



# 2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

**Dr. Akil E. Ross, Sr., Superintendent**  
School District Five of Lexington  
and Richland Counties



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## FINDING VISION

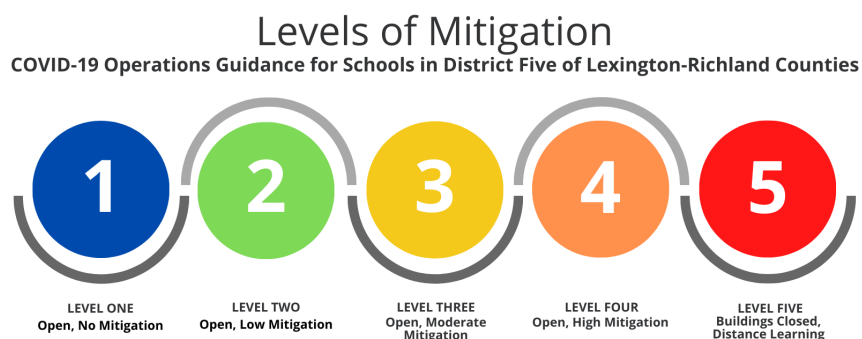
The 2021-2022 school year had a difficult beginning. There was an administration change and uncertainty about COVID-19 and a safe return to in-person learning. It was important to unify the staff and recommit to a common vision. At an opening district meeting, Dr. Ross asked staff members to list their “Why” - the reason they do what they do. Out of their responses School District Five found its new vision - to LOVE and GROW our students.

**WE LOVE & GROW**  
**our students!**

## COVID-19 MITIGATION

As the 2021-2022 school year began, the COVID-19 Delta variant was emerging. It was vital to create a plan for how to safely operate schools and offices as the numbers of isolated and quarantined students and staff increased. School District Five staff developed the COVID-19 Levels of Mitigation that outlined how School District Five would operate as COVID-19 impacts increased and decreased. School District Five’s COVID-19 dashboard, created by the District’s Office of Accountability, implemented the different colors which served as a guide for how to operate at each campus.

When an individual campus reached 30% of students impacted by COVID-19, School District Five implemented a 2-hour delay for extra cleaning and additional staff training on COVID-19 protocols. In January, the COVID-19 Omicron variant created another wave of student and staff absences, and School District Five Administration determined that, due to high staff absences, schools were not able to provide sufficient Instruction, Safety, and Supervision (ISS). As a result, the District implemented two virtual learning days so that instruction could continue safely. School District Five is very proud of its staff and the efforts to keep students safely in school during the ongoing pandemic.



## HOW ARE THE CHILDREN?

As students returned to school after the time of virtual and hybrid learning, school leaders could see a change in the needs students presented at school. The children were not well, and it impacted their ability to learn and grow successfully. School District Five created the Whole Child Continuum, an umbrella of services to help students become successful learners. It includes all the services School District Five provides:

- Physical Safety
- Physical Health
- Social Needs
- Mental Health Needs
- Behavioral Issues
- Academic Readiness
- Educational Needs



## STAFF ENHANCEMENTS

In order to meet all of the aspects of the Whole Child Continuum, School District Five expanded its staff to include the following:

- Clinical Counselors
- Expectation Coaches
- Full-Time Lead Nurse
- Mental Health Lead Counselor
- School Counseling Specialist

School District Five has also committed resources to existing staff to recognize the extraordinary work they do to love and grow students every day:

- New Employee Retention Incentive (NERI)
- \$1000 Employee Appreciation Bonus
- \$50 Friday Attendance Incentive
- Salary Increases for FY 2022-2023



## FOCUS ON LITERACY

In 2022, School District Five reaffirmed its commitment to meet the needs of the whole child to include improved literacy across the curriculum. Instructional staff will focus on the following areas:

- The Alphabetic Code: Phonemic Awareness & Phonics
- Comprehension
- Research
- Vocabulary
- Written Expression

Secondary Literacy Intervention is a part of the Multi-tiered System of Supports model (MTSS). Each school has a Read to Succeed plan as required by law. These plans will continue to be revised to include literacy strategies across the curriculum. School District Five has Literacy Lab classes in all intermediate and middle-level schools. Dutch Fork High School added a Literacy Lab this year. District and school instructional staff will be studying the effectiveness and how School District Five can revise and expand it to other high schools in the future.



## THE NEST

On Friday, February 4, 2022, students at Irmo High School staged a walk-out in protest of harassment and ongoing classroom disruptions. This walk-out brought to light many issues at the school and other student needs that were not being met. Dr. Ross, District Administrators, and School Administrators worked through the weekend and, in 72 hours, created a school within a school.

The Nest is a short-term intervention built for students who struggle to make progress in school due to their challenging behaviors. With evidence based practices at its foundation, the Nest focuses on five critical structures:

- Academic Instruction
- Behavior Interventions
- Career Readiness (executive functioning, self regulation, soft skills, etc.)
- Family Involvement
- Supported Transitions including, but not limited to the following:
  - Coaching to support usage of skills learned in the Nest
  - Building relationships with staff and peers outside of the Nest

The Nest at Irmo High School saw very quick results: After two weeks, discipline referrals were down by approximately 30%. The Irmo High School climate has changed for the better because of this intervention, and School District Five looks forward to the Nest continuing to evolve and improve. School District Five Administration is also grateful that the Board of Trustees has seen the value of this intervention and has approved similar programs at other School District Five campuses for FY 2022-2023.

## IRMO HIGH SCHOOL ENHANCEMENTS

Irmo High School will begin looking different in the next year. In October 2021, the School District Five Board of Trustees approved funding for a new East Wing to replace the original building from 1954. This new building will include state-of-the-art facilities for students and staff and is being built with no tax impact to the community. In May 2022, the architectural team held an informational meeting at Irmo High School to hear from the community suggestions on how to Look Back and Dream Forward with the new building.



The East Wing Building is not the only new growth at Irmo High School. The 1st Jobs Initiative was born in late 2021 and continues to be set in motion as a way for students to “Earn While They Learn” by getting jobs as School District Five employees in areas such as:

- Maintenance
- Student Nutrition Service
- Clerical
- Landscaping
- Transportation

While the students work, they earn class credit, and most importantly, job skills that will help them after they graduate and seek other employment.

School District Five also looks forward to launching Mall Street at Irmo High School, which is a small business incubator for entrepreneurship and a small business certificate. Irmo High School will establish storefronts in its building along Mall Street. Students will have the opportunity to create business plans, apply for small business loans, and then open for business. This program requires partnerships with local businesses and financial institutions, but in return, it has the potential to give back the investment to the local community. Further, students will be able to earn a small business certificate through School District Five’s Career and Technical Education program.

## **CHAPIN HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM ENHANCEMENTS**

Also in October 2021, the School District Five Board of Trustees voted to undertake a Renovations and Additions Project at the Chapin High School Football Stadium. This project incorporates improvements including:

- New press box
- New concessions and Eagle store area
- Renovated bathrooms in the Field House
- Improved parking areas
- Increased seating capacity

School District Five looks forward to working with Jumper Carter Sease Architects on this exciting project and seeing the stadium improvements come to fruition.





## COMMUNICATIONS

Thorough and timely communication is vital to ensuring public trust. Dr. Ross and School District Five staff have implemented several new methods of communication to keep students, staff, parents, and the community informed about the District. These methods include:

- Online Community Forums to share information and respond to viewer questions about COVID-19, changes at Irmo High School, and the potential bond referendum
- Listening Sessions at Irmo High School and Irmo Middle School to hear faculty and staff concerns and answer questions about campus changes
- In-Person Community Input Meetings at two different schools for the community to hear about and respond to the potential bond referendum
- Sunday Evening videos from Dr. Ross to District families to share District news and upcoming events
- Sunday Evening phone calls from Dr. Ross to the individual Board of Trustees members to keep them updated on District news and issues

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

The nationwide increase in school shootings and other security threats required School District Five to review its safety protocols and look for ways to improve school safety. In June 2022, School District Five Administration determined that a multi-layered approach to school safety was most effective, focusing on Communication, Compartmentalization, and Awareness. To further that goal, School District Five purchased at least one open-gate weapon detection system for each School District Five campus with remaining portions of the 2021-2022 general fund.



## BOND REFERENDUM

The 2019 District-Wide Facilities Need Assessment by M.B. Kahn Construction Co., Inc., indicated ten (10) fair or poor- rated facilities in School District Five. Further, the 2019 Milone and MacBroom, Inc., study predicted a problematic rise in school capacity in the Chapin area, which the District is now beginning to recognize. School District Five is in a position to resolve these issues with a bond referendum that would provide the District with at least \$150 Million for new construction and facility upgrades, as well as opportunities to relieve overcrowding in the Chapin attendance cluster with no increase in taxes for the School District Five community.

School District Five employed PFM Financial Advisors, LLC, to work with the District and provide an additional opportunity for public trust as the District seeks this Referendum. Further, Dr. Ross held two different online community forum events and two different in-person community input meetings to share the available options and request feedback. School District Five also presented the information at its various advisory meetings. School District Five administration is grateful to the Board of Trustees for recognizing the needs and authorizing the District to proceed with a demographics study to determine the best path for the District's growth.

## GRADUATION BY THE NUMBERS



## LOOKING FORWARD

2021-2022 was a busy year, full of exciting changes and progress. Our Strategic Plan process provided clarity for our future directions. We approved 4 goals for the next 5 years:

**GOAL I:** We will maintain a safe and secure environment focused on the social and emotional growth and development of all students.

**GOAL II:** We will provide challenging curricula focused on the academic development and college and career readiness of all students.

**GOAL III:** We will recruit, retain, and develop a highly effective, diverse staff.

**GOAL IV:** We will provide challenging curricula focused on the academic development of students in gifted programs and provide equitable opportunities for participation in gifted programs.



As we approach the 2022-2023 academic year, we look forward to more growth and opportunities for success. We appreciate our partnerships with the Board of Trustees, schools, parents, and the community, as we continue to work together to LOVE and GROW our students.

## 2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

DR. AKIL E. ROSS, SR., SUPERINTENDENT





