Rockbridge County Public Schools
RCPS
Learning First

Building Bridges for Tomorrow

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN **2018–2022**

Brief Introductory Letter

In looking to the future of our school division, I have a belief that — in order to know which path we need to follow — we need to first understand where we stand currently. What are the things that we do well in Rockbridge County Public Schools (RCPS), and where do the challenges lay that we need to work on and overcome? Over a year ago, RCPS chose to embark upon a transformational journey to completely and systemically evaluate itself. The results of this self-evaluation will help us determine the best path forward. When using a critical eye to evaluate ourselves, we found that RCPS has a strong foundation for future growth resulting from a clear mission, a healthy enrollment comprised of a motivated and diverse student body, a committed and skilled faculty, a challenging curriculum, and an engaged, supportive community.

No school division can remain static. It is essential that we build upon what we know we do well by actively seeking ways to further the excellence of Rockbridge County Public Schools and ensure that our students are properly prepared with 21st century skills to graduate and lead productive and rewarding lives.

Stakeholders were invited to become part of the collaborative effort to develop the comprehensive plan. A committee was formed to evaluate and prioritize the data from the planning survey that was gathered in the fall of 2017. Stakeholders — including parents, community members, students, teachers, and local business leaders and partners, as well as school and division level administrators — worked for months using the survey data to not only envision a future for RCPS, but also to develop a road map to take us there. The resulting comprehensive plan is a living document that will be used to guide decision-making and evaluate current programs for effectiveness. By clearly articulating our plan to all stakeholders, we will move forward with a common vision.

It is with my sincerest gratitude that I would like to personally thank everyone involved with the development of this comprehensive plan. Your dedication, insight, and contributions brought this vital plan to reality. Working together and utilizing this comprehensive plan, we will provide the educational excellence our students so greatly deserve.

Phillip J. Thompson
Division Superintendent

Motto

LEARNING FIRST

Vision Statement

Rockbridge County Public Schools partners with families and the community to prepare students for a changing world through project-based learning, technology, and innovative teaching. Our primary goal is for all our students to be productive and responsible members of society who are capable of competing in the global economy and motivated to pursue lifelong learning.

Mission Statement

Rockbridge County Public Schools provides instruction to meet the needs of all students in schools that are fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. We provide all elementary students with balanced instruction in the core subject areas of math, English, science, and social studies, enhanced by opportunities for enrichment and exploration through music, the arts, physical education, and a variety of other areas. We provide diverse educational opportunities for middle and high school students to prepare them for higher education or skilled workforce entry.

Core Beliefs/Values

RCPS CORE BELIEFS OR VALUES

- School environments provide physical and emotional safety for all students, staff, and community members
- Stakeholders strive for ALL students to be successful
- Continuous improvement of research-based strategies, targeted to increase student achievement
- Division culture and climate is student-centered to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all learners

PRIORITY 1

Student Success

Goal: Engage students in authentic learning that supports meaningful academic, artistic, and athletic performances, and inspires every student to achieve life, career, and post-secondary success

PRIORITY 2

Instruction, Leadership, and Support

Goal: Provide high-quality and innovative instruction, leadership, and support for all students and families across every aspect of school and division operations
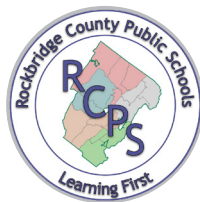
PRIORITY 3

School Safety, Culture, and Climate

Goal: Create safe, supportive, and mutually nurturing learning and work environments

PRIORITY 4

Communication and Engagement

Goal: Provide opportunities and resources for students, families, employees, and community members to be purposely connected and engaged with their school and/or the school division

Student Success

GOAL: Engage students in authentic educational experiences that support meaningful academic, artistic, and athletic performances, and inspire each student to achieve life, career, and post-secondary success

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1

Design and deliver an engaging and innovative curriculum

- Incorporate high-yield instructional strategies into all lessons and units
- Provide opportunities for student choice and feedback during instruction and assessments
- Create inquiry-based and project-based lessons and units
- Define and embed essential life skills and workplace expectations throughout the curriculum
- Assess student and instructional staff engagement across all grade levels

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2

Provide learning experiences beyond the classroom

- Enhance and expand plans for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and career and technical education (CTE)
- Create a system of school and community-based experiences, such as field trips, career explorations, job shadowing, internships, and externships
- Build and strengthen community partnerships aligned with instructional programs
- Provide opportunities to expose students to various artistic and athletic activities, as well as possible career pathways
- Continue to offer dual-enrollment classes through Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3

Align internal and external resources to ensure success for all students

- Develop a plan to audit curriculum at each grade level
- Identify academic performance gaps to develop, strengthen, and enhance intervention strategies
- Review staffing and resources for both enrichment and intervention opportunities
- Publish and promote internal and external opportunities for student enrichment and intervention
- Integrate community organization and partnership activities into instructional programs

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4

Design innovative formative and summative assessments to measure student success

- Continue to monitor and refine Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Incorporate twenty-first century technology within assessment strategies
- Create performance-based assessments for students to demonstrate and share their learning
- Design and create student growth plans (academic, career, and social/emotional) collaboratively with parents, students, and teachers
- Survey RCPS graduates on their readiness for post-high school experiences: career, college, and life
- Provide professional development (PD) training to instructional staff that focuses on leading authentic learning, providing constructive feedback, employing twenty-first century technology, and assessing student performance

Student Success

1. Number/percent of students participating in learning opportunities outside of the classroom (job shadowing, internships, etc.)
2. Number of regular, consistent experiential learning opportunities available through internships and/or community-service projects
3. Number of community partners engaged in and providing student learning opportunities
4. Number of project-based learning (PBL) units completed by grade level and/or subject
5. Number/percent of engaged students and staff
6. Program of studies/course offerings (CTE, arts, world languages, etc.)
7. Number of athletics/sports/club opportunities
8. Number of students participating in athletics
9. Number of students enrolled in arts program
10. Number of students producing projects using technology
11. Number/percent of students utilizing school counselor services
12. Number/percent of students enrolled in advanced placement and/or dual enrollment courses
13. Number/percent of students enrolled in CTE/STEM courses
14. Number/percent of students completing CTE/STEM program (certifications)
15. Number of teachers using high-yield strategies through instructional audits and teacher walkthrough observations
16. Number/percent of graduates who report gaining life skills from their RCPS education
17. Number of business resource people at career and/or skills events
18. Student use of technology

Instruction, Leadership, and Support

GOAL: Provide high-quality and innovative instruction, leadership, and support for all students and families across every aspect of school and division operations

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1

Develop a plan to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, administrators, and support staff

- Review current RCPS employee recruitment and retention strategies to identify effective tactics and incentives
- Design and implement an employee recruitment and retention plan with incentives as appropriate and based on available funding
- Identify current and future "hard-to-staff" positions and develop strategies to address staffing those positions
- Assess RCPS working conditions and benefits and gather employee feedback
- Analyze RCPS employee exit data to identify and address patterns and themes

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2

Review and revise employee performance evaluation process with RCPS comprehensive plan measures and outcomes

- Human Resources will review and assess all RCPS employee performance reviews
- Incorporate the four priorities of the RCPS comprehensive plan into the performance review process
- Ensure communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity are part of classroom instruction and workplace interactions
- Establish expectations for instructional staff to use high-yield strategies
- Continue to revise the teacher evaluation process (TalentEd)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3

Expand and coordinate timely, relevant, and employee-initiated job-embedded professional development for both support and licensed staff members

- Develop a comprehensive professional development plan for certified and support staff
- Investigate and implement innovative professional development and training opportunities for all employees, such as self-guided learning, micro-credentialing, etc.
- Provide and refine mentoring and coaching program for teachers, administrators, and support staff
- Provide career growth and high-quality professional development
- Identify and expand teacher leadership opportunities and support career growth

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4

Cultivate and celebrate a caring environment for students and families across all RCPS departments

- Identify behaviors and expectations associated with a caring environment
- Develop a recognition program for all employees who demonstrate exemplary performance
- Promote an employee feedback and recognition program to share examples of caring behaviors
- Create opportunities for families and community partners to participate and share in celebrating the RCPS caring culture activities as well as possible career pathways
- Continue to offer dual-enrollment classes through Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC)

Instruction, Leadership, and Support

1. Survey students, parents, and teachers (school quality/instruction/support)
2. Number of teachers who follow through on Professional Development in lesson plans and classroom activities
3. Number of engaged stakeholders (participants) in school and division events
4. Number of completed professional development hours
5. Number or variety of learning opportunities
6. Retention rate of teachers who have received effective mentoring
7. Number of professional development sessions and participants
8. Number of project-based learning units required of each teacher
9. Number/percent of teachers surveyed who believe professional development was relevant and meaningful
10. Number/percent of staff using technology resources provided to them
11. Creation of measurable and consistent teacher evaluations
12. Number of PBL experiences students complete during the year
13. Increase funding to support professional development and additional degrees/endorsements
14. Number of out-of-classroom experiences
15. Incentives for and recruitment of high-quality math instructors
16. Expanded opportunities for world language instruction

School Safety, Culture, and Climate

GOAL: Create safe, supportive, and mutually nurturing learning and work environments

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1

Cultivate a school and work environment of respect, empathy, and inclusion for all students, staff, and families

- Conduct an annual school climate survey of students, staff, and family members to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement
- Assess barriers and opportunities to improve student attendance, truancy, and late arrivals/early dismissals
- Incorporate school climate and work environment goals in school and division improvement plans
- Create opportunities for school and division staff members to share strategies and programs that foster a respectful, welcoming, inclusive, and collaborative school and work environment

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2

Embed social and emotional learning (SEL) support systems into instruction and school counseling programs

- Review and evaluate school division staffing and resources dedicated to social and emotional learning supports
- Establish staff, student, and community focus groups to gather insights on issues and concerns about safety, security, and social and emotional well-being
- Develop a comprehensive SEL plan that includes curriculum, school counseling services, and community-based services with goals, objectives, and strategies
- Continue to offer and refine the BRAVE and CrisisGo anti-bullying programs
- Coordinate with outside agencies to provide staff development training with a focus on mental health services and intervention strategies

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3

Provide safe, updated, and well-maintained facilities

- Conduct facility audits to assess school and workplace security and maintenance requirements
- Maintain mandatory safety inspections at all schools and division facilities
- Conduct crisis-management training and update safety protocols with all staff
- Develop and publish a multi-year facilities maintenance and capital improvement plan
- Administer annual school safety survey to staff, students, and families

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4

Develop a community-wide network of student and family support systems

- Create and publish a list of local community-based organizations that provide services for RCPS families with contact information
- Produce and distribute information about RCPS and non-RCPS services that support student academic and emotional well-being, such as tutoring, mentoring programs, or other social services
- Provide parent/family workshops to share information and strategies to enhance student success—in the classroom and at home
- Create and promote safe spaces, in-person and online, where students, staff, and families can go to ask questions and get answers
- Provide training to instructional staff that focuses on leading authentic learning, providing constructive feedback, employing twenty-first century technology, and assessing student performance

School Safety, Culture, and Climate

1. Number/percent of student, parent, staff surveys about school climate and work environment
2. Number/percent of student surveys (YRB: Youth Risk Behaviors)
3. Documentation of training opportunities
4. Number of safety drills conducted and evaluated, and procedures assessed and updated
5. Number/percent of parents, students, and staff who feel physically safe and emotionally secure at school
6. Updated crisis plans and procedures
7. Building safety audits
8. Crisis management training for staff
9. Number/percent of staff trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), etc.
10. Number of new intervention strategies used to foster a safe school environment
11. Number of guidance and mental health professional staff
12. Emotional intelligence survey to measure student effects
13. Amount of time staff are available to students (reduced duty assignments)
14. Number of students who use school counseling services for their social-emotional needs
15. Number of crisis trainings for RCPS employees
16. Budget for guidance and mental health services
17. Increased student access to adult mentors
18. Number/percent of discipline referrals by type
19. Number of students with at-risk behaviors and interventions used to help
20. Number of identified and established safety protocols
21. Pre- and post-test survey results completed at professional development trainings related to safety, climate, and culture

Communication and Engagement

GOAL: Provide opportunities and resources for students, families, employees, and community members to be purposely connected and engaged with their school and/or the school division

STRATEGIC
INITIATIVE
1

Develop a comprehensive division-wide communication plan

- Conduct a school and division audit of communication channels, their use, and their effectiveness
- Develop protocols and tips to foster effective communication strategies for students, parents, staff, and community members
- Monitor, update, and maintain communication platforms division-wide for communication with all stakeholders

STRATEGIC
INITIATIVE
2

Create and communicate opportunities for families to acquire necessary information, knowledge, and skills to support their child's learning at home and school

- Increase access and distribution of information and resources to aid and support parents in their child's learning
- Host school and division-wide "learning fairs" for community members and families to gather information about RCPS instructional programs
- Create opportunities for parents to actively participate in student-led learning experiences

STRATEGIC
INITIATIVE
3

Establish a division-wide engagement committee

- Conduct a needs-assessment for student, staff, parent, and family engagement
- Create a targeted engagement action plan
- Implement and incentivize parent and family engagement
- Monitor and measure levels of family, student, and employee engagement
- Provide opportunities for parents, families, and community members to give feedback about schools and the division

Communication and Engagement

1. Weekly updates to school/division websites
2. Number of website views/visits
3. Use a survey to measure perceived value, use, and effectiveness of communication methods
4. Number and response of media communications over individual platforms
5. Number of parents/families attending school-sponsored or division events
6. Increased involvement in school programs and activities
7. Number/percent of parents connected to social media outlets
8. Number of staff, students, and parents involved in PTA/PTO/PTSA
9. Parent contact logs
10. Number of parent/family/community volunteers
11. Number of people subscribing to newsletter
12. Survey response rate
13. Number of students who participate in school communication efforts
14. Decreased paper usage
15. Tracked and recorded methods and frequency of outreach
16. Number of followers on social media channels
17. Number/percent of parents and community members using resources for student learning or providing activities/opportunities
18. Number of participants at PTSA meetings
19. Review of school and division websites and social media pages
20. Number of communication channels and usage

Monitoring Progress
(Journey Ahead)

2018–2019: BUILD THE FOUNDATION OR BREAK GROUND

By June 2019, RCPS will have collected one year of data, monitored progress against measures of success, and tracked progress for each priority.

2019–2020: ASSEMBLE THE RESOURCES/EQUIPMENT

By June 2020, RCPS will have collected two years of data and provided additional resources in priority areas that have not made significant progress relative to the measures of success. Progress for each strategic priority will be posted on the division's website.

2020–2021: BUILD THE BRIDGE

By June 2021, RCPS will have implemented all components of the comprehensive plan, collected three years of data, and publicly posted progress for each strategic priority on the division website.

2021–2022: PAVE THE BRIDGE

By June 2022, RCPS will have implemented all components of the comprehensive plan and observed positive outcomes in all four priority areas identified in the comprehensive plan.

Acknowledgement of
Comprehensive Plan Committee Members

DIVISION LEADERS:
1. Haywood Hand – Assistant Superintendent
2. Tim Martino – Director of Elementary Education
3. Jason Kirby – Director of Personnel and Technology
4. Randy Walters – Director of Facilities and Transportation
5. Twila Brown – Director of Special Education
6. Christine Wood – Supervisor of Student Services
7. Matt Crossman – Supervisor of Testing and Media Services
8. Steven Wilder – Supervisor of Career and Technical Education
9. Tracy Hinty – Coordinator of Federal Programs

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS:
1. Mike Craft – Principal, RCHS
2. Billy Thomas – Principal, Maury River Middle School
3. Lori Teague – Principal, Mountain View Elementary School
4. Melanie Falls – Supervisor of Attendance and Student Services
5. Diane Secord – Assistant Principal, Central Elementary School

TEACHERS:
1. Becky Bennett – Instructional Technology Resource Teacher, Maury River Middle School
2. Farrah Erskine – 3rd Grade, Fairfield Elementary School
3. Amy Hinkle - Math, Rockbridge County High School

STUDENTS:
1. Chesley Strickler – Rockbridge County High School
2. Mallory Keeley – Rockbridge County High School
3. Malik Dunn – Rockbridge County High School

PARENTS:
1. Tammi Hellwig – Rockbridge County High School
2. Michele Huntsman – Maury River Middle School
3. Marsha Owens – Natural Bridge Elementary School

COMMUNITY MEMBERS:
1. Kathy Burant – Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation
2. Bobbie Wolfe – YMCA Executive Director
3. Larry Lange – L&S Services
4. Brianne Rogers – Family Preservation Services

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Audit – a formal examination of an organization's account

Authentic Learning - real life learning that encourages students to create a tangible, useful product to be shared with their world

BRAVE – Bullying Reported And Violence Eradicated – a division-wide anti-bullying program

Career and Technical Education (CTE) – Provides students of all ages with the academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners

CrisisGo – a safety platform to report bullying

Dual-Enrollment – allows high school students to be enrolled in two separate, academically related institutions and earn college and high school credits concurrently

Experiential Learning – the process of learning through experience, which is more specifically defined as "learning by doing"

Externships – experiential learning opportunities, similar to internships, provided by partnerships with educational institutions and employers to give students short practical experiences in their field of study

Facility audits – assessing buildings, grounds, and equipment

Hard-to-staff – areas with a shortage of qualified candidates

High-quality – adhering to an excellent standard of measure

High-yield Strategies – practices that are data driven and proven, when implemented correctly, provide desired results

High-yield Instructional Strategies – research-based instructional strategies that support and improve student capacity for learning

Inclusive – including everyone

Inquiry-Based – a form of active learning that starts by posing questions, problems, or scenarios rather than simply presenting established facts or portraying a smooth path to knowledge

Internships – work experience undertaken by students looking to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular field of study

Job-Embedded Professional Development – teacher learning that is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning

Job Shadowing – popular on-the-job learning, career development, and leadership development program

Learning Fairs – an instructional approach method to gather more knowledge of a certain topic or subject

Micro-Credentialing – the process of earning a certification in a specific topic area

Needs Assessment – a tool that can be used in strategic planning to measure the goals of an organization

PBL – Project Based Learning

Performance-Based Assessment – also known as alternative or authentic assessment, is a form of testing that requires students to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list of responses

Platforms – a group of technologies that are used as a base upon which other applications and processes are used

Professional Development – learning to earn or maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees to formal coursework, attending conferences,

and informal learning opportunities situated in practice

Project-Based – a student-centered instructional strategy that involves a dynamic classroom approach in which it is believed that students acquire a deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems

Protocol – an agreed-upon format for transmitting data and information

PTA – Parent Teacher Association

PTO – Parent Teacher Organization

PTSA – Parent Teacher Student Association

Response to Intervention – an approach to academic intervention used to provide early, systematic, and appropriately intensive assistance to children who are at risk for or already underperforming as compared to appropriate grade or age-level standards

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) – a term used to group together these four academic disciplines

School Climate – quality and character of school life

Social and Emotional Learning – an educational process for learning life skills – such as character education, peer mediation, anger management, etc.

Student Growth Plans – measures how a student progresses academically during his or her time in school or with a particular teacher

Student-Led Learning Experiences – educational method of teaching that shifts the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student
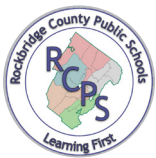
Rockbridge County Public Schools is centrally located in the historic and scenic Shenandoah Valley in the west-central region of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Rockbridge County is named for the distinctive geological landmark, Natural Bridge, located in the southern portion of the county.

Rockbridge County is bordered on the west by the lower elevations of the Allegheny Mountains and on the east by the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is surrounded by the counties of Augusta, Nelson, Amherst, Bedford, Botetourt, Alleghany, and Bath, and lies at the headwaters of the James and Maury rivers. Two major interstates, 81 and 64, service the Rockbridge County area. Within its borders are two incorporated towns, Glasgow and Goshen, and two independent cities, Lexington and Buena Vista. The county seat, located within the city limits of Lexington, is an important educational, retail, commercial, historical, and governmental center.

Rockbridge County is also home to four institutions of higher learning. The institutions include: Virginia Military Institute, Washington and Lee University, Southern Virginia University, and Dabney S. Lancaster Community College.

Rockbridge County Public Schools offer all programs and activities free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, or gender. Grievance procedures for any forms of discrimination are published in the Rockbridge County Policy Manual, located in the public library, each school, and the school board office. Specific complaints under Title IX should be sent to the Assistant Superintendent. Section 504 complaints regarding discrimination should be sent to the Director of Special Education. All other discrimination complaints should be sent to the Superintendent. These persons may be reached at the **Rockbridge County Schools Administrative Offices, 2893 Collierstown Rd., Lexington, VA 24450, or by calling (540) 463-7386**.