

Richland County Community Unit School District No. 1

www.rccu1.net

State of the District Report 2021



RCCU1 Annual State of the District Report January 21, 2021

Introduction

Each January since 2003, the Richland County School District has created an annual State of the District Report to communicate with the Board of Education the state of education in the school district. This communication typically includes an assortment of student data, specific initiatives in the different schools, financial data for the district, and much more.

In past years this annual report has had many different forms, and at times the report has been a lengthy document of 12 or more pages. In an effort to create a report that is shorter, but still includes information that is important to stakeholders, the Richland County School District Administrative Team created a strategic dashboard in January 2019. This strategic dashboard is easy to navigate and includes up to date data and relevant information. The information that follows will provide board members and members of the community a summary of the strategic dashboard and what users of the dashboard can expect to find there.

2020 In Review

There were two issues that dominated the Year 2020 in the Richland County School District. Those two issues are the renovation of the Richland County High School and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning.

RCHS Renovation Project

As the year 2020 ended, the renovation of RCHS stands at more than 90% complete. The timeline of this project may be traced back to January 2016 when the RCCU1 Board of Education issued a charge to develop a citizen advisory committee to study the topic of a long-range facility plan for the school district. After numerous meetings of this committee and five larger community engagement meetings that included several hundred community members, the recommendation was made to the school board to pursue a large scale renovation of the high school facility.

The physical work on the high school renovation project began in the spring/summer of 2019 with Phase 1 construction. This included site utility work, asbestos abatement, and the demolition of the auditorium, southwest entrance, and the hallway behind the gymnasium. Phase 2 began in the fall of 2019 with new construction of the auxiliary gymnasium, commons area and new theater. This work continued as the year 2020 began. When the school closure took place in the spring of 2020, the renovation of the existing spaces began. At the writing of this report, the auxiliary gymnasium and theater are scheduled for completion in the first week of February 2021.

At the time the renovation project began there were two main commitments made to the community. The first commitment was to accomplish a major renovation so the facility met the three priorities of enhanced safety and security, better accessibility to those that had mobility challenges, and an updated and modern learning environment that would serve district students for the next three generations. This commitment was met as every space of the building was impacted and each of the three priorities were accomplished through the renovation. The second commitment was to complete this renovation without impacting the property tax rate of the citizens of Richland County. Through the use of alternate revenue bonds funded by the 1% sales tax and a restructuring of the district's existing debt, this commitment was also met. The current tax rate from the 2020 tax levy indicates that this tax rate is lower than the five-year average.

COVID-19 Impact

On March 12, 2020 the school district ended the 3rd term of the 2019-2020 school year and had a 4-day weekend prior to the start of the 4th term. By the time this weekend was over, the entire state of Illinois had moved to remote learning and there would be no return to in-person instruction for the remainder of that school year. Teachers, administrators, and educational support staff came together very quickly to develop a plan that provided continuity of education for the students of the Richland County School District.

During the summer of 2020, three different committees were formed to develop the school reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. These committees included an Instructional Planning Committee, a Health and Wellness Committee, and a Facilities and Operations Committee. Approximately 75 staff members served on these committees and helped to develop a comprehensive plan that adhered to the public health guidelines and allowed for in-person learning to take place throughout the school district.

During the first half of the 2020-2021 school year, education in the Richland County School District has looked different than it has in past years. Administrators, teachers, and support staff have shown tremendous agility and flexibility as they have balanced in-person and remote learning. Throughout the district, 10% - 15% of students are participating in fully remote learning. While there have been quarantined students and staff and students and staff that have tested positive for COVID-19, the school reopening plan has proven effective. By limiting exposure of students and staff to possible infection, following the school reopening plan, and adhering to public health guidelines, the school buildings have been able to remain open except for a 7-day move to fully remote learning at Richland County Elementary School.

Richland County Community Unit #1 Strategic Dashboard

Those individuals interested in a deeper look at education in the Richland County School District may access the district's strategic dashboard at www.rccu1.net. The strategic dashboard link is at the bottom of the district's homepage. A direct link to the dashboard can be found at <https://ecriss.ecragroup.com/strategy/Home/Index?Dashboard=RIC001> .

The strategic dashboard has two main components. The first component is a Home page that provides some basic information about the school district, including a brief description of the school district, the mission and vision of the school district, and coming soon after the high school renovation is complete, a short video highlighting some key parts of the school district.

The second main component of the strategic dashboard is an Indicators page. This is where a user will find most of the information he/she is looking for. There are seven main Indicators that include District Characteristics, District and School Highlights, Learning Environment, Student Achievement and Success, Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Opportunities, Finances and Operations, and RCHS Renovation. Each of these Indicators has several tiles that provide a user with a deeper dive into the information he/she wants to see. A brief description of each Indicator is below.

District Characteristics

There are six tiles that provide demographic information about the students that attend school in the Richland County School District. This demographic information includes student enrollment, student diversity, students with special needs, student mobility, students identified as low-income, and students with English as a second language.

District & School Highlights

There are four tiles in this section of the dashboard. The district and each school has a tile that provides some basic information, as well as highlighting specific initiatives and accomplishments of each school.

Learning Environment

This indicator has seven tiles that describe the learning environment of the school district. Users can find information from the school climate and culture survey that is taken each year, student attendance, school safety, student/teacher ratio, student/administrator ratio, instructional technology, and preschool.

Student Achievement & Success

Student assessment data is an important part of any school. However, there is more to student achievement and success than a test score. This indicator has six tiles with information to help users better understand what student achievement and success looks like in the Richland County School District. Along with test data from state and local assessments, one can also find information about high school graduation rate, college-credits earned while in high school, and Kindergarten readiness. It is also important to note that some of the data in this section of the dashboard is incomplete as various types of student assessments were suspended last spring due to the school closure.

Extra-Curricular & Co-Curricular Opportunities

Some of the most meaningful and exciting learning opportunities take place outside of the regular classroom. The Richland County School District believes that this learning enriches a

student's experience in school, and RCCU1 provides students with outstanding opportunities to explore their interests. This indicator has five tiles that provide data about student opportunities and participation rates at RCMS and RCHS.

Finance & Operations

There are eight tiles that make up this indicator. Information about the board of education, school district fund balances, expenditures and revenue sources, the district's financial profile score, and a breakdown of the district budget and annual tax levy can be found in this section.

RCHS Renovation

The Richland County High School renovation is a significant event in the school district and within the community. The renovation planning began in January of 2017, with actual demolition and construction getting underway in June of 2019. Within this indicator one will find design drawings, a project schedule, and photographs/videos of the renovation as it progresses.

Conclusion

The word unprecedented has been frequently used to describe the events of the Year 2020. That word certainly applies to many of the occurrences that have taken place in the Richland County School District this past year. Time will tell what the lasting impact, both positive and negative, will be on the school district. Undoubtedly, there will be positive changes that result from innovations developed by teachers, administrators, and support staff as they have explored new ways to deliver classroom instruction. These changes may allow for additional ways to engage students in learning and provide them with additional learning opportunities. Also, the loss of the last ¼ of the 2019-2020 school year and the disruptions to the 2020-2021 school year from COVID-19 will have an impact on student learning that is difficult to predict. Through an intentional assessment of student learning needs, this impact will be mitigated so that students have the tools they need to move forward in their learning.

With all of the challenges faced, RCCU1 is in a solid position to move forward. There has been a continued focus on doing what is best for students, including prioritizing health and safety with all decisions. As 2021 begins, the challenges stated in this report have not gone away, but their impact will be manageable due to the effort and commitment of the district's administration, faculty, and staff.