

Rankin County School District Dropout Prevention Plan 2026 - 2027

RCSD School Board Approved on 7/22/2026 (date)

Shane Sanders, Superintendent

Keith Reed, Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Undray Scott, Assistant Superintendent

Eric Smith, Assistant Superintendent

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Strategic Plan Summary

VISION

Continue a tradition of excellence by providing a world-class education that empowers all to grow through curiosity, discovery and learning.

MISSION

BRING EVERYONE'S STRENGTHS TOGETHER

We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.

GOALS

- We will all experience a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.
- We will all grow intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically through academics, fine arts, athletics, service and extracurricular activities.
- We will all design and deliver a challenging and globally inspired curriculum, meaningful and engaging instruction and rigorous assessments that focus on the continuous improvement of academic achievement.
- We will all use technology and resources for collaboration, innovation, research, analysis and problem-solving.
- We will all operate with fiscal integrity, efficiency, accountability and transparency.
- We will all, as partners with community, support each aspect of every student's educational experience.
- We will all strive to hire, train and retain outstanding professionals.

   #RCSDBg2b | #traditionofexcellence

CORE VALUES (S.T.R.I.V.E.)

Service

Work to benefit others.

Teamwork

Drive success through strong collaboration and communication.

Relationships

Value people by building strong, respectful partnerships among our students, colleagues, families, businesses and communities.

Integrity

Uphold our ethics and principles with every action and every decision.

Vision

Plan for the future with imagination, innovation, creativity and wisdom.

Excellence

Pursue and achieve academic excellence and personal development by delivering a high-quality education to every student.

MOTTO

GREAT to BEST



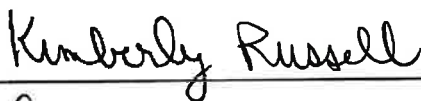
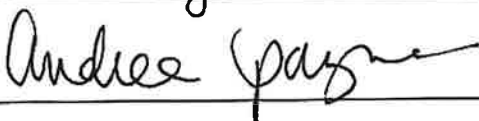
Brandon
Florence
McLaurin
Northwest
Pelahatchie
Pisgah
Puckett
Richland

Rankin County School District

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Dropout Prevention Plan

Signatures

TITLE	SIGNATURE
Shane Sanders Superintendent	
Keith Reed Assistant Superintendent	
Dr. Undray Scott Assistant Superintendent	
Eric Smith Assistant Superintendent	
Ben Stein Assistant Superintendent	
Dr. Amanda Stocks Assistant Superintendent	
Dr. Rico Buckhaulte Executive Director of Federal Programs & Student Support	
Jessica Hodges Executive Director of Academics	
Laura Clark Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction	
Dr. Kimberly Russell Director of Student Support Services/Counseling	
Andrea Payne Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction	
Laura Anne Marshall Student Support Specialist II	

School Data - RCSD - 28 Total Schools			
<i>Elementary Schools</i>	<i>Middle Schools</i>	<i>High Schools</i>	<i>Alternative School</i>
Total Number: 16 PK-5 Grade: 5 PK-6 Grade: 4 PK-1 Grade: 1 PK-2 Grade: 2 2-3 Grade: 1 3-5 Grade: 1 3-6 Grade: 1 4-5 Grade: 1	Total Number: 3 6-8 Grade: 3	Total Number: 8 7-12 Grade: 5 9-12 Grade: 3	Total Number: 1 K-12 Grade: 1

[Link to RCSD enrollment by grade level](#)

Rankin County School District Student Assessment and Accountability Data

The Rankin County School District's Statewide Assessment Results and the Statewide Accountability System for students in grades 3-8 and high school end-of-course subject area assessments for past school years can be found at the link below:

<https://mdek12.org/publicreporting/accountability/>



Rankin County School District
4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates
Five-Year Trend

District/School Name	2017 Cohort (2021 Grade) Cohort N-Cou nt	2017 Cohort (2021 Grade) Graduati on Rate	2017 Cohort (2021 Grade) Dropou t Rate	2018 Cohort (2022 Grade) Cohort N-Cou nt	2018 Cohort (2022 Grade) Graduati on Rate	2018 Cohort (2022 Grade) Dropou t Rate	2019 Cohort (2023 Grade) Cohort N-Cou nt	2019 Cohort (2023 Grade) Graduati on Rate	2019 Cohort (2023 Grade) Dropou t Rate	2020 Cohort (2024 Grade) Cohort N-Cou nt	2020 Cohort (2024 Grade) Graduati on Rate	2020 Cohort (2024 Grade) Dropou t Rate	2021 Cohort (2025 Grade) Cohort N-Cou nt	2021 Cohort (2025 Grade) Graduati on Rate	2021 Cohort (2025 Grade) Dropou t Rate
Rankin Co School District	1,417	92.5	5.3	1,418	92.1	6.4	1,390	92.5	6.3	1,401	94.6	4.0	1,377	94.5	3.9
Brandon High School	427	93.9	3.98	401	93.8	5.2	404	94.3	4.5	398	95.5	3.0	399	95.2	2.5
Florence High School	174	95.4	3.4	178	93.3	6.2	156	92.3	6.4	181	95.0	5.0	152	97.4	2.6
McLaurin Attendance Center	93	90.3	6.5	87	90.8	6.9	73	91.7	8.2	86	91.9	5.8	76	94.7	5.3
Northwest Rankin High School	422	89.6	7.8	433	91.2	7.9	461	89.2	8.9	443	93.9	4.3	439	92.5	5.9
Pelahatchie Attendance Center	64	87.5	9.4	73	84.9	8.2	58	96.6	3.4	58	96.6	3.4	43	95.3	2.3
Pisgah High School	60	93.3	6.7	70	90.0	8.6	65	95.4	4.6	71	94.4	5.6	75	94.7	2.7
Puckett Attendance Center	56	98.2	1.8	56	89.3	8.9	52	94.2	5.8	52	96.2	3.8	57	91.2	5.3
Richland High School	122	95.1	1.6	119	96.6	1.7	119	95.8	3.4	112	95.5	3.6	134	97.0	2.2

Updated 02/10/26

Student Readiness for College and Career

All students and parents are advised about higher-level course offerings at their school through the pre-registration process. All students have the opportunity to enroll in AP and Dual Credit/Enrollment classes. All students are encouraged to push themselves beyond basic courses to enhance their ACT scores and also to enhance learning experiences and deepen knowledge through higher-order thinking skills utilized in dual enrollment, AP, and advanced courses.

Academic assistance is available to all students during specific times of the day that vary by building. Before and after school are options for academic support as well as specific blocks of time during the school day allotted for remediation and extra support. Students identified through data as needing support through the academic tier process are given extra time with an instructor during the day to receive academic support. Students who fail a Carnegie Unit course with a grade between 55-59 can apply for credit recovery. If approved, the students can take the modified course using Grade Results. If a student successfully completes the modified

course then they earn a grade of 60. By using data to identify students who need extra academic support before it is too late, students are college or career-ready upon graduation.

Students in the class of 2023 and beyond are able to choose diploma endorsements to add to the MDE traditional diploma - Distinguished, Academic, CTE/JROTC.

Beginning in 2025-2026, MDE added The Bridge to Career class has an option for students who have not been successful in passing state end of the course assessments after multiple attempts and remediation. The Bridge to Career class equips students with tangible, real-world professional skills while fulfilling the state requirement to pass any of the three state tests. Through hands-on experiences like career portfolio creation and interview preparation, the curriculum connects classroom learning directly to future employment. This practical approach keeps at-risk students engaged and clearly shows them a viable, supported path to earning their high school diploma.

- Grade Results: <https://www.graderesults.com/>
- Differentiated Instruction MTSS: Tiered Intervention for academics and behavior
- Major Clarity Career & College Exploration: <https://majorclarity.com>
- Newsela: <https://solutions.newsela.com/>

Alternative Programs & JDC Transitions

Hinds Community College offers an innovative workforce training program, MI-BEST, dedicated to preparing people who need help with foundational skills for careers by mixing career training with additional support for math, writing, and reading inside the classroom. This program helps provide a clear path toward higher education for students who have not yet earned their high school diploma or GED. This is a program we can suggest to students who have dropped out of school, but are now wanting to continue their education. The goals of the program include:

- Assist students who need to earn their GED to do so while they are also enrolled in college courses focused on preparing them for a career
- Help students to earn one or more certifications that help them get a better job now with a family-sustaining wage
- Allow students to earn college credit that leads to a degree in the future

The Rankin County School District Learning Center is an alternative education school for grades K-12.

Students who are transitioning back to the home school district from the JDC work with a teacher and other youth court pertinent staff from the sponsoring school district and collaborate

with parents, teachers and counselors from the home school district to ensure that the detainee will have a successful transition back to their home school district once released from detention.

Attendance

A student who misses 10% or more of their school days, which averages to just two days a month, for any reason, is considered chronically absent. Every absence, excused or unexcused, (including suspensions), is a learning opportunity lost. Chronically absent students are more likely to fall behind academically and less likely to graduate from high school. Addressing chronic absenteeism and developing good attendance habits is a solvable problem for which we all share responsibility.

Our schools have monthly student support meetings to monitor absences and discuss supports for intervention. RCSD Student Support Services Specialists and MDE School Attendance Officers attend these meetings as well.

Our district also meets monthly with Rankin County Youth Court representatives to discuss student attendance and how we can all work together to provide support to students and families.

District supports include:

- Early attendance monitoring
- Parent outreach
- Attendance teams
- Transportation problem-solving
- Incentives for improved attendance

Career and Technical Education

The Rankin County School District provides multiple career pathway options for high school students, including career academies, academic and career technical education programs of study at the high school, and career technical programs of study at the Pearl-Rankin Career Technical Center. High School Career Academies are school-within-a-school, career-based programs of study that integrate rigorous academic and technical courses aligned to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to transition to a post-secondary institution or career. Programs follow a sequence of CTE courses, which provide opportunities for students to explore and apply 21st-century skills to real-world scenarios.

During their senior year, students can participate in work-based learning and internship experiences related to their careers. In addition to CTE career academies, academic and CTE programs of study are offered which provide integration of rigorous academic and technical curricula with real-world relevance. Academies include Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cyber Security, Culinary, Health Science, Sports Medicine, Educator Preparation, Business, Engineering, Convergent Media Academy, Law and Public Safety, Heavy Equipment, and Firefighter. The Pearl Rankin Career and Technical Center offers programs in Architecture and Drafting, Automotive Services, Business, Marketing and Finance, Collision Repair, Construction, Culinary Arts, Digital Media Technology/Multimedia, Early Childhood Services, Health Science, Welding, and Simulation Animation and Design/Interactive Media Technology.

College Ready Skills

Students are provided opportunities to practice college and career-ready skills through presentations (MDE College and Career Readiness Course), work-based learning classes, etc. Students are also exposed to various careers and colleges through events such as Career Fairs and the RCSD College Fair. Also, students are able to practice these skills through our academy courses, hands-on type internships, and work-based learning experiences.

Students learn to make effective and efficient use of college and career resources through frequent meetings with their school counselor and career coach in addition to using programs on a regular basis such as Major Clarity and Method Test Prep. In extra mini-enrichment periods at some schools, there are lessons taught on college entrance ACT scores and scholarships, and various career opportunities.

RCSD uses Major Clarity as a vehicle for students to complete their ISP's (Individual Success Plans). All students are required to complete a five-year course plan in Major Clarity along with using the program to assist with college and career exploration and goal setting. Major Clarity is monitored throughout the school year and student plans are updated each year with the student, parent and counselor. The student course plans are updated each year.

Dual Credit /College Credit

Students who meet the ACT requirements set forth by Hinds Community College for dual credit/enrollment are highly encouraged to enroll in college classes taught on each high school campus and at the Hinds Community College - Career Tech Rankin Campus.

College Going Culture

Each campus offers multiple college campus visits during the school year (two-year and four-year) to all juniors and seniors. Each student has the opportunity for a "college day" to

explore options offered to them at the college of their choice. All 11th and 12th-grade students attend the RCSD College Fair for exposure to many local, state, and national colleges/universities. Our fair is scheduled for September 30, 2026 at the Hinds Muse Center in Pearl.

Each campus offers students and families support through the FAFSA process by having local agencies (Get2College, Hinds CC), school counselors, and school websites where information is shared and can be accessed. Parents have the opportunity to attend FAFSA days at their student's high school where people from agencies such as Get2College assist them in filling out the FAFSA and provide financial aid advice one-on-one. These events are held virtually as well.

RCSD pays for all sophomores in the district to take the ACT, juniors to take the ACT WorkKeys, and seniors who need ACT scores instead of the MDE End of the Year Assessment requirements. MDE pays for all Juniors to take the ACT each spring. Every student is offered the opportunity to take the ACT/SAT, PSAT/Aspire in sequence and on time. Each campus provides the opportunity for students to prepare for these tests by offering ACT/PSAT/SAT Preparatory classes during the school day. ACT and ACT WorkKeys Boot Camps are offered throughout the district by the RCSD College- and Career-Preparatory Specialist and Mastery Prep.

Every student completes a 5-year plan through Major Clarity, which begins in 6th grade and ends in 12th grade, where they plan their high school course of study, with the ultimate objective being the decision to pursue college at the community college level or at the university level. Students are supported daily by teachers, counselors, and administrators who set a college-going culture through everyday experiences in our district including in-person and virtual college recruiter visits, career exploration through Major Clarity and counselor lessons and classroom visits by adults in varied career fields, and college representatives who are visible and active on campus and virtually in each high school to recruit. Students in 6th grade use Major Clarity throughout the school year to explore various careers and colleges. Students in grades 7th-12th use Major Clarity to explore careers and colleges and financial aid/scholarships in addition to making their 5-year course plan of study.

Students take the College and Career Readiness course where the focus is on investigating colleges and careers based on their interests. Students meet with mentors who give them real-world knowledge of the career(s) that they are interested in pursuing. The district has created a culture where college and careers are the likely next step after high school.

In 2026-2027, Rankin County School District has career coach positions which allows at least 1 career coach to be assigned to each of the 8 Rankin County School District high schools. A career coach's primary responsibility is to assist students in identifying career goals through personal and group consultation. Utilizing leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, career coaches promote academic and personal success by implementing a comprehensive program

that encompasses areas of personal and social development of students as well as academic and career needs.

Curriculum - Teaching and Learning

Rankin County School District Teachers plan instruction that incorporates multiple standards, Best Practices, and 21st-century skills. The following are examples:

- Wellness - entire unit based on health incorporating technology into lessons as well as community involvement (i.e. "Move to Learn", Community Helper, and other character ed assemblies which could be conducted virtually if necessary). Chick-fil-A Core Essentials, Chick-fil-A's Re-Co program, and Seedlings for PreK are also a vital part of our wellness / SEL in RCSD. In 21-22, we implemented teacher-led SEL lessons for grades pre-K - 12 a suggested minimum of 2 times a month.
- Leadership, Accountability & Social Responsibility - PBIS and other positive behavioral systems are introduced at the beginning of the year and expectations are upheld throughout the year; students have the ability to brainstorm, research, and provide input for activities based upon these initiatives.
- Communication & Collaboration - Guidance classes are offered at each elementary school and provide problem-solving opportunities in which students interact together thus promoting teamwork, cooperation, and skills needed for the future. Elementary Counselors use Chick-fil-A Core Essentials curriculum in their guidance classes. General assemblies have been conducted in the past for middle and high schools on topics of social responsibility and ethics. Vector is implemented with middle and high school students to promote all of the skills mentioned. Middle school and High school counselors can utilize the Chick-fil-A ReConnect in classes and school-wide. In 21-22, we implemented teacher-led SEL lessons for grades pre-K - 12 a suggested minimum of 2 times a month along with counselor-led lessons in elementary and middle school.

Rankin County School District teachers relate the content to other disciplines:

Cross disciplines – enrichment teachers integrate ideas from the classroom teachers to help promote understanding of various units and concepts; in turn, classroom teachers incorporate music, reading, physical movement, and counseling topics within their classrooms when appropriate to support a comprehensive educational environment.

Global awareness – encouraged by all educators within each school to make connections, master standards, and provide students with opportunities to be an integral part of the ever-changing global society in which they live (e.g. Native Americans, rainforests, and natural disasters.)

Teachers provide opportunities for students to share ambitions, as well as integrating dress-up days, classroom guest speakers, and assemblies. This promotes early exploration of future career opportunities. Counselors impart information regarding various colleges and lessons geared towards responsibilities and special talents desired in various fields. Beginning in grade 6, all students have the opportunity for career exploration through Major Clarity, our online platform for college and career exploration, as well as where students can update and maintain a 5-year course plan (grade 7 and above). In elementary schools, various aspects of career exploration are embedded in units that are taught at each grade level. Elementary counselors have career-focused months each year.

MTSS Tier Training: Employees receive training through various platforms on the Tier process. All of these are conducted through a variety of methods (virtual meetings, small & large groups, video training, etc). RCSD Student Support Services Dept also conducts MTSS behavior tier training for administrators, counselors and teachers. We partner with REACH MS for training on MTSS also. In 25-26 all of our elementary schools were Tier I model sites through REACH MS. We have one high school (Richland High) that is a Tier I model site through Reach MS. Our goal for 26-27 is for additional high schools to be Tier I model sites thru REACH MS.

RCSD Professional Development

RCSD Summer Professional Development

RCSD Back to School Professional Development

RCSD Counselor Meetings

Suicide Prevention Training

RCSD New Teacher Training

RCSD Director Meetings

For more information on the training opportunities listed above, visit [RCSD Curriculum Webpage](#).

Instruction - Teaching & Learning

Teachers create learning groups within the classroom that provide for varied instruction in the subjects of reading, language arts, and mathematics. Students are paired with other individuals in order to enhance learning within the classroom from one another, as well as teacher-led instruction. Teachers and counselors, along with administrators, create individual student plans through the MTSS process and provide students the opportunity to develop skills with helpful accommodations promoting success. Progress Monitoring: formative and summative assessments are administered frequently and the data is used by teachers and administrators to redesign practice and instruction to fit the needs of the individual students. School Level Data

Meetings are conducted regularly with the support of the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Departments.

Teachers provide technology during instruction for research opportunities such as iPads and computers, as well as for basic learning skills with Smart-boards, Apple TVs, and document cameras. The district provides laptops to all students in grades 7-12 and lessons are integrated and delivered through Google Classroom . The district purchased iPads and Chromebooks for students in grades PreK-6. Lessons are integrated through Google Classroom.

Teachers regularly participate in PLCs at the building level to examine the school-wide design process and use it to take on problems that arise.

Teachers instruct students on how to communicate effectively with each other and set up classroom practices that require them to do so. Collaboration and discussion among students are encouraged and expected. Teachers instruct and model effective communication skills, teach students critical thinking skills, and model collaboration and discussion techniques such as Socratic circles and panel discussions.

State approved individualized computer based Instruction and assessments are used to help teachers understand the root causes behind student challenges. They automatically provide individualized online and teacher-led instruction targeted to each student's unique needs. In addition, easy-to-read reports provide teachers with a detailed action plan for individual and group instruction and the tools to deliver that instruction in any style learning environment.

Gifted Program: Pull-out program for students tested and identified as intellectually gifted. In 21-22, we added 2nd grade as an additional grade to be mass-screened for the gifted program. We are continuing to mass-screen all 1st and 2nd grade students.

I.E.P. – Individualized Education Programs: This is a document created for individual students who receive special education services. It outlines academic and /or behavior goals, services, and accommodations that will be made available for the child. The IEP is developed by the special education teacher, regular education teacher, agency representative (administrator), and parent during an official meeting.

Assessment - Teaching and Learning

Teachers routinely share the rubrics with students that clearly communicate meaningful learning outcomes and criteria for success. Teachers monitor progress throughout each lesson. Teachers focus on breaking down data from common assessments and district assessments to ensure students' success. By sharing rubrics in this way and making changes to them as necessary, two-way communication between learners and teachers is being practiced and knowledge is being gained.

Teachers employ varied assessment strategies that elicit student thinking related to learning outcomes so that teachers have a more complete understanding of students' knowledge and skills. Teachers use a wide variety of resources to help elicit student thinking related to learning outcomes.

Teachers provide instructional interventions based on data from assessments. Teachers provide Tier II interventions for students who do not master skills in math and reading. Interventionists in the schools provide Tier III interventions for students who need additional support beyond Tier II. Timely and targeted opportunities for students to learn are afforded to students, and teachers and interventionists collaborate on data gathered from assessments.

Teachers are responsible for working with students on completing their [RCSD Student Goal Sheets](#). They meet with each of their students to determine what the individual student's goal should be for the current school year. Once the goal is set, teachers meet with each student regularly to determine progress or if assistance is needed.

Teachers regularly provide feedback to students and parents regarding progress on specific learning outcomes. Parents have access to the PowerSchool Parent Portal where they can access student grades at any time. Progress reports and Report Cards are available to parents every nine weeks.

SEL & Student Support

Rankin County School District has a partnership with Region 8 that provides school-based mental health therapists and nurses in our schools. Beginning in school year 21-22 we began implementing teacher-led SEL lessons for grades Pre K - 12 two times a month. RCSD has four mental health therapists in addition to the one crisis/drug counselor we have had for several years. We also have 16 school-based RCSD nurses and 1 nurse manager. We also have 11 behavior specialists.

In 2025-2026 school year we added an at-risk specialist to work in our Title I schools: Richland Elementary, Richland Upper Elementary, Richland High School, McLaurin Elementary, McLaurin High School, Pelahatchie Elementary, and Pelahatchie High School and students from title I schools who are at our Learning Center.

Bully Prevention Awareness - [RCSD Bully Prevention Awareness](#) - policy JDDA

Some RCSD high schools have advisory blocks for college and career planning and state and national test preparation. Middle school students have advisory teams through Cyber Foundations I and II. Counselors visit advisory blocks and prepare lessons that regular advisory teachers use to assist their students with goal setting, long-range plans, and college and career planning.

Teachers work with students during the spring semester for pre-registration and also use the career exploration program “Major Clarity”. Counselors are assigned to work with the same “group” of students throughout their education experience in a particular building. This enhances relationships between families and students and their school counselor so the counselor acts as a true advisor.

Students have access to Google Classroom and correspondence courses from state universities.

Some academic supports that are in place include things such as summer enrichment programs and tutoring session times available during flex block (where offered), before and after school. Students identified as needing extra academic support are scheduled in a course block during the day where they can receive the interventions needed to help them be successful.

Students in grades 6-12 have accounts with Major Clarity that enable them to explore their career interests and future-ready skills. Students are also afforded opportunities through College- and Career- Readiness, Work Based Learning, and academy opportunities to be exposed to real-world experiences and obtain knowledge and skills beyond the classroom.

Adult/Student Relationships

In 2021-22, we began implementing teacher-led SEL lessons for grades pre-K - 12 a minimum of 2 times per month. Additionally, welcome letters are on school websites, and social media messages are sent to welcome students and parents to the new school year. Orientations and back-to-school nights are held in the first few weeks of the school year. Parent conference days and opportunities are presented throughout the year as well.

School teams meet frequently by grade level or department to discuss needs and progress of students.

Students are assigned a homeroom and in high schools an advisory block in some schools. Students meet with their advisor and/or counselor to review grades and receive instruction on goal setting, standardized test taking, college and career and long range plans.

Students who are reassigned to the RCSD Learning Center for any period of time are assigned an adult mentor from their home school.

Administrators and counselors use the school webpage and Parent Square, a communication and family engagement platform to send messages and connect with parents and guardians. Schools also use social media platforms to deliver information to their audience daily. All RCSD web pages and social media platforms are also available to be translated into other languages.

Collaborative Work Orientation

Teachers participate in observing their peers and give and receive feedback in order to become better instructors, revise instruction, and change strategies if necessary. The MS Teacher Growth Rubric is used to give teachers feedback and to keep them accountable for classroom management and effective instruction.

Back to School 2026-2027 - Professional Learning - This back-to-school professional learning is provided for all elementary & secondary teachers in the RCSD. Teachers and staff may choose programs of interest for morning and afternoon sessions. In addition, RCSD offers the following:

- Principal Academy
- Pre-K-12 Principal & Director Meetings
- Superintendent Teacher Advisory
- Superintendent Student Advisory
- Elementary Principal Advisory Committee
- Secondary Principal Advisory Committee
- R.I.S.E. - RCSD Induction, Support, and Encouragement Program (new teachers with 0-3 years of experience - 3-year mentoring program)

Staff regularly participates and engages in PLCs and professional development to enhance their teaching and instruction through the support and guidance of peers. Sharing of lessons and assignments is also beneficial to improving instruction. Data is analyzed and used to drive instruction.

Staff members hold each of their departments and peers accountable for improving student learning, sharing best practices, giving and receiving feedback from benchmarking, and participating in PLCs and PD to enhance their instruction. The Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Departments provide instructional guidance and support to administrators and teachers.

When new hires are made, administrators may collaborate with teachers and departments on interviewing and hiring people who will be the "best fit" for the school and will align with the school's mission and vision.

Shared Responsibility & Collaborative Decision Making

Teachers are responsible for advisory classes that meet at various times (depending on location) and examine college and career options through the computer program Major Clarity. Also, students receive guided practice on ACT testing during the advisory block along with

subject area testing practice, pre-registration, and course information for the next school year. Lessons are also taught on the importance of education, future salaries, etc.

Student groups and classes participate in various activities throughout the year to ensure community engagement and to contribute to citizenship. Programs that involve retired military persons, having grandparents and community mentors in our buildings, students performing volunteer service through various organizations, clubs sponsoring needy families, and various student groups welcoming new students. These are a few of the many things our schools do to encourage students to become better citizens.

- **Student Council:** The Student Council is involved in various service projects throughout the year to assist those within the school community. This club prides itself in setting goals to assist students in becoming positive, productive citizens.
- **SAVE Promise / Kindness Clubs** - Students Against Violence Everywhere
- **National Junior Beta Club & Beta Club**
- **Key Club and Others:** Local schools have clubs that provide students with opportunities for community service.

Through the MTSS process, teachers create many evidenced-based, innovative instructional practices to engage and help with the challenging students in their classrooms.

Staff members are provided opportunities to give input on school decisions. Some schools do things such as surveys or Google forms while others have active discussions in faculty meetings and PLCs to achieve this goal.

Sustainability

Staff members share lessons and resources and provide feedback and advice to one another after benchmarking. Teachers routinely meet and share “best practices”. Mentor teachers actively assist new hires with lessons and resources.

PLCs are provided for staff participation to enhance teaching and share best practices. Data is reviewed, and lessons and objectives are planned around student achievement and the critical question of “What do we want students to learn”?

Through advisory council meetings, the faculty/staff feels ownership in a wide array of decisions made and can speak confidently to stakeholders in the community and school regarding these decisions.

Our schools use tools such as Google Drive and Google Classroom to easily disseminate resources and materials received at training and professional developments. These tools are also used to share lessons and classroom resources by teachers and counselors.

Professional Inquiry

National standards and research-based tools are used by teachers and are monitored and reviewed by administrators to help enhance best practices in the classroom and address deficiencies through feedback and collaboration. Teachers regularly attend PLCs and professional development opportunities to better their instructional practice and reach a wide variety of learning styles and needs in their classrooms.

Shared Mission & Vision/ Leadership

Staff members participate in professional development where a common vision and mission are established. Through regular meetings and collaboration, teachers promote the vision and mission in classrooms and create positive learning environments that foster the vision and mission.

Change Agent / Leadership

Leadership teams meet regularly within school buildings. In these meetings, teachers are encouraged to collaborate with school principals in exploring solutions to meet the needs of all students and to think of creative ways to reach at-risk students. Also, data is analyzed and current trends and "issues" in the school are addressed.

Principals take part in a district advisory team and various state commissions or committees. They then bring the knowledge they acquire from around the state back to our district and implement best practices in our district.

Teachers can participate in various leadership teams at the school and district levels. Students have numerous opportunities to build leadership skills, including but not limited to, student government, JROTC, and other clubs and organizations.

Focus on Powerful Teaching & Learning

Schools schedule regular PLCs, faculty meetings, data meetings, leadership team meetings, and growth model debriefings. Schools are responsible for identifying and participating in a school-wide book study based on best practices in classroom instruction and teaching.

Staff members participate in professional learning communities and professional development activities. Through department & grade level meetings and PLCs, teachers hold each other accountable for improving teaching practices and professional learning.

School leaders & teachers collect and analyze data, analyze summative assessments, and schedule growth debriefings. Each school has a data plan that is submitted to the district office to explain how they will use and analyze data within their particular building to improve student achievement. Teachers are trained on how to analyze data and how to use it effectively in instruction. The Rankin County School District has an Elementary Instructional Data Specialist and a Secondary Instructional Data Specialist that supports the school leaders and teachers.

Principals facilitate PLC meetings and RCSD curriculum-specific professional development. Principals are instructional leaders in their buildings and are responsible for coaching staff and implementing new programs and curriculums.

Culture of High Expectations

The principal holds staff accountable for ensuring the success of each student through data meetings and progress reports. Departments within the school regularly meet and collaborate together to look at “at-risk” students and what can be done to help them grow.

Teachers are held accountable for the full engagement and implementation of a rigorous and challenging learning environment. Teachers and principals collaborate frequently with the principal being the instructional leader in the school. The principal demonstrates evidence of high expectations for all staff that include routine conversations with staff regarding school standards for rigorous and challenging learning environments for all students through the Mississippi Educator & Administrator professional growth rubric.

Each month, schools hold committee meetings to focus on attendance and behavior data and trends. In these meetings, students who are at risk in either area are discussed and plans are developed and evaluated based on individual needs to try to help the student improve their attendance and or behavior. School wide data trends are also discussed and goals put in place or adjusted depending on what the data shows.

Shared Leadership

Staff have a variety of ways to give input on decisions that are appropriate for staff to be a part of. Principals ensure when using groups to make decisions that a wide variety of diversity is incorporated in the makeup of the decision-making group of stakeholders.

The principal actively encourages teacher leadership through traditional school-based leadership opportunities, including department/grade level leaders, school improvement teams, etc. The department heads are responsible for leading regular meetings with their peers and teachers are encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities beyond the school walls. The principal promotes staff participation in district and external leadership opportunities and

enables staff to lead school-based conversations about those experiences. - MDE (Mississippi Department of Education) Committees and SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) district committees.

Collaborative Work Environment

Through regularly scheduled PTO meetings, and events such as back-to-school nights, pre-registration nights, advisory blocks, and class meetings, the staff and administration proactively develop relationships with students, families, and community partners. Schools are encouraged to nominate and participate in student, teacher, staff member, principal, and parent of the month programs, and also to sponsor clubs and other organizations.

Teachers administer benchmarks and collaborate with peers in their local building and across the district. The collaboration includes giving and receiving feedback on assessment results and instructional practices. Staff share instructional practices, lessons learned, and current challenges with peers during common planning opportunities through PLCs (Professional Learning Communities), morning zero block, common planning blocks, monthly book studies, weekly/monthly unit planning, ELA (English/Language Arts) assessment analysis, and Math assessment analysis, as well as "plus day" planning where applicable.

Autonomous Governance

Regular administrative advisory meetings are held with internal stakeholders. Principals meet regularly to discuss policies, curriculum & instruction, and praise for staff on the administrative level. On the school level, many schools have leadership teams involving department heads and other key leaders within the school to talk about policies and procedures and curriculum and instruction issues.

Principals collaborate with RCSD on local school budgets. Our budgets are prepared at the district level. Various organizations within the school community, such as PTO and private foundations designed to raise educational funds, can supplement the school's budget as needs arise throughout the year.

Our schools actively advertise through social media outlets and our school and district websites the various social/ emotional/ behavioral curriculum themes and our district strategic plan summary. During the pre-registration season in the spring of each year, students who will be in high school are allowed to tour the various programs available at their local high school through either a Pre-Registration night or a day in which 8th graders are brought to the high school to tour. In addition, 9th graders are taken to the Pearl branch of Hinds CC Rankin to tour the Career and Technical Center and view the programs available there.

County Office personnel and school principals are involved in identifying who will attend professional development from each building and planning and designing the district-level professional development to be beneficial to staff.

Each RCSD school has a schedule that is designed for that school's individual needs. Principals regularly adjust the timing within the school day to meet the needs of students and faculty, such as state test review days, etc. Teachers and staff are regularly consulted over what changes would be best for the school and benefit students the most.

Family Engagement & School /Community Collaboration

RCSD offers many programs/services regarding family engagement and school/community collaboration:

- **School Websites:** Every school in RCSD has a website. Information for students and parents is updated regularly.
- **Parent Square** - district notification system for sending parent notifications and emergency alerts
- **SAY SOMETHING** hotline/ app to report any concerns from students. It can be reported anonymously.
- **Open House:** This event is held annually to provide parents with essential information pertaining to his or her child's education. Parents and students attend a briefing conducted by school administration and visit classrooms to review the details of the classroom syllabus with teachers.
- **Parent-Community Surveys:** Parents and community members provide feedback annually about the schools' programs, safety, and general functioning via survey. The information is collected and analyzed to assist the principal and district in the development of Title I school-wide plans which detail such plans as school reform initiatives, timely assistance to students, professional development, and highly-qualified teachers and teacher assistants.
- **School Resource Officers:** Every school has access to a police officer.
- RCSD has 16 nurses and 1 nurse manager for the 2026-2027 school year.
- RCSD has 4 mental health therapists for the 26-27 school year along with our 1 crisis counselor to help deal with student mental health needs.
- **Career Speakers:** All RCSD schools have career speakers who either visit the schools at various times during the school year or meet virtually with groups.
- **Partnership with local businesses** to provide student rewards/incentives
- **Region 8 Partnership:** Region 8 provides school-based mental health therapists and nurses in our schools.
- **MDE School Attendance Officers**
- **Junior Auxiliary of Rankin County:** The Junior Auxiliary works with our schools in helping provide school supplies, clothing, etc for our students in need.

- **First Responders Lunch:** First Responders are invited to eat lunch in any RCSD school cafeteria on any school day. This encourages healthy relationships between RCSD students and First Responders.
- **Elementary & Secondary Student of the Month**
- **Red Ribbon Week -** Schools participate in the national Red Ribbon Week to educate students on the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- **Read Across America Week -** Elementary schools participate in Read Across America week to celebrate and engage students in literature and reading activities. School activities include community guest readers, dress up days, and other fun and engaging reading activities.
- **SAVE Promise Clubs (Kindness clubs) -** all schools with grades 2-12
- **FAFSA Day/Workshops -** schools hold workshops for educating parents on completing financial aid, host set days for parents to come fill out financial aid application
- **Rankin College Fair -** partnering with MACRO, this is held annually for all juniors and seniors.
- **Get 2 College teams up with our middle & high schools to offer workshops on a variety of topics from colleges & scholarships to careers and applications.**
- **Hinds Community College Partnership:** Rankin County School District and HCC have established a partnership to provide students the opportunity to take dual credit classes.
- **Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports:** Each school has a positive behavior plan in place. Many of our schools are PBIS schools that have been recognized as a model site for PBIS. Students are rewarded in a variety of ways based on improvements in grades, behavior, and attendance.
- **College and Career Planning:** Counselors meet with each student to discuss schedules and career planning and are available to discuss with parents/guardians. The student's ISP is shared electronically with parents from the Major Clarity platform. The in person meeting should take place during their 9th, 10th, and 11th-grade years.
- **RCSD Career Fair:** Local businesses and organizations participate in the career fair and students in grades 11th and 12th attend.
- **Orientation:** New student orientation is held in July/August of each year to welcome all ninth-grade students and parents.
- **Parent-Student Workshops:** Workshops are held throughout the school year. Parents are informed about the timetable for the senior year. Information that is shared with parents may include NCAA eligibility, financial aid, college information, career pathways, and any other necessary information deemed appropriate by the local schools. Virtual platforms are also used to conduct these meetings. Counselors utilize Google Classroom in middle and high schools for students to be able to find information in a centralized place.
- **Awards programs:** Local schools hold awards programs to recognize students for a wide variety of accomplishments, not limited just to academics.

School/Program Sustainability

Advisory Councils are created for teachers, new teachers, and students by the superintendent at the district level. We strive to achieve this goal with our articulation agreement with Hinds Community College and offer dual credit in the secondary setting in every high school within the district. We also offer a wide variety of Advanced Placement courses. We have a district Strategic Plan Summary that our superintendent has made public and visible to all by placing posters in all local schools to create community awareness of district goals, mission, and vision. Each department in our district office and each school has its own strategic plan that aligns with the district plan.

Facilities & Resources

Adequate space in buildings provides the ability to collaborate. Teachers and staff are provided a variety of curriculum and technology resources in order to produce lifelong learners and high achievers. Technology is readily available to all staff and students. All students in grades 7-12 are provided a Macbook computer (\$50 deposit) and are able to utilize Google Classroom and other online learning platforms. Students in elementary grades may also be issued a device by RCSD to work remotely if needed and to enhance educational opportunities for all students.

Collaborative Work Orientation

Staff meets and collaborates with building level peers and has common planning time in many of our schools in order to enhance cross curricular and vertical development. Staff also attend regularly scheduled district training and professional developments.

The mission of Schools of Innovation is to better prepare students for success in life and work by allowing schools flexibility in structure and implementation for requisite success. Richland High School was awarded this distinction by MDE.