

One Team One Mission One Rock Hill

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



ROCK HILL
Schools

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



Dear Team Rock Hill,

We've made it 2020, and I hope you can see it. We began the school year by articulating a clear vision and a shared vision. We are each blessed to work with and love our 17,549 students. Your passion and commitment to improving student outcomes each and every day continue to impress me. Thank you for helping to make a difference in our community as we work together as One Team on One Mission for One Rock Hill. Each of you continue to use your gifts to make this an amazing place that remains focused on doing what is best for our students every day. It has been a joy to observe the level of student engagement during my visits to schools, and I continue to be impressed by the outstanding educators and staff in our school district. I encourage you to continue focusing on our shared vision to improve learning outcomes for all students.

THE FOCUS FIVE

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

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

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

Superintendent

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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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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 run 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. Principals should include these items when providing budget needs to the Superintendent and Chief Finance Officer during budget season.

Is there a stipend or compensation to teachers when additional job duties are required during the interim period of a position being filled? If not, please consider.

When teachers are asked to teach classes due to a long term employment vacancy , those teachers do receive compensation.

We consistently have students waiting 30-45 after dismissal for their bus to arrive and bring them home. Why is this happening?

Our Transportation Department is working hard to eliminate late buses. We have a very complex transportation system. Using 110 buses, our 119 drivers transport 8,500 students per day covering more than 600 routes and 10,189 miles per day. We have recently hired a firm to conduct an efficiency study and we will be implementing several of their recommendations, including a GPS tracking system for our buses. This tracking system is in its final stages of testing and will be fully operational by the end of February. In addition, we are always looking to hire and train additional drivers.

According to the 10 year Master Plan, the Flex Center's "Tentative Start Date" for change/renovation is 2022 with an estimated cost of \$2,000,000.00. However, in the Master Plan, there are no details unlike all the other site descriptions listed in the plan. Why are there no details listed in the Master Plan like the other sites? The temperature on Renaissance hall can drop into the 50's on cold days. The heating system was designed to have open doors throughout the building but the security doors prevent air exchange. The halls also have no duct work and the building has multiple heating/air units attached to specific rooms, which costs a significant amount to run. Is there a plan to expedite moving the Flex Center programs to a more suitable location prior to the "Tentative Start Date"?

The project titled "Alterations and Upgrades, Selected Program Relocations" is intended to support vacation and reassignment of district functions from Flexible Learning Center at Flint Street Extension. Actual relocations and timetable will be the result of the coordination of other Master Plan projects with a goal to optimize the execution of all projects while minimizing the impact to learning across the district.

Not a question but THANK YOU SO MUCH for the professional development day and work day after our winter break this year. It made for very productive days learning and growing as an educator as well as becoming more organized and ready to take on the second semester of school.

Thank you for the feedback.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

While it is still early on in the legislative session, does the district have a tentative plan or idea for how five additional workdays will be added to the 2020-2021 calendar? Would they be spread out throughout the year or placed at the beginning? Would they be fully used as teacher workday without any meetings and/or professional development or will those additional days be a combination? Also, with the potential of an earlier start date, would the district be looking to redo the already approved calendar? If so, would a calendar committee meet to discuss any changes or will those decisions be made by the district office?

It remains early in the legislative session, and as such it is too presumptuous to know which amendments will pass in the "Education Reform Bill" S.419. Should the additional five contract days remain in the final bill, it is unlikely the change would be implemented for the 2020-2021 school year. As designed, the five additional days are teacher work days, and a district calendar committee would convene to recommend the best placement of the days. Also included in S.419 is an amendment to allow districts more flexibility with the school start date.

Support with managing behavior issues

The District has been able to offer professional development, during staff meetings and/or on PD days in areas such as Crisis Prevention Intervention, and classroom behavior management strategies. Itinerant ESE staff are available to work with classroom teachers and offer hands-on strategies for students with challenging behaviors. For the last 3 years, online modules, such as 321 Insights, are available for all certified and non-certified staff to view practical approaches to areas such as de-escalation, avoiding power struggles, etc.

All elementary schools and CCDC have a Behavior Management Assistant, or BMA, that is able to work with children demonstrating challenging behaviors, offer small groups and model behavioral strategies for individual classroom teachers and children. This school year, behavior management PD has been offered for teacher assistants at the preschool and elementary level.

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).

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Are there any plans to bring back the self-contained classes for special needs children? More and more these children are being mainstreamed into the classroom with no support. The teachers are not trained in special education. How is this beneficial to both the student and the others in the regular education classroom who have so much of their teacher's time taken away from them, dealing with issues that the child can not help?

There are self-contained programs for students with significant disabilities throughout the district. To prepare for the 2019-2020 school year, self-contained classrooms were reorganized to allow students with disabilities to attend either their home school or the school nearest to their home. Most schools house at least one specialized self-contained program. However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that students with disabilities are served in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Most of the time, the LRE is the general classroom with ESE support.

Is there anyway that a reading interventionist can be placed at every school? At the present moment, only Title 1 schools are eligible, but all schools have children who need extra help in reading. If not, could the job description of the literacy coach be changed to allow them to work with small groups, since most of them are reading recovery trained?

As we begin budget discussions for 2020-2021, Elementary Principals' top priority is to have an Academic Interventionist placed at each school. As with all budget considerations, this request will be part of a larger budget process in terms of what will be funded for next school year. The State of South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) provides funding for school-based literacy coaches to work directly with teachers to bring about improvements in the classrooms that impact student achievement and literacy. Each District must sign a Memorandum of Agreement for school-based literacy coaches regarding requirements for funding, use of funds and clearly defined roles of the coach.

In 2019-2020, flexibility was given to schools where 80% of students were meeting standards in reading according to SC Ready or other assessments to submit a waiver to have an Academic Interventionist in lieu of a Literacy Coach. Only one school met the criteria, and a waiver was submitted. This school split the approved position to serve as a .50 Coach and .50 Interventionist.



Why do the middle schools and high schools have special classes for their autistic kids but elementary schools do not? Why do our students who have moderate to severe autism have no support, as our hard-of-hearing students do? Why are they not at least provided with shadows? Most classroom teachers seem to understand that putting moderately to severely autistic students in general education classrooms is NOT inclusion. It is simply putting them in a classroom with a general education teacher who has no training or experience in helping autistic students (most teachers I have spoken with either had no college course or only one semester of special education). As a result, the autistic student is left to flounder on his/her own.

Students with disabilities must have access to the general curriculum. The IEP team determines to what extent the students have access to the general education curriculum, with or without additional supports, as well as what may be necessary to meet the students' unique circumstances. Students that are on the Autism Spectrum, like all students with special needs, have an IEP team that will make the determination of how best to offer special education services, accommodations and programming. There are always considerations for specialized programming for unique populations throughout the school year.

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I have a concern that the benchmark tests aren't very developmentally appropriate (from 2nd grade teacher). Based on the law, elementary students should have certain amount of health education minutes; is there a plan to accommodate teachers with resources to help meet the required minutes?

Our goals with benchmark tests are to provide a formative tool to help teachers to keep students on track for success. All tests are to be age and grade level appropriate. For grade levels in which a benchmark is offered, the instruction department is conducting teacher surveys following the assessment to monitor and determine the efficacy of providing this tool. Additionally, conversation and feedback is occurring with principals regarding such formative assessments. This has also been discussed at past Teacher Listen and Learn where staff has sought input. If you wish to offer any additional feedback, please contact Dr. Missy Brakefield, Elementary Director (mbrakefi@rhmail.org) or Ms. Jennifer Morrison, Secondary Director (jimmorrison@rhmail.org).

District staff has communicated with the State Department of Education (SDE) over the past two years regarding the adoption of health books and resources. Unfortunately, funding has not been allocated from the SDE for purchase of these needed materials. Thus, we will need to request funding in the budget to acquire resources to support elementary health materials. We will continue to work on meeting this need.

The Kindergarten thru 2nd Grade Technology Committee has never met. We have been asking for 3 years for a replacement device for the iPads in K-2. Is funding the issue?

This is in process with two meetings that will take place in February and March with the first meeting scheduled for February 19. Funding is being put into place for devices and support as this is an immediate need. The Instruction Department has already begun the process of collecting feedback on what is needed for teaching and learning with devices at the K-2 level, and the teachers will be included in this process during the spring.

The District needs a procedure in place for notifications when a student transfers or leaves the District. We currently have no procedure in place to retrieve library books and laptops since the responsible parties are not notified. Is it the responsibility of the Power School Clerks or the Assistant Principals?

This is a school-based process that is put into place at each site for collecting books, laptops, and other school property. Many schools use their own "check out" lists when a student aims to transfer or leave a school. The suggestion to develop a uniform "check out" process that can be implemented across the district will be considered.



Most of our elementary teachers have requested that student laptops remain at school. This ensures the laptops are available, fully charged and in working order. Has the District weighed the cost-benefit for repairing and replacing devices versus allowing the laptops to remain at school and ready to use?

Rock Hill Schools' began its personal mobile computing initiative several years ago with a commitment that students in grades 3-12 would have access to devices 24 hours a day, seven days a week should their parents choose. Device access gives students access to the most current information available through the Internet and our Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas. A Technology Protection Plan document assists parents in understanding the student responsibilities if a device is taken home. As Rock Hill Schools continues to implement technology resources and provide digital access, the costs for repairs and considerations for devices at school will be monitored and considered.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Kindergarten teachers have really been excited about implementing the Lucy Calkins reading and phonics workshops. Both are developmentally appropriate, and have been helping students become strong readers and writers. We have noticed that the writers workshop is much more advanced learning than the readers and phonics. For example, in readers workshop students are practicing reading patterned books, but for writers workshop they are expected to write how to books that hold no pattern. Most of the lessons are above the children's ability levels. We have addressed these concerns with our literacy coaches and district literacy personnel. Could we look at the writing curriculum to make it more developmentally aligned with the readers and phonics curriculum?

Our district has adopted a balanced literacy model. As a part of this model, Writing Workshop is a framework for writing instruction. In order for students to become successful writers, there must be a balance. The Calkins Units are a common resource available to our elementary schools. These units support the Writing Workshop framework and they also align to our SC Standards. The Calkins Writing Units of Study were purchased by the district for all teachers in order to bring consistency and rigor across the district. There are also many other resources which can be utilized to provide student support or teaching possibilities.

As with any resource used in any classroom, a teacher must follow the needs of his or her students. At any point before, during, and after a unit, the teacher always has the option to add additional units or lessons to meet the needs of the class. Mini lessons within the Calkins Units of study can also be tailored to specific needs of a class. In addition to Writing Workshop, Shared Writing and Interactive Writing are also critical for developing student writing skills and writing processes.

To speak directly to the Calkins Writing Units, Lucy Calkins, who is the Editor and co-author of the series, speaks to this in the front matter of each unit as well as the Pathways book and the If/Then book. There are 4 units provided. For Kindergarten, the first unit is Launching Writing Workshop, which helps the teacher to set up the structures of workshop and exposes the students to all 3 types of writing (opinion, informational, and narrative.) The purpose of this unit is simply exposure. At the end of this unit, if the teacher feels that the majority of students are not ready for the narrative unit, the teacher may choose to provide some additional supportive instruction. Many schools have begun using the Show and Tell unit which teaches the students to go from labeling to patterned books. This If/Then unit has been very well-received. If there are any other follow up questions, please contact the District Literacy Coaches, Dr. Susan Green sgreen@rhmail.org or Liz Bridges ebridges@rhmail.org.



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.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

What is the benefit of make-up school? Seems that students are continually given opportunities to make it up but the students still do not come. Then when they do make up time, it seems like its Make Up School year round.

According to South Carolina law, high schools must ensure students attend at least 120 hours of class before providing credit for a one-credit course. Make-up school is provided to help students meet the state seat time requirement so credit can be awarded. Our high schools are continually working to communicate attendance requirements to students and families and provide productive ways in which seat time can be made up and documented appropriately. If you have ideas about how make-up school and other make-up structures can work better at your school, please reach out to your principal or Jennifer Morrison, Executive Director of Secondary Education.

Recently, teachers listened to presentations from ClearTouch and Promethean for the new boards. When will a decision be made on which board will be purchased and when will the teachers that were approved to get boards get them?

On Wednesday January 28, information from the presentations was shared with the Technology Council where their guidance was sought to help determine the most appropriate panel for our district. The data included teacher feedback that was gathered at the panel demonstrations. Once the panel manufacturer is selected, we will be able to order soon thereafter. We expect a fairly quick turnaround as both companies have stock nearby.

The Governor of SC has proposed putting K4 programs into all school districts across our state. Taking into account what our school district already has in place, what changes do you see occurring?



Gov. Henry McMaster has made a general announcement as part of his budget regarding his desire to expand full-day preschool options for parents in South Carolina. However, no specific guidelines, requirements, or resources have been shared with school districts. Once the district receives this information, communication will follow regarding any plans or changes. As the district plans forward it is the intent to expand our pre-K programming.

Please review the district's plans to accommodate the increasing numbers of students in the Unique Pathways classrooms and the possible new programs or classes for these students.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the District added additional Unique Pathways classrooms as well as reorganized these specialized programs to be located in the student's home school or as close as possible. Throughout this school year, ESE has had an influx of students requiring a self-contained program, such as our Unique Pathways. The District team is now looking at what additional programs will be needed for the 2020-2021 school year to meet the additional student increases.

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What efforts are being made to provide more collaborative opportunities for related arts teachers? While we are grateful for a district-level coordinator, having time together allows us to effectively plan vertically and horizontally which we have not had the opportunity to do in over a decade. Currently, we have one set date for this (OEC in October), which does not allow for much time due to the rigorous schedule of other sessions provided.



The district is open to furthering opportunities for collaboration during the school year. This can be discussed and supported by Ms. Kim Grant, Arts and Technology Specialist, to explore opportunities for arts teachers to get together and network. We will work with Ms. Grant at kgrant@rhmail.org to develop.

What is the long-term plan for handling the mental health crisis facing our students? Is there a plan to bring more mental health counselors that are employed by the district into the schools?

As the 2019 statistics on mental health for children ages 5-18 are published, we see that Rock Hill Schools are not alone providing for our students living with ACE's, trauma and other emotional challenges. It is the District's position that all staff and administration must become trauma informed, know about ACE's, form relationships with our students and teach to their strengths. The District has added an additional Catawba Mental Health service provider. We now have 17 providers from Catawba Mental Health and 5 district mental health providers to serve our students in crisis. We have 18 BMA's in our elementary schools and have put School Safety Officers (SSOs) in our schools as well. We have close to 5% of our total population, or nearly 800 students, receiving mental health services each week.

In January 2020, tele-psychiatry was initiated at each of our high schools. The students that will need initial psych-medical appointments and follow-ups for medication will be able to utilize the tele-psychiatrist. The District has met with a community mental health advisor to provide stakeholder insights and recommendations. Further, we are partnering with Winthrop's Social Work Department and School Psychology Department, and the University of South Carolina's Social Work Department to provide interns to receive hands-on experience and work with our students. There is also a district team dedicated to providing ideas and programming for our children with significant mental health issues in the near future. The budget will include a recommendation for additional positions.

What is the district's plan to update technology in all of the schools? Will there be Professional Development to teach the new technology?

We are currently developing a Five-Year Technology Plan to address updates in technology throughout the district regarding devices (teachers and students), instructional panels/displays, infrastructure, and informational software. Professional development is offered throughout the year at school sites by our Instructional Technology Specialists as well as any in-service opportunities brought in for district and school focus areas in technology. Much of the PD is customized by the needs shared at each school.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Phoenix is not a discipline driven program yet it is housed under the same “umbrella” a Renaissance and Raven. The public has a misconception of Phoenix due to this “connection.” People in the community (parents, other teachers, business leaders, city officials) mistakenly put the three programs together. Phoenix enrollment is not due to behavioral issues and should not be connected to programs that are. Is there a plan to separate the behavioral driven alternative programs with the non-behavioral alternative programs?

The website for our alternative programs reads: “The Flexible Learning Center houses three schools: Phoenix Academy, Renaissance Academy, and Raven Academy and also houses Adult Education. Alternative does not mean bad. We recognize that not all paths are the same. At the Flexible Learning Center, we provide a pathway to earning school credits that is different from the traditional school model.” Rock Hill Schools has been in conversations to explore options that are and will continue to enhance and improve alternative education opportunities for these students.

Will elementary schools have late starts next year?

There are currently no plans to change the start times of elementary schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Any changes to start times or the district calendar would be advertised for stakeholder input.



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