

One Team. One Mission. One Rock Hill.

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN



ROCK HILL
Schools

TEACHER LISTEN & LEARN

Dear Team Rock Hill,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Rock Hill Schools employees for the work that you have accomplished to help us all start the 2019-2020 school year successfully. Your passion and commitment to improving student outcomes each and every day continue to impress me. Thank you for helping to make a difference in our community as we work together as One Team on One Mission for One Rock Hill. Each of you continue to use your gifts to make this an amazing place that remains focused on doing what is best for our students every day. It has been a joy to observe the level of student engagement during my visits to each school during the first quarter, and I continue to be impressed by the outstanding educators in our school district. I encourage you to continue our focusing on our shared vision to improve learning outcomes for all students.

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

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

Aligned with the focus on communication with all stakeholders, I, along with my administrative team, look forward to again hosting the monthly Listen & Learn sessions with teachers representing each school in our district. We will hold eight sessions that will allow everyone to hear about successes and areas for continued growth for our district. Cabinet members will also share important information about what is taking place across our district. Responses to questions from our October 2019 session can be found on the following pages. These responses are not all-inclusive, and we would certainly welcome the opportunity to further discuss these questions and other relevant topics in more detail within specific levels and school settings. If you have follow up questions or desire more information, please contact one of our Cabinet team members. You may find an organizational chart with contact information on the next page.

I am confident our schools and district will benefit from this open dialogue regarding the needs that exist for our students, staff, and organization overall. If you would like to represent your school at an upcoming session, you are encouraged to talk with your principal.

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

Sincerely,



Bill Cook
Superintendent



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ROCK HILL SCHOOLS DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM



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In the following pages, questions raised at the most recent Teacher Listen & Learn are answered. Due to the nature of some questions, we are not able to provide a complete response since we may not be aware of the context in which the question or concern is shared. If you desire additional information or have additional questions, please contact a member of Cabinet. Our team members are ready to assist you with more information.



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What has the district done to close the achievement gap within African Americans and their counterpart student groups? Has the district considered initiatives led by Richland 1 and Berkeley County School District in the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer (only two in the state) to review data on suspensions and academic deficiencies of African-American students (males in particular)? To what extent is data reflected and/or utilized within instructional purposes (even among non-tested subject areas) to facilitate interdisciplinary planning, closing achievement gaps, and measuring overall instruction of the students within Rock Hill Schools?

Rock Hill Schools has utilized multiple data points to consider, implement, and measure efforts to support student achievement in all subgroups. This has been done at the district and school levels. Implementation of evidence-based instruction, providing professional development, progress monitoring focusing on instructional time, implementing supplemental instruction, increasing efforts to bolster involvement and education between home and school, and use of formative assessments are all strategies our teachers and administrators have utilized in addressing the achievement gaps. Strategic planning and efforts to address socioeconomic disparities with all students are continued areas of work for our schools and district. This year, the district is engaging in an overall focus on the use of data protocols and improvement of data literacy across all levels, beginning at the leadership level. In this work, we pay particular attention to how all of our many subgroups of students perform and consider what we all need to do to close achievement gaps. Areas to continue support include career and college readiness, more participation in advanced coursework and programs, achievement in core subject areas, addressing behavior and suspensions, and fostering on-time graduation. Considering leadership in the area of diversity is an idea the district will continue to expand.

Has the district sought the Call Me Mister programs from Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) to bring in cultural sensitivity and hiring practices of teachers of color within high needs schools?

The Call Me Mister program does not function in this capacity. The mission of the program is to encourage and support minority males to major in education. It is the mission of our district to recruit and retain the very best with a strong focus on hiring minority candidates.

Is there a plan for regular education teachers to help with extreme discipline problems that require daily room evacuations? At what point is the loss of instructional time for the others students a consideration?

Our departments and staff stand to assist schools with the varying needs of student support and discipline. We will continue to implement strategies and resources for working with students who are encountering difficulty on a daily basis. In extreme situations where classrooms are being vacated on a regular basis, guidance counselors, mental health counselors, behavior management assistants, and district personnel should work to support the teacher(s) and administration with student behavioral plans and assistance.

Are there plans to make 2nd grade one-to-one?

The iPads are not in the best shape after being used for several years. There is a sub-committee being formed of K2 teachers to determine what the technology needs are. Then the appropriate device(s) will be identified and the ratio of students to devices. The 2nd grade device very well may be different from the K1 group since there are different needs. These decisions will be incorporated into the 5 year technology plan.



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With the strong push to use Mastery Connect for math assessments (3-5) for the purpose of rigor and tracking students for intervention, are the math quarterly benchmarks still necessary? Would this time not be better used for instruction?

The math benchmarks are used at the school level to identify where students are and determine if students have reached mastery on the standards each quarter. They allow individual teachers and grade level teams to have data conversations to adjust instruction if needed to prepare for end of grade assessments. Since these assessments are only given at the end of each quarter, the district is working with schools to create common formative assessments so that teachers can view student progress throughout the quarter and not just at the end. Different schools are at different levels of creating common formative assessments. The district math coaches will continue to work with schools to utilize MasteryConnect to create rigorous assessments that are aligned to the standards.

With MasteryConnect being a major component of assessing students across the district, how can we as teachers make sure that our assessments are secure and assure students are not getting access to assessments prior to tests.

As teachers and grade level teams create assessments in MasteryConnect, there is a privacy option where teachers can choose to make their assessments private to the district, the school or themselves. This allows a teacher to determine who can view the assessment. Students do not have access to the assessment until a teacher puts the assessment in their tracker. When going through MasteryConnect, students cannot access the assessment without a test ID number. If going through Launchpad, students cannot access the assessment until the teacher pushes the assessment out to students in the class. These measures ensure that students can't access the assessment until the teacher is ready for them to view and take the assessment. Teachers can control the privacy of assessments given through the student portal. Assessment/answer key visibility can be hidden or shown based on a teacher's preference.



For more information on using the student portal, see the following articles:

Overview of Student Portal - <http://bit.ly/2PS9LBV> Change Assessment Privacy Settings - <http://bit.ly/2rb9Lm9>

When students in 3rd through 5th grades are assessed in Reading, they are expected to read a rather lengthy leveled passages written at their on-grade reading level, since summative assessments are required to be at grade level. They then have to answer questions based on the passage. If students do not demonstrate mastery of the standards assessed, teachers are required to retest those standards. Our concern is that retesting those students who read below grade level will yield the same results. It is extremely frustrating for those students. Are we following the correct protocol by retesting those students when they do not demonstrate mastery?

This is a discussion we will have with our District Literacy Coaches and School-Based Literacy Coaches as this warrants further conversation. In the past we have said that summative assessments need to be at the same rigor of state assessments as testing students on their individual levels may lead to misconceptions about student grade level performance. We will follow up with additional feedback.

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In regard to teachers recertification: Why are teachers without a masters degree required to take a graduate level course? What percentage of teachers do not have their masters? Why are we making teachers pay for additional courses, and why is this still a requirement when we are experiencing a teacher shortage?

This requirement is not a district imposed requirement. This is a requirement set forth by the state board of education for any certified teacher that does not hold a masters degree. Any change in this requirement will have to be made on the state level.



Will the district revisit the idea of offering a stipend for teachers with National Board Certification?

This will be added to the list of considerations for the FY 2020-2021 General Fund budget discussions.

Are we planning to continue the retention bonus every school year for returning employees?

Eligible employees received a retention bonus on October 31. Future bonuses will be contingent upon available funding. This year, the district committed \$2.1 million to provide the bonuses for all employees.

Why are teachers not given a day to input our report card grades? Why is the teacher workday after grades are already due?

The workday schedule is established and recommended by the district calendar committee. The schedule to input grades and any time related is set for the year after the calendar is approved and released at the district level. When a district calendar committee is established each year, this question, or request, would be appropriate to share with the calendar committee members who provide input on calendar design.

Can the district partner with Winthrop or USC to offer inexpensive (ie free) classes so we can become cross certified? For instance, I need just 3 classes to become certified in English. To take these classes at Winthrop would cost me over \$7,000 out of pocket, money I do not have. This would help the district train teachers in shortage areas and will allow for more teachers to change content areas and aid retention.

The district is currently working with the OEC to partner with a university to offer a cohort for add on special education certification. We are starting the conversations around this certification area and hope that over time we will be able to offer cohorts for other areas of certification.

When the district pulls teachers from their home schools to fill gaps in the district it is usually done with little notice (~24 hours to change schools, grade level and/or subject) and usually impacts morale. Can the district provide some sort of compensation?

When teachers are moved, it is always done to address an immediate area of need. Every effort is given to allow the teacher and school transition time. The idea of providing a bonus has never been explored. This would have to be something that is budgeted for and can be discussed in the upcoming budget cycle for subsequent years.

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When asking for opinions on district surveys can we have more options to write in comments and suggestions? Usually the questions are very closed ended with a simple yes or no being all we can add. Many times we teachers have excellent ideas to improve the district but there doesn't seem to be many outlets to pass

Thank you for this excellent thought. Many of our district surveys - and of course the state surveys - are closed response type questions only because they are distributed to hundreds of respondents and we want to be able to gather, analyze, and use the data as quickly as possible. We will keep your suggestion in mind for future district-controlled surveys. Currently, we receive many teacher suggestions and thoughts through our monthly Teacher Listen and Learn meetings. Always feel free to share suggestions with your school's representative to these meetings, or you might wish to talk with you principal and volunteer on a district committee. You are also welcome to contact any district staff member directly. Contact information for each Cabinet member is available on page three of this document. Teacher voice is very important to how decisions are made in our district; we want to hear from you.

Is there any way that the district can purchase "hot-spots" to offer wifi services to our medical homebound students or to our virtual students that need internet access?

The waiting list for hot-spots at the Public Library is too long and it slows the students' progress. We are looking at home Internet options with Comporium, T-Mobile, and Sprint for students and teachers. T-Mobile and Sprint have hotspot options for education. We are exploring the application process that is required for both.



ATC caters to over 2,000 students, many with 504 accommodations. Yet, we are down to one part-time Guidance Counselor to work with a large number of kids. We need a full-time individual or two who can cover this need for us. We also see a number of 504 accommodation forms come in simply acknowledging that the student has a 504, but does not indicate what the accommodations are. Also, we have students who have to serve ISS at times, but we do not have the facility for this, and the home schools often are not able to follow up with us without repeated communication due to the large amount of communication they receive on a daily basis. This is also where a full-time person would be needed.

Regarding the ISS question, like any of our schools, ATC will have the opportunity to request a position for ISS coordination in the coming budget process for 2020-21 funding. Please be sure to discuss your concerns with Mr. Roveri so school staff can work together to prioritize and make its request accordingly. ATC is provided 1.5 guidance counselors and .5 curriculum support by the district to address the needs of all students.

Will the district programs at Sylvia Circle Family Learning Center be getting interactive displays? For the ParentSmart Family Literacy program, there are two Early Childhood classrooms and two Adult Education classrooms. It would be great to have one in each classroom, or at the very least in each of the Adult Education classrooms.

The district panel purchase is a piece of the 5 year technology plan including the distribution plan. We will add Sylvia Circle for discussion.

What is the district's technology plan to replace aging technology in schools.

The 5 year technology plan is currently being developed to address needs including student laptop refresh, teacher/administrator refresh, displays (panels), and network maintenance/upgrades.

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Is there any additional support coming related to 3rd grade and R2S?

Any additional positions for FY 2020-2021 would need to be part of the district's budget considerations. All budget requests go through a prioritization process and is dependent on available funding. For 2019-2020, Academic Interventionists for all elementary schools was one of the items submitted; however, due to prioritization and available funding these positions were not funded this school year. We will begin the process for next year soon.

For this school year, we are making an adjustment to students participating in Summer Reading Camp to include identified grade 2 students to participate to be proactive to entry into third grade.

How would teachers accommodate students without internet access on eLearning days? How can we ensure assignments are accessible to all students?



Students who do not have internet access will be provided assignments for eLearning. For example, students may be able to download their assignment to their laptop to take home and complete. For a PreK - Grade 2 student, we aim to provide packets. We will provide information on internet resources and are currently seeking methods in which to seek any community resources for internet service. In planning and preparing for eLearning days, we will work with teachers on how to support all students.

How will Elementary Special Area teachers be impacted/contribute to the new eLearning days, and what will eLearning look like for K5-2?

Information will be shared with teachers and families during the month of November on how to prepare all students for eLearning. PreK - Grade 2 will most likely be provided packets to take home. Special area teachers will also be involved in providing lesson materials.

What are the district plans to make sure that students coming from elementary school immersion are at an appropriate language level to process the curriculum?

Based on the performance data from the STAMP proficiency assessment, the majority of our students are on-target with where they should be by the end of 5th grade. It is important to remember that while there is target language literacy instruction in elementary school, the target language is the vehicle that is used to teach math and science. Middle school is where students begin truly diving intensively into the mechanics of the language. Additionally, language learning is a skill. Students acquire language at various rates. Lastly, for students who are having difficulties acquiring language, teachers and administrators should be implementing language specific interventions to support the skill(s) that need(s) remediation.



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