

2025–2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

# RAMS **XII**

Learn | Connect | Contribute | Succeed



Rockford Public Schools

Quality Community – Quality Schools  
*Together Building a Tradition of Excellence*



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# SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD PRESIDENT



To our Rockford Public Schools Community:

To get where we want to go, we must know where we are going.

For over thirty years, the Rockford Public Schools has made sure we knew where we were going through our RAMS planning process, the Rockford Action Model for Success. Every three years since 1989, we have taken the time to look back so that we can look ahead. The RAMS planning process has allowed our district to identify where we want our district to go.

This planning process has enabled our district to set an intentional course and create excellent outcomes for students and the community. There are many reasons to have RAM Pride.

Some highlights include:

- Student achievement that consistently ranks high in both the county and state.
- Positive school climates and cultures that promote safety, belonging, and student engagement.
- Community support for bond proposals that have led to increased learning opportunities for all.
- Unique and rigorous instructional programming that includes college partnerships, multilingual opportunities, individualized learning paths, and career exploration.
- Robust co-curricular programming in fine arts, clubs, athletics, and community-based programs.



Over the past year, we have worked on gathering input and listening to the needs and hopes of stakeholders from the Rockford Public Schools community. From these conversations, we have created our roadmap for the next three years - RAMS XII. This strategic plan is divided into five key pillars: Academic Excellence, Wellness and Preparedness, Social Responsibility and Community Engagement, Collaborative Culture, and Organizational Effectiveness. The priorities embedded in these pillars tell our story and define our future influence. Over the course of the next three years, we will implement action, reflect on progress, and strive toward our destination.

We are excited about the Rockford Public Schools' future. Our RAMS XII plan will help us continue to move forward and allow us to Learn, Connect, Contribute, and Succeed.

Dr. Steve Matthews  
Superintendent, Rockford Public Schools

Jarrod Folsom  
President, Rockford Public Schools Board of Education

## OUR MISSION AND VISION



### *Our Commitment to Excellence*

#### Vision

**Rockford Public Schools** is committed to fostering a rigorous, cohesive learning environment that challenges and supports each student, equipping them for **success now and in the future.**

#### Mission

**Rockford Public Schools** will be a community of educational excellence, where students are challenged to **think critically, act compassionately, and succeed boldly.**



# Rockford Public Schools and the Rockford Community

## SHARE A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

### WHO WE ARE

#### OUR DISTRICT

- 7,700+ Students
- 1,300+ Employees
- 500+ Teachers & Professional Staff



The Rockford School district is **100 square miles** and a northern suburb of Grand Rapids. RPS serves the City of Rockford and parts of **6 townships** in Northeast Kent County



#### Elementary Buildings

- Belmont Elementary
- Cannonsburg Elementary
- Crestwood Elementary
- Edgerton Trails Elementary
- Lakes Elementary
- Meadow Ridge Elementary
- Parkside Elementary
- Roguewood Elementary
- Valley View Elementary



#### Middle School Buildings

- East Rockford Middle School
- North Rockford Middle School



#### High School Buildings

- Rockford Freshman Center
- Rockford High School
- River Valley Academy



All schools recognized as State of Michigan **BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS**



**OUR FOCUS:** Ensuring that every student is part of a supportive school community and is given opportunities to find their place and flourish.



**CORE VALUES:** Student-Centered Action, Respect, Transparency, Collaboration



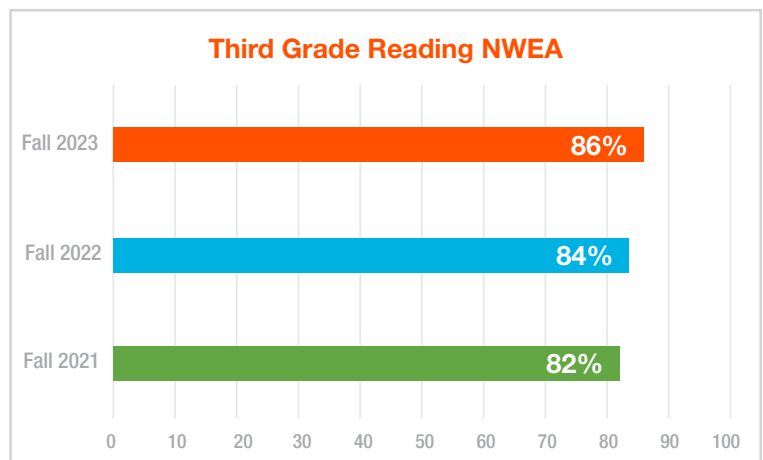
**STAFF COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT:** We take collective responsibility for the success of every student.



# BUILDING CAPACITY AND IMPROVING RESULTS FOR ALL

**A school district on the rise, RPS' student achievement trend has been increasing steadily and opportunities for academic and career-based experiences lead the region.**

- 2023 - All Schools in our District **Earned A's for state testing** proficiency and growth
- Student Achievement Results - **top three districts** in Kent County
- Leads Kent County in opportunities for students to **earn college credit**
- College Attendance Rate after college: **80%**
- College Board Recognized **Advanced Placement District**
- Recognized in the region as a **leader in literacy** focused instructional framework and practices.
- Embedded systems of academic support to ensure **high levels of learning** for all.



# PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

The following are characteristics that our school community has identified as priorities to nurture in the journey of each student.



Critical  
**THINKER**



Academically  
**PROFICIENT**



Socially and  
Emotionally **AWARE**



Personally  
**RESPONSIBLE**



Career and College  
**READY**



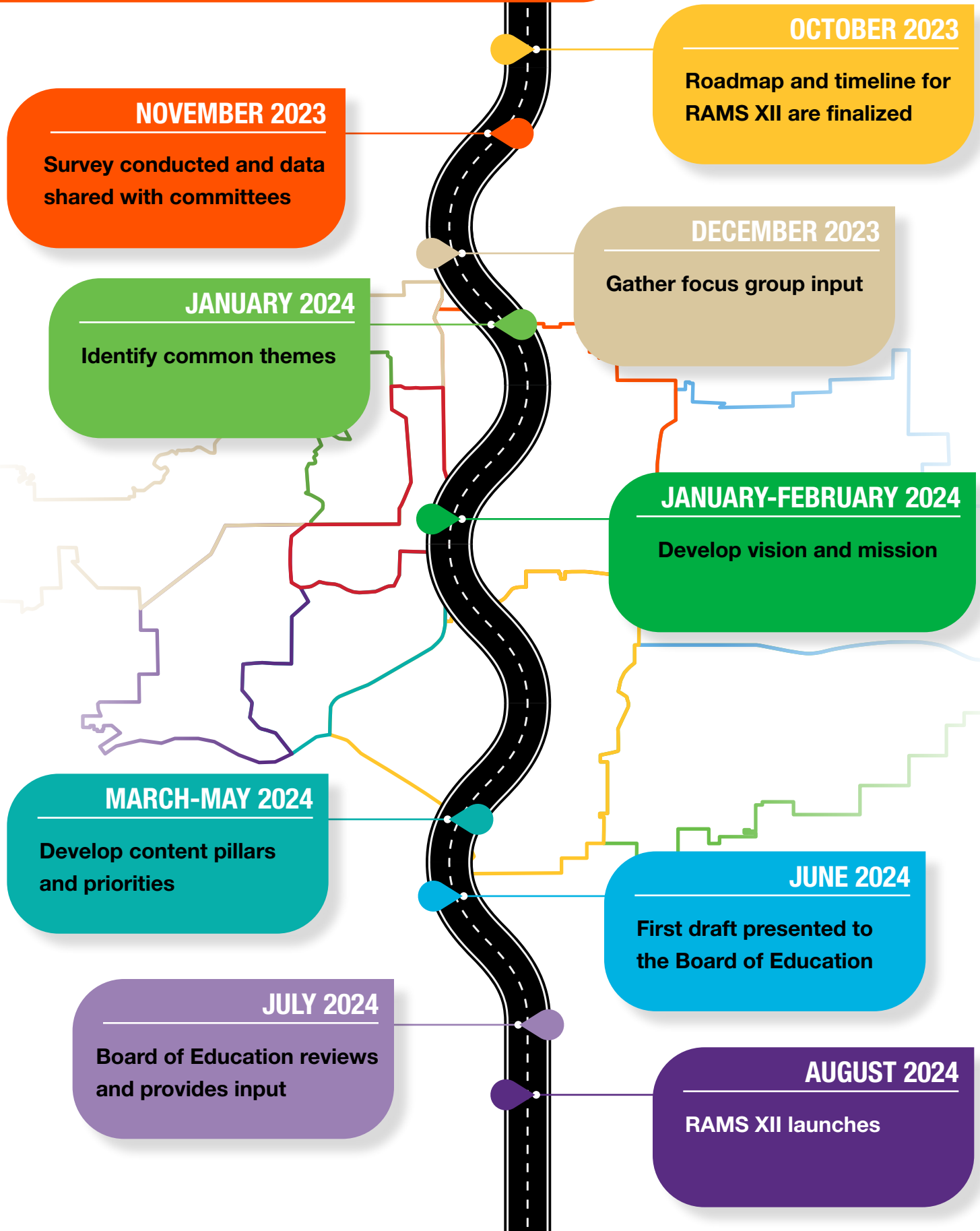
Problem  
**SOLVER**



Effective  
**COMMUNICATOR**



# THE ROADMAP PLANNING PROCESS





## WHAT WE HEARD

### At Rockford Public Schools,

- High-quality learning opportunities where students can grow in critical thinking skills and then achieve future successes based on their experiences at RPS.
- Students who are engaged in their community, able to think critically, culturally competent, and ready for the world.
- Social and Emotional Wellness for students, staff, and the community we share.
- Effective problem-solving and communication at all levels of the organization.
- High quality staff in every department and role across our district.



## PILLARS AND PRIORITIES

**ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE**

**WELLNESS AND  
PREPAREDNESS**

**SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY  
AND COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT**

**COLLABORATIVE  
CULTURE**

**ORGANIZATIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS**



**PILLAR 1**

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

**Academic experiences that ensure personalized learning, rigorous instruction, and readiness for future opportunities.**

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of Rockford Public Schools is to provide high-quality educational opportunities to ensure every student’s readiness for the future. Academic excellence provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge to reach their potential.

**Reason:** Academic excellence is pursuing intentional and comprehensive education that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and opportunities. It encompasses a dynamic blend of curriculum, instruction, and assessment tailored to meet the diverse needs of all learners. In practice, classrooms are buzzing with engaged students, staff facilitating inquiry-based learning, and a supportive community valuing intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning. Our strategic initiatives aim to cultivate an environment where students can achieve their highest potential and thrive as confident, capable individuals prepared for success.

**PRIORITIES**

- 1A High-Quality Instruction**
- 1B Career/College Readiness-Post Secondary Preparedness**
- 1C Critical Thinking**
- 1D Diverse Offerings**

**PILLAR 1**



PILLAR 1

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

# 1A | HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION

### 1.A.1 Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

- Ensure a high standard of learning for every student by delivering rigorous and content-standard-aligned instruction across all grade levels and content areas.

### 1.A.2 Tiered Instruction

- Assess individual student learning needs and respond with targeted instruction emphasizing English Language Arts and mathematics.

### 1.A.3 Student Engagement

- Support daily classroom instructional design that engages students in relevant and active learning activities.

### 1.A.4 Data Response/Assessment

- Utilize benchmark and formative assessment data to inform instruction based on building, grade level, and classroom student learning trends.

### 1.A.5 Eliminating Opportunity Gaps

- Identify district and building population achievement trends and focus specialized instructional programming toward target students who are disadvantaged and underachieving compared to their peers.

# 1B

## CAREER/COLLEGE READINESS - POST SECONDARY PREPAREDNESS

### 1.B.1 Career Awareness

- Accelerate opportunities for career exploration by providing regular embedded career pathway exposure throughout a student's K-12 experience.
- Engage families and students at all levels in understanding post-secondary options for careers.

### 1.B.2 Job Shadow Experiences

- Create opportunities for students at all levels to engage in meaningful job shadow experiences that showcase varied future pathways.

### 1.B.3 College Credit and Certification Opportunities

- Leverage current partnerships and expand new opportunities to increase access for students to earn valuable certifications and college credits while in grades 6-12.

### 1.B.4 Employability Skills

- Ensure all students strengthen the necessary skills to enter the workforce and adulthood in ways that support success, including leadership, initiative, social skills, problem-solving, and growth mindset.





PILLAR 1

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

# 1C

## CRITICAL THINKING

### 1.C.1 Social-Emotional Wellness

- Integrate and support a district-wide social-emotional curriculum to establish articulated grade-level expectations and strengthen skill development for every student.

### 1.C.2 Embedded Inquiry Learning Opportunities

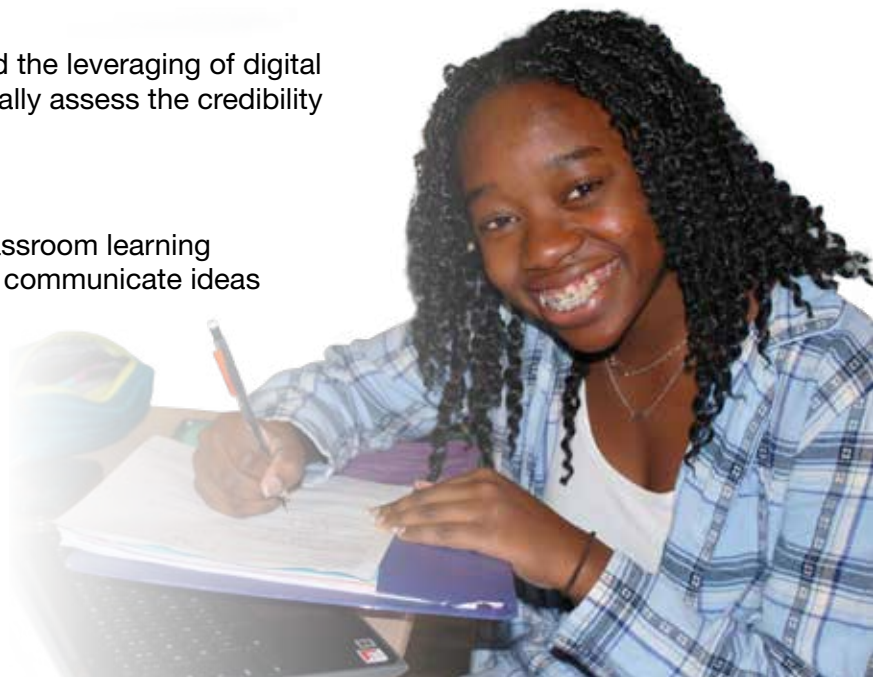
- Incorporate inquiry-driven and problem-based learning activities across all grade levels and subjects to encourage innovation and critical thinking among students.

### 1.C.3 Evaluating Information

- Embed information literacy skills and the leveraging of digital tools to teach students how to critically assess the credibility of information and sources.

### 1.C.4 Effective Communication

- Engage students in collaborative classroom learning activities to develop their abilities to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.



# 1D

## DIVERSE OFFERINGS

### 1.D.1 Enriching Experiences

- Extend student learning opportunities by creating community and school-based opportunities for students in all grade levels to engage in meaningful experiences during and after school hours.

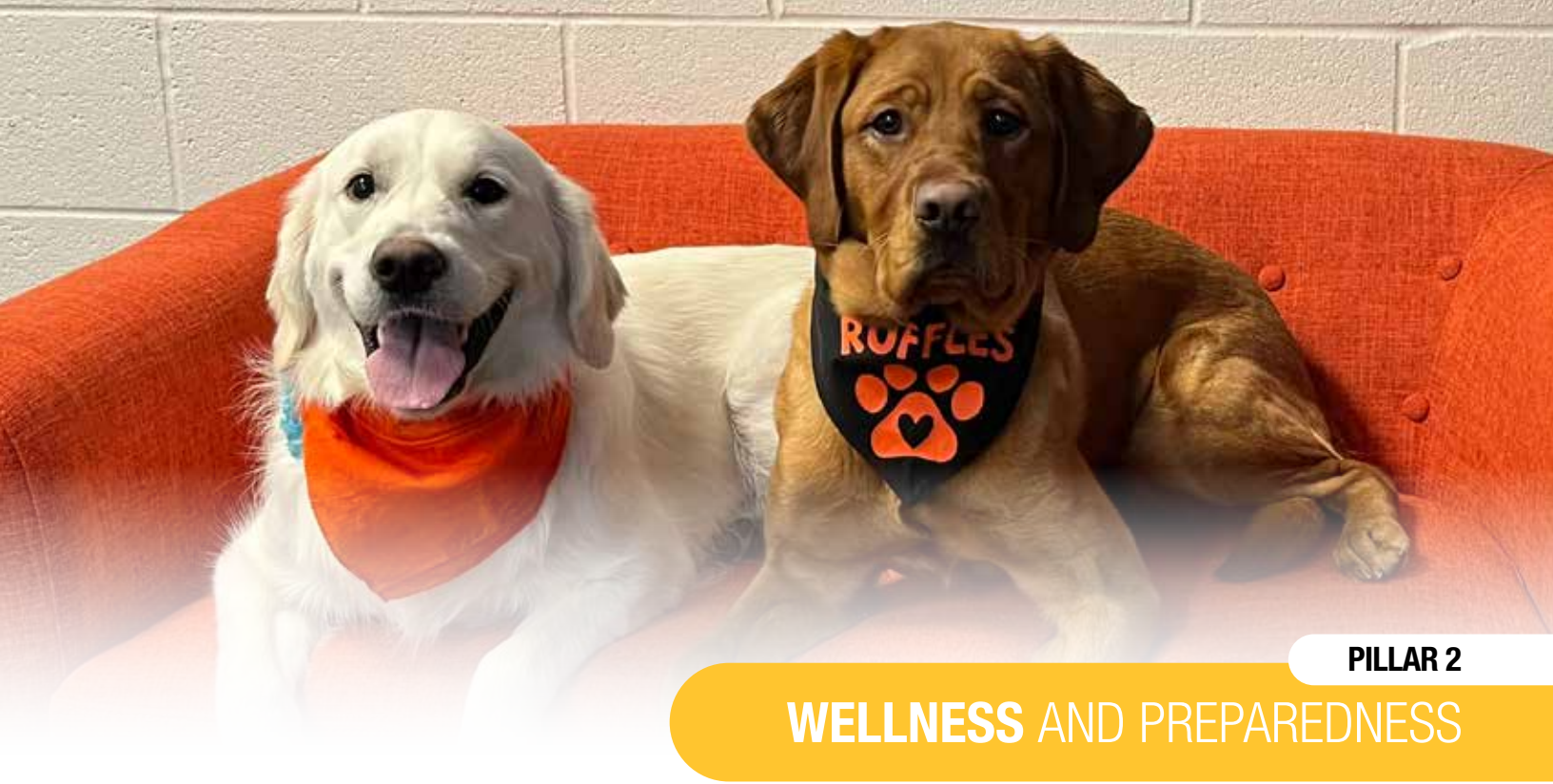
### 1.D.2 Innovative Programming

- Expand and enroll students in innovative programs supporting a balanced and well-rounded education. Examples include multilingual programs, Science Technology, Engineering Arts Mathematics (STEAM), outdoor education, coding, robotics, academically advanced programs, fine arts, and others.

### 1.D.3 Co-Curricular Offerings

- Improve opportunities for students at all levels to engage in co-curricular activities, including student interest clubs, philanthropic and volunteer activities, arts programming, career awareness clubs, civic engagement clubs, and competitive and non-competitive athletic programs.





PILLAR 2

## WELLNESS AND PREPAREDNESS

**A comprehensive approach to helping students build a strong foundation for their well-being and future achievements.**

**Purpose:** Our educational philosophy goes beyond academic excellence to encompass the social, emotional, physical, and ethical development of every student. We strive to create a supportive environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

**Reason:** Student wellbeing and preparedness are foundational cornerstones for academic success and holistic development. Prioritizing student well-being fosters a supportive environment conducive to learning, nurturing emotional resilience, and mental health. Ensuring preparedness equips students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to navigate challenges in life. By embedding these principles into the strategic framework, we will cultivate a thriving educational community and empower individuals to contribute positively to society.

### PRIORITIES

- 2A Student Well-being
- 2B Employability Skills
- 2C Safety and Security

PILLAR 2

## 2A

## STUDENT WELLBEING

**2.A.1 Whole Child Growth Opportunities**

- Provide comprehensive mental health screening of all students.
- Create and maintain mentorship programs that strengthen interpersonal relationships with students.
- Establish a team of support personnel in each learning community to provide student wellness services.

**2.A.2 Tiered Systems of Support**

- Develop a district-wide, social-emotional, tiered system of support.
- Ensure vertical alignment of DK-12 social-emotional curriculum.
- Promote school-wide absence prevention and intervention practices.

**2.A.3 Healthy Relationships**

- Establish restorative practices to respond to student behaviors.
- Provide addiction support and education.

**2.A.4 Physical and Mental Health Support**

- Elevate school nutrition with healthier options for snacks and meals.
- Promote an active lifestyle through expanded physical education opportunities.
- Provide mindfulness training for all students integrated into instruction.
- Increase engagement and productivity through the student experience with new classroom furniture.

**2.A.5 Special Programming**

- Integrate students with disabilities within the building culture in meaningful ways.
- Provide social work support for all students and staff in each building.
- Expand peer-to-peer programs for equitable access across all buildings.







PILLAR 2

## WELLNESS AND PREPAREDNESS

# 2B

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

### 2.B.1 Curricular/Grade Level Expectations

- Connect classroom activities with “real world” relevance to promote student interest and skill development.
- Establish partnerships with local businesses.
- Increase students’ knowledge about fiscally responsible decision making.

### 2.B.2 Strong Emotional Skills

- Participate in productive struggle activities to work through difficult situations.
- Use problem-based learning opportunities to focus on resilience and solution-based outcomes.

### 2.B.3 Goal Setting

- Use growth mindset education to allow students to set academic and personal wellness goals.

### 2.B.4 Self-Assessment and Reflection

- Provide student assessment and reflection opportunities around achievement or performance to strengthen ownership and resiliency.

# 2C

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

### 2.C.1 District Response Team

- Strengthen the district Crisis Management Team through relevant training and procedural practices.
- Review and update the district Crisis Communication Plan.
- Continue to emphasize training for all populations with our district's emergency response procedures.
- Refine the district critical risk management protocols to support high needs situations.

### 2.C.2 Safe District Learning Environments

- Provide secure and updated indoor learning spaces for student collaboration accessible to all students.
- Ensure outdoor play-based learning areas are accessible to all students.
- Identify and renovate existing spaces for parity and student safety across the district.
- Educate students and staff on emergency response procedures.

### 2.C.3 Evaluate and Upgrade Physical Safety Measures Throughout the District

- Educate staff and students on safety protocols, including local and national trends in school safety and security.
- Evaluate physical security and safety measures at all district sites and make necessary upgrades.





**PILLAR 3**

# **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Strengthening students’ abilities to interact with and contribute to others while positively influencing their larger community.**

**Purpose:** Our approach to social responsibility emphasizes the development of cultural awareness, equitable behavior, and influential engagement. Our students will have the skills to thrive in an interconnected world and contribute positively to a diverse and ever-evolving global community.

**Reason:** We will cultivate informed, compassionate, and proactive individuals who thrive and contribute locally and globally. Through diverse experiences and community partnerships, we will foster a learning environment where students gain global perspectives and an appreciation for different cultures and viewpoints.

## **PRIORITIES**

- 3A Global Citizenship**
- 3B Equity**
- 3C Civic Engagement and Community Involvement**

# **PILLAR 3**

## 3A

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

**3.A.1 School-to-School Partnerships**

- Provide opportunities for students to engage in virtual international collaborations, exchange programs, or global learning initiatives.

**3.A.2 Interacting with Diversity**

- Implement regular training sessions on cultural competence, implicit bias, and inclusive practices.

**3.A.3 Promoting Perspective-Taking and Understanding**

- Implement activities that encourage students to explore and appreciate diverse perspectives and opinions.

**3.A.4 Diverse Cultural Celebrations**

- Organize multicultural events, celebrations, or cultural exchange programs to expose students to different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives.

**3.A.5 Digital Citizenship**

- Offer digital literacy lessons, workshops, and seminars that address issues of online safety, digital footprint, and digital etiquette.





**PILLAR 3**

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **3B**

#### **EQUITY**

##### **3.B.1 Cultural Responsiveness**

- Embed lessons on the world's cultures into various subject areas, including history, social studies, and literature.

##### **3.B.2 Inclusive Participation in Community Events**

- Provide equal access for all students to extracurricular activities, enriching experiences, and educational opportunities regardless of financial circumstances.

##### **3.B.3 Eliminating Barriers and Enhancing Student Engagement**

- Ensure that policy and practice promote inclusivity and access to programming for all students.



# 3C

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 3.C.1 Local Experiences

- Engage in community-based experiences (field trips, internships, job shadows, etc.) that allow students to experience the benefits of local organizations.

### 3.C.2 Strong Partnerships

- Build and fortify district partnerships with local, state, and national organizations to support and enhance education in Rockford and across the state.

### 3.C.3 Preparation for Global Interaction

- Facilitate experiences to prepare students for active participation in a worldwide community through international learning experiences and global service learning projects.

### 3.C.4 Community Service

- Provide pathways for local philanthropic projects and engagement between schools and the greater community.





## PILLAR 4

# COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

**Collective values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors that shape interactions and practices to influence overall educational outcomes positively.**

**Purpose:** Rockford Public Schools will have a respectful, collaborative culture where every member feels valued and empowered. Our work together will focus on our shared commitment to student success and common goals.

**Reason:** A collaborative culture empowers individuals to collectively achieve more than they could alone. Collaboration cultivates a sense of shared ownership, encouraging stakeholders to identify common goals and work to improve solutions. This inclusive approach promotes innovation and creativity. Prioritizing collaboration improves communication, strengthens teamwork, and builds a strong sense of community.

## PRIORITIES

4A Investment in Staff

4B Strong Partnerships

4C Belonging

PILLAR  
4

# COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

## 4A

### INVESTMENT IN STAFF

#### 4.A.1 Professional Learning

- Collaborate with leadership of all staff groups to understand growth areas and embed professional learning into the yearly district calendar.

#### 4.A.2 Staff Wellness

- Survey staff needs and explore wellness programs to promote mental and physical wellness.

#### 4.A.3 Competitive Staff Compensation Schedule

- Gather data about other school districts' staff compensation schedules and prioritize decision-making to pay our staff competitively.

#### 4.A.4 Opportunity for Advancement

- Develop new pathways for staff to obtain additional certifications, advanced degrees, or leadership roles.







## 4B

### STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

#### 4.B.1 Consistent Communication

- Enhance and streamline the district website, social media, and communication entities to improve access to school information.
- Engage in timely and relevant communication with community stakeholders.

#### 4.B.2 Enhanced Family Relationships

- Develop resources to promote family engagement in school and community events.
- Provide staff professional development opportunities to build capacity with family engagement.

#### 4.B.3 Leadership Influence

- Grow and foster community partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and institutes of higher education.
- Engage in regular conversation with parents, students, staff, and local leaders to strengthen understanding and action around community values.
- Build partnerships with professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels to advance innovative thought and stay current in the field of education.

#### 4.B.4 Robust Community Engagement

- Encourage and support the use of school volunteers and family participation in school district events.
- Expand community partner engagement in district initiatives.

# 4C | BELONGING

## 4.C.1 Welcoming Environments

- Build the capacity of all staff to implement affirming and welcoming language for all.
- Train staff in trauma-informed practices.
- Provide safe and culturally responsive environments that value and celebrate the diversity of our community.

## 4.C.2 Supporting All Learners

- Increase staff awareness and capacity to support students from underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.
- Devote professional learning to understanding how to meet the needs of diverse populations.

## 4.C.3 Honoring Perspectives

- Engage students in regular, inclusive events that highlight global perspectives and represent diversity in our school community.
- Increase the percentage of students and parents responding to district surveys.





PILLAR 5

# ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

**Ensuring the foundation of our system remains balanced and functional, even when subjected to changes, stresses, or external influences.**

**Purpose:** Rockford Public Schools will innovatively and responsibly manage our organization to prepare students for the future. Physical spaces and decision-making will be agile and responsive to meet the needs of our school community.

**Reason:** Organization effectiveness ensures resources are maximized and goals are efficiently pursued. Rockford Public Schools will allocate time, talent, and funding effectively by optimizing processes and structures. This focus on effectiveness enhances accountability and transparency, fostering trust among stakeholders while promoting a culture of continuous improvement.

## PRIORITIES

- 5A Operational Sustainability
- 5B User-Friendly Experiences
- 5C Facility Enhancement

PILLAR 5



## 5A

## OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

**5.A.1 Organizational Wellness**

- Build capacity in all staff to understand and implement the tenets of fiscal responsibility using district resources.
- Establish and communicate clear policies and procedures to all levels of district leadership.
- Manage resources with a student-centered decision-making lens.
- Collaborate on best practices and procedures to optimize efficiency and the utilization of resources.

**5.A.2 System Monitoring and Improvement**

- Develop protocols and methods for efficiency and cost-saving measures.
- Increase collaboration among district departments using common data systems to drive continuous improvement.
- Build capacity in district staff to utilize data to drive improvement and effectively plan for future needs.
- Ensure district financial health through proactive budget planning, ongoing monitoring, and sound fiscal management practices.





**PILLAR 5**

## **ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

### **5B**

#### **USER-FRIENDLY EXPERIENCES**

##### **5.B.1 Updated Communication Platforms**

- Review and update the district website to add features that increase informational effectiveness.
- Provide ongoing and accessible communication that meets the needs of all in our school community.
- Develop technology pathways that streamline the end-user experience and facilitate effective communication.
- Enhance district payment experiences through clarity and consolidation.

##### **5.B.2 Stakeholder Feedback**

- Develop a method to monitor and communicate progress on the implementation of RAMS XII.
- Enhance feedback channels with students, families, and RPS community members to drive future district priorities.



## 5C

## FACILITY ENHANCEMENT

**5.C.1 Planning for the Future**

- Gather stakeholder input to identify current strengths and anticipated future needs.
- Prioritize current and future district needs for school bond consideration.

**5.C.2 Modernizing Infrastructure**

- Enhance student learning experiences through facility renovation and construction.
- Ensure the district facilities meet the changing needs of the community and student population.
- Provide student opportunities in modern, comfortable spaces across all district learning environments.
- Leverage district technology infrastructure to enhance organizational effectiveness and transparency.
- Maintain and upgrade district facilities to maximize student learning, prioritized by identified district needs.

**5.C.3 Facility Access**

- Enhance district scheduling procedures to maximize the use of facility use outside of the school day.
- Ensure district facilities and programs are accessible to all in our school community.
- Maintain rigorous security measures to prioritize student safety in all district facilities and events.



### As we look to the future, there are other important action steps that we will take as we implement RAMS XII Pillars and Priorities.

- **Building and Department Goals.** Across RPS, our leadership and staff will develop goals and actions to focus our work with the Pillars and Priorities established in our strategic plan. These goals, when implemented in our classrooms, buses, sports fields, and all other learning environments, will help us move our priorities forward and help support all RPS students.
- **Communication Prioritization & Consistent Feedback.** We will continue to engage with stakeholders frequently and deeply over the course of this strategic plan to ensure we remain steadfast in improving outcomes for all stakeholders. We will communicate regularly with our Board of Education, parents, and the community about our successes and challenges.
- **Organizational Alignment.** We will align our work to the tenets of this plan through ensuring that our fiscal resources, leadership decision-making, and district policies and procedures support the vision cast in this plan. This includes aligned professional development, student-centered core values, and collective commitments within a collaborative culture across all facets of RPS.

## CALL TO ACTION

### Join Us in Shaping the Future of Rockford Public Schools!

At Rockford Public Schools, we are committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic excellence, wellness and preparedness, social responsibility and community engagement, collaborative culture, and organizational effectiveness. Our pillars guide us in providing high-quality education and holistic development for every student.

Together, we can create a vibrant and thriving educational community. Join us in our mission to provide high-quality educational opportunities. Your support and involvement are the final pillar in ensuring the success of our students. Let's work together to empower our students and build a brighter future for all.



*Our Commitment to Excellence*





**RAMS**  
Learn | Connect | Contribute | Succeed

