Child Development Center, are trained to work with students with ASD. The roles of the Itinerant ESE staff and BMA are to work with the classroom teacher to model strategies and approaches for student success. All elementary schools have sensory rooms and sensory pathways. Any staff member can assist the student with ASD, however, most often the BMA will remove the student from the classroom, work with that student to lower anxiety or overstimulation, and return to the general classroom. Under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act), students with ASD as well as all students with other determined disabilities must access the general curriculum and general education classroom to the extent possible in light of their unique circumstances. This is called the Least Restrictive Environment. There are students with ASD that may require more services and programming at the elementary level. The ESE Department is also working with other departments to consider creative programming for students that may require more services due to their ASD challenges for the 2020-2021 school year.

Sometimes there are no substitutes available for last minute sick absences. What is our district doing about the need for substitute teachers?

We continue to recruit quality substitutes. We have a Kelly representative housed in our district several times a week. Kelly Services is now offering incentives and bonuses to their substitutes. This year, we increased the amount we pay our daily substitutes. It is our hope that all of these efforts will help to decrease the number of unfilled substitute vacancies.

STAY CONNECTED



@ROCKHILLSCHOOLS

📍 386 E. Black Street
Rock Hill, SC 29730

✉ communications@rhmail.org
🌐 www.rock-hill.k12.sc.us

☎ 803.981.1000 (phone)
803.981.1094 (fax)