

Renville County West Strategic Planning: Data

RCW Focus Groups

- Participants: 24 groups, 125 people
- 15 community/parent groups, 57 people
- 6 student groups, 46 students
- 3 staff groups, 22 staff members

RCW Survey

- Participants: 69 respondents.
- 38 parents
- 13 teachers
- 4 other school staff
- 10 community members
- 1 school board member
- 0 students
- 3 “others”

General Impressions

The RCW School District was often described as having a close knit, family type of feel. Having all students, pre-K through high school in one building seems to contribute to this warm, caring atmosphere. The majority of the people who participated in the focus groups were graduates or married to graduates of the RCW School District. There was pride that many of the teachers were also graduates of RCW and that there were a number of young teachers returning to the community.

Students, community members, and parents had very complimentary things to say about teachers and staff. Words used to describe the teachers and staff were dedicated, caring, helpful, nice, and friendly. Students reported that they feel teachers want them to succeed. Areas of improvement for teachers would be using technology more effectively and using a variety of teaching strategies, especially those that allow for more hands on learning.

RCW was commended for being one of the first districts in the area to implement a one to one initiative with iPads. There was a strong appreciation for the opportunity for students to earn college credits while in high school. The voluntary pre-K program is valued. Communication with parents was often mentioned as being very good. Financial and life skills were highlighted as some of the top skills that students need for the future. RCW does not have Business or FACS classes where these skills are typically taught.

Overall, the RCW School District has the support of staff, parents, community and students. There seems to be a desire to expand this partnership. Being a small district made up of several small districts, there is a desire to solidify the interdependence between school and community. One way to accomplish this is by finding additional ways to communicate with the communities.

Student participation in sports and extra-curricular activities is reportedly low, however there is excitement about the robotics program. Students feel that the lunch program could improve and that the amount of time given to eat lunch could be longer. They also indicated that it would be nice to have a commons area. Some bullying was reported in the 7th and 8th grades. Favoritism was also said to occur.

The board was applauded for beginning the long range planning process. Developing this strategic plan should provide solid direction for RCW's future.

1. What do you appreciate about RCW Schools?

- Teachers. (helpful, caring, committed, work well together)
- Being in a pre-K-12 building. (close-knit, sense of community, family)
- Staff. (grew up here, dedicated)

2. What characteristics are important for an effective school district?

- Teachers/Staff. (dedicated, positive, passionate about their job, understanding, enjoys their job, nurturing, makes connections with students)
- Really good communication.
- Supportive community.
- Variety of opportunities for students.
- Hands-on learning, use of a variety of teaching strategies.
- Up-to-date Technology.
- Strong Leadership.
- Good Administration.
- No bullying.

3. Looking ahead to 2027, if CNN was going to do a story on RCW Public Schools, what do you hope that they would highlight?

	Total	Survey	Focus Groups
Academic success	44	15	29
Successful sports teams	18	5	13
Community and school partnerships	18	3	15
Student successes	15	3	12
Leading the way in technology	15	4	11
Growth in student enrollment	14	6	8
Great food served at school	12	0	12
New building	11	1	10

4. What things are currently in place to help us accomplish that success story?

- Caring Staff (23), Young teachers. (6)
- Good technology. (iPads)
- Activities beyond sports. (Robotics was specifically mentioned.)
- Community support.
- Building improvements.
- Good communication with parents.

5. What things are missing?

- Communication. (marketing, what is going on at RCW, sharing successes)
- Student participation in sports, music, and other extracurricular activities.
- Advisory groups/mental health needs.
- Strong leadership.
- Life skills education. (FACS, CTE courses)
- Better lunch.
- Better cafeteria and/or commons area.

6. What do we want all students to know and be able to do when they leave RCW Senior High?

	Total	Survey	Focus Groups
Life skills	73	21	52
Academics	51	39	12
Personal finance	36	14	22
Communicate Effectively	25	11	14
How to apply to college and for jobs	24	11	13
Know what career/job you are interested in	23	10	13
Have a strong work ethic	21	10	11
How to balance a checkbook	19	6	13
To be respectful	19	9	10

7. How does technology impact student learning?

- It gets in the way of socialization.
- It makes learning more fun, engaging, and is motivating.
- It is both good and bad. There needs to be a balance.
- It is distracting and can hinder learning.
- It allows students to learn faster/find information quicker.

We asked students, "What types of technology seem most helpful?"

- iPad. (22)
- Chromebook or laptop. (17)
- We need better infrastructure.
- Smartboards/Promethean boards are nice.
- Security system is good.
- Students and teachers need to be using technology more.

8. School facilities

Seventy four percent of the survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the current school facilities. This mirrors the sentiment of the focus group participants. The school facilities recently underwent an addition. The new elementary wing addition has large classrooms, but lacks adequate restrooms, especially for the preschool students. The weight room/fitness center is a nice addition, however it is missing an outside access door, so community utilization is now limited. The new gym was designed to be a

practice gym and is now being used as a competition gym. There were concerns about adequate seating for the competition gym. The district may want to consider developing a long range plan for facilities.

9. What are the qualities that make the RCW School District unique? What makes it different from the surrounding school districts?

	Total	Survey	Focus Groups
All grades in one school building	30	12	18
Smaller than most schools	19	13	6
Close knit and cohesive	18	6	12
Teachers – caring, supportive, dedicated	17	11	6
Diverse student body	15	6	9
Nothing	15	11	4

10. How effective is the RCW School District in the following areas:

	Highly Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective
Academic success for all students	5	35	27	1
Athletic opportunities	6	39	20	3
Bullying prevention	4	22	26	16
Career counseling	2	11	26	19
Mental health counseling	3	25	25	10
Opportunities for earning college credits	15	36	11	1
Opportunities for gifted and talented	3	13	30	18
Opportunities to participate in music	16	36	15	1
Opportunities to receive extra help	10	31	19	8
Special Education Services	16	35	13	0
Variety of course offerings	4	28	27	6
Variety of extra-curricular activities (non-athletic)	5	26	30	7

	Highly Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective
Welcoming environment	11	36	17	4
Embracing diversity	11	36	22	0
Communication with parents	5	31	23	10
Communication with the community	3	21	30	13
Emphasis on life-long learning	1	26	32	8
Parent and family involvement	4	22	36	7
Fair and equitable treatment of all students	7	26	26	9
High expectations for students	8	29	25	6
Respectful learning environment	5	36	25	3

Safe learning environment	13	33	20	3
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