



Rapid City Area Schools

District Transition Plan

2014-2015

Revised: May 2014

Transition Plan Rapid City Area Schools 2014-2015

Program Development

Rapid City Area School District 51-4, located in the Black Hills, is the second largest school district in the state of South Dakota. Rapid City is the “Gateway to the Intermountain West” and is a center for commerce, culture, transportation, and education for the entire high plains. The district’s northern boundary encompasses the Black Hawk area. The eastern boundary extends to the Rapid Valley area. The southern boundary includes the Spring Creek and Hart Ranch area, and the western boundary contains the Johnson Siding Area. The economic base in Rapid City includes agriculture, forestry, government, tourism, healthcare, manufacturing, and a strong service sector. Rapid City is a community of approximately 70,000 people, with the population of Pennington County at approximately 100,000.

Twenty-three schools comprise the school district: 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. The district employs approximately 1030 teachers, and has a total staff of approximately 1,784. Services available include pre-schools, the North Rapid Community Schools, an alternative high school, guidance and counseling, special education, district summer school, 21st Century Community Learning Discovery Centers which provide after school and summer programs, and post technical education.

Although district enrollment has shown some decline, then increases in the past, the current population shows signs of stabilization. The student population as of September 27, 2013 was 13,915 students. This population includes 6,839 elementary students, 3,107 middle school students, 3,969 high school students and 27 students ages 19-21.

Rapid City School District’s 13-14 student profile information is indicated in the table below:

<u>Student Characteristic</u>	<u>Percentage/Data</u>
American Indian or Alaskan Native	20 %
Asian	<1 %
Black	1 %
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%
White	72 %
Two or More Races	5 %
Special Education	13 %
Gifted Education	2 %
English Language Learners (ELL)	<1 %
Poverty (Free and Reduced Lunch)	44 %
Identified Homeless	5%

Migrant

0 %

The purpose of the district's coordination and transition plan is to articulate structures within the district that promote and provide successful educational opportunities for all students from birth through post-secondary education.

Coordination and Communication

Young children experience a milestone transition when they approach the age of five and enter the public school system. Plans are in place to assist preschool children to transition from early childhood programs into kindergarten. Parents and schools communicate and coordinate efforts in order to prepare children to function successfully in the school setting.

A RCAS Pre-school Transition Committee was developed to specifically address the transition process from pre-school to kindergarten. The initial committee members were as follows:

Name	Agency/Title
Lisa Plumb	RCAS/Director Federal Programs, Grants & State Assessment
Todd Christensen	RCAS/Special Education Program Director
Nanci Jennings	RCAS/Title I Parent Coordinator, ELL & PAT Teacher
Sue Micone	RCAS/Kindergarten Teacher at Knollwood
Cher Daniel	RCAS/Elementary Principal at Rapid Valley
Lori Laughlin	Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC)
Priscilla Yellow Horse	Dakota Transitional Head Start Coordinator
Shawnda Ruml	Dakota Transitional Head Start Site Supervisor
Winona Angel	Dakota Transitional Head Start Family Service Advocate & Parent
Vicki Lowry	Youth and Family Services Head Start
Cindy Fox	Parents as Teachers (PAT)
Autumn Gregory	Early Childhood Connections
Kim Booth	Early Childhood Connections Trainer
Megan Larson	SD Voices for Children Coordinator

This committee first met on November 30, 2010 to discuss the coordination of efforts and channels of communication that will promote early educational success for students. Specific activities identified at the meeting included the following:

- Survey elementary principals and kindergarten teachers regarding what preschool to elementary transition procedures are in place and what more needs to be implemented.
- Survey Dakota Transitional and Youth and Family Services Head Starts regarding what preschool to elementary transition procedures are in place and what more needs to be implemented.
- Develop relevant communication tools for preschool parents regarding the school district, and determine methods of distribution.
- Begin planning an annual school district sponsored meeting for area preschool educators to provide information that can be passed on to parents.
- Review possible avenues of communication between the district and area preschools regarding preschool student assessment information.

The committee met again in January of 2011 to review the survey results and formulate next steps to implement structures that will promote improved communication between preschool educators, parents and the school district.

For the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the North Rapid Community Schools Early Learning Committee was formed to continue the work of the initial committee in discussing transition from preschool to kindergarten. The committee members were:

Name	Agency/Title
Morgan VonHaden	North Rapid Community School Coordinator
Lori Laughlin	Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC)
Scott Phares	Principal, Horace Mann Elementary
Lisa Plumb	RCAS/Director Federal Programs, Grants & Assessment
Todd Christensen	RCAS/Special Education Program Director
Nanci Jennings	RCAS/Title I Parent Coordinator, ELL & Parents As Teacher (PAT) Coordinator
Amy Zens	RCAS/Kindergarten Teacher, Horace Mann
Bruce Long Fox	Director Rural American Initiatives Head Start
Vicki Lowry	Youth and Family Services Head Start
Megan Larson	SD Starting Strong Coordinator

The committee reviewed what programs are currently in place and identified areas of focus which include:

- Work with RCAS and preschool agencies to address the waiting lists.
- Having additional transition activities throughout the year between RCAS and preschool agencies.
- Using RCAS Title I funds to expand existing RCAS preschool program.

In addition, Amy Zens was invited by Youth and Family Services to attend an all day workshop in May 2013 coordinated by SD DOE Head Start Coordinator, Rayne Dosch, to review the federal document, *A Guide to Creating Head Start-School Partnerships* and the *SD Early Learning Guidelines Crosswalk Charts* for aligning Head Start standards with the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten in English-Language Arts and Mathematics. A follow-up communication will take place to continue this work with additional kindergarten teachers in RCAS.

Pre-school to Elementary Transition Process

Beginning this year, all elementary schools in RCAS have an all day kindergarten program. In addition, The RCAS provides services from birth to age five for children eligible for special education and related services. A child-find procedure has been established to identify qualifying children. Children eligible for special education and related services are placed in early intervention programs. The purpose of the early intervention setting is to assist three to five year-old students eligible for special education and related services. Pre-school services are open to typically developing children as space is available. Five early intervention programs are located in four elementary schools. Two early intervention programs are at General Beadle Elementary, one at Meadowbrook Elementary, and one at Robbinsdale Elementary. There are two communication preschool programs located at Rapid Valley Elementary, assisting three to five year-olds in speech and language development.

Head Start students visit kindergarten classrooms each spring. Small group sessions are held for kindergarten students during the first week of school. Private preschools are also invited to visit kindergarten classrooms. A kindergarten open house may be held before school starts to assist with the transition process. Kindergarten parents are targeted to attend parenting classes. Kindergarten screening is done in the spring, through coordination and communication with the RCAS Screening Team.

The District also employs an Early Intervention Teacher and Speech/Language Pathologists that work in all of the Rapid City Head Start Facilities. Other related services including Occupational and Physical Therapy are provided to eligible children. The District also works with all Rapid City Head Start facilities in implementing a "Response to Intervention" model that assists all of the children that attend.

Students who are no longer eligible for special education can receive transition support from the building level Intervention Strategist whose role is to provide differentiated instruction. In addition, special education students transitioning from one level to another (elementary level to middle school level; middle school level to high school level) attend a spring IEP or IEP addendum meeting at the receiving school. The student and parents have the opportunity to meet teachers, administrators, and to tour the building. Special education staff receives training to support transitioning. Examples of this include a presentation about the Enderle-Severson Transition Rating Scale (a transition assessment tool) and the Transitions Outcomes Project Training. Post high school special education transitions are addressed through the IEP process. Included in these IEP discussions are the opportunities for job shadowing, visits from outside agencies, experience based career exploration, vocational opportunities, and independent living.

Elementary to Middle School Transition Process

Each spring, administrators from the district's middle schools assist with transitioning of fifth grade students from elementary school to middle school. Registration is conducted at this time and student questions are answered. The fifth graders may also take a field trip to the middle school, so that they have a better understanding of the school setting and what to expect as middle school students. All five middle schools have moved the traditional fall open house to the week prior to school starting to familiarize parents and students with teachers and schedules.

Middle School to High School Transition Process

With regard to transitioning from middle school to high school, each January, the high schools send a comprehensive mailing to middle school parents and students regarding scheduling and transition into high school. Teams of administrators and counselors visit each feeder middle school to work with students on the process of moving from middle school to high school. In addition, eighth grade students are required to participate in the South Dakota My Life program. Counselors assist students in folding the results of this program into the development of a four year high school plan. Middle school students and their parents are invited to attend an evening orientation/course selection session at the high schools. On the day before the first day of school, administration and guidance host an additional orientation session for ninth graders and their parents.

RCAS offers an alternative high school setting at Rapid City High School (RCHS). Transition to the program at RCHS begins with the middle school staff making recommendations of students who would benefit from participating in the program. Parents may also recommend their children to RCHS. Individual interviews are conducted with each student and their family wishing to attend to make sure the program is the best placement for the needs of the student. To further assist in this transition to high school, a series of workshops and activities are held during the first week of school to emphasize RCHS's expectations.

Each September, guidance counselors and Lifeways advisors assist ninth graders with high school transition by discussing topics such as drug/alcohol prevention and awareness, homework habits, information about transcripts, and study skills. Specifically at Stevens High School, at-risk ninth graders may be enrolled in the Tender Loving Care (TLC) core. This core has been designed to address the needs of at-risk ninth graders by providing smaller class sizes, a variety of pedagogical styles, and assignment to the Academic Resource Center for additional assistance. To keep the transition process intact for these students, counselors and teachers make specific recommendations for appropriate placement in 10th grade classes. At Central High School, beginning in the fall of 2012, all freshmen are enrolled in the “Freshmen House.” This highly structured model is part of Central’s “School within a School” concept. The model is complete with a hybrid schedule, counseling, special education and administrative services and supplemental educational support services. The model uses a core within a core system that maximizes student instructional contact time, and provides math and reading support through skill-based tutorials within the Freshmen Academic Resource Center.

High School to Post-secondary Transition Process

The high schools provide transition to post secondary education through several venues. The guidance departments in conjunction with post secondary institutions offer sessions for parents and students focusing on assisting families in planning for college admissions, scholarships, financial aid, etc. Juniors and seniors attend Post-High Planning, a yearly event represented by over fifty post-secondary schools where students get first-hand information about financial aid, admission requirements, scholarships, program of study, student services, cost, and other information about participating schools.

In the months of September and October, guidance counselors and Lifeways advisers complete transcript checks and then visit individual classrooms to work with students on planning their coursework with their post-secondary goals in mind. Beginning in eighth grade, students participate in the South Dakota My Life program. Counselors assist students in folding these results into the development of a four year high school plan that is reviewed annually during high school. Students are also able to access the program through Skyward and can monitor their own progress as they develop an electronic portfolio.

Transitioning into the world of work and post secondary education is an ongoing process at the Career Learning Center (CLC) Academy. Beginning with the student/parent interview, the coordinator identifies what the student’s plans are after graduation. Appropriate classes are planned to assist the student in that career direction. Students who have no plans are encouraged to take the Career Decisions course. Once a student is enrolled at the CLC Academy, they participate in an all-day orientation, most of which is devoted to learning the steps of career selection, doing interest and aptitude testing, and learning to use a variety of websites that can assist with college planning and financing. Through the Learn and Serve Program and

Partnership Rapid City, students are made aware of the opportunity to do job shadowing as a way of finalizing or exploring career plans.

Students are encouraged to attend Fall Career Planning Days, the Health Fair, visits to Western Dakota Junior and Senior Days, in addition to taking the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Throughout the school year, the coordinator meets with students to discuss the results of the career activities and discusses the post-secondary ideas they have developed. Senior exit interviews review the students' plans and include the offer to be of further assistance after graduation. Development of the CLC website provides financial aid information, ACT testing, career exploration links, and other information that parents and students have requested in regard to post high school and transition.

Other Transition Support

Ongoing plans are in place to transition secondary students from outside treatment facilities/incarceration back to the mainstream high school. The Western South Dakota Juvenile Service Center (WSDJSC) supports students transitioning back to public education in cooperation with the school districts. Each student's home school is expected to designate a person to act as liaison between the school and WSDJSC. This person assists in securing books and course work from the home school while the student is at the WSDJSC. After release to the home school, this liaison assists with the student's transition back into the home school environment. This designee can act as a liaison between the student and classroom teachers who may not always understand the difficulties students face when returning to the mainstream.

Outreach programs have been created to address student needs as they transition back from a correctional facility, treatment facility or another out of district placement. The Rushmore Academy works with youth who are assigned to the Department of Corrections and unable to attend their regular high school for any number of reasons. This program helps them to earn high school credit while waiting to enter one of the district's high schools or other alternative programs. Students work one on one with certified staff to earn credits toward high school graduation, learn appropriate job skills and personal finance and living skills.

Professional Development

In the fall of 2012, RCAS helped host the Parent Information Resources Center's Fifth Annual Parent Involvement Conference. An area of focus for the conference was providing information to educators and parents on helping students make smooth transitions from pre-school to post-secondary.

Each of the district's 9 Title I schools conducts numerous professional development opportunities in the areas of balanced literacy and inquiry mathematics throughout the school year. Transition training is also conducted by the Office of Special Education and Related Services.

Parent Involvement and Education

The Rapid City Area School's Parents as Teachers program serves the target population of English language learners for families of children ages 0-5. The central focus of facilitating pre-school (ages 3-5) is preparing children for kindergarten requirements. The parent educator works in the homes of the preschool families encouraging the parents as first teachers of their children. Age appropriate activities are shown to the parents to empower them to work with their children in completing activities. The program is organized to transition the children into other pre-schools such as Head Start, and ultimately Kindergarten. Support is also provided to the parents in seeking medical, social and legal services as well as connecting to the schools with the use of translation of paper work and kindergarten screening procedures. In addition the program uses tools of English Language Learning with special curriculum that empowers the parents to understand policy and procedures as it relates to school. Evaluations of the child are completed bi-annually with Denver II and Batelle Language specific testing. If the need arises, children are referred to other agencies for Developmental testing and an exchange of information is given with permission of the parents

Each Title I school conducts numerous parent involvement, partnership and education events throughout the school year, including parent information on interpreting test results and how parents can assist with their child's learning and development. Of particular note for the 2013-2014 school year, the Title I schools each conducted a "Family Friendly Walk-Through" including a parent survey that resulted in specific feedback from parents on the many aspects parents are pleased with, and areas that the schools can focus their attention on in order to improve family-school relations.

The three Title I Focus Schools (General Beadle Elementary, Knollwood Elementary and North Middle School) have a Student Success Facilitator who works closely with a representative from the Office of Indian Education, to conduct home visits, facilitate positive relationships and develop support systems for students in danger of not progressing with their peers.

Evaluation

The district's coordination and transition plan will be reviewed and revised annually. The evaluation process and criteria used will be based on the requirements and guidelines provided by the South Dakota Department of Education, as well as the research and guidelines from the Solid Foundation organization.

Monitoring and Support

When academic or behavioral concerns arise, students experiencing difficulty receive effective and timely assistance by a referral to each building's Response to Intervention (Rtl) team. The assessments used to determine progress for individual students include the following: Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) of oral fluency; elementary literacy Observation Survey Tasks which include assessments on letter identification, concepts about print, and text reading level; the elementary math counting assessments, hiding assessments, and the grouping by 10's assessment. At the secondary level, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Math Inventory (SRI) results are reviewed.

After the referral from the Rtl team, the Intervention Strategist, a teacher specifically hired at each school to meet the needs of at-risk students, conducts a classroom observation and sets up a team meeting, which includes a child's parents. The results of individual student data is presented and shared with all members of the team at this time. Teachers and specialists (such as a social worker, counselor, and/or behavior strategist) serve as team members. The team suggests strategies and interventions to assist with a child's success. The team may recommend a meeting with the pre-referral team to determine if formal testing is needed. The Multi-Disciplinary Assessment Team (MDAT) reviews the results of the testing to determine eligible services.

Services are available for the most at-risk kindergarten students through Extended Day Kindergarten programs, located at General Beadle, Horace Mann, Knollwood, and Valley View Elementary Schools. In addition, first grade students at the eight Title I buildings whose literacy development is most at-risk receive additional support in the form of the Reading Recovery program. First grade students are selected for Reading Recovery based on the results of the Observation Survey Tasks. The lowest scoring students are placed in Reading Recovery. With both Reading Recovery and Extended Day Kindergarten students, a new student is selected to enter the program as students exit the program. These students continue to be monitored in first and second grades to ensure continued strategic reading.

Students at elementary schools receive more instructional time by utilizing the literacy staff for class size reduction during literacy instruction in grades K-2. By adding a second teacher during the literacy time, two certified, trained teachers are working with students during Balanced Literacy Instruction.

In addition, three Title I elementary schools, General Beadle, Knollwood, and Valley View, have Math Recovery for first grade students. Training has also been provided to at least one special education teacher in each Title I elementary building and one Title I middle school, in the Add+Vantage program which utilizes Math Recovery strategies and assessments to assist teachers in diagnosing a student's current understanding of math concepts in order to provide appropriate interventions and modifications.

Support and communication with parents in the form of meetings, Tuesday folders, conferences, the district web site, and teacher contacts are done on an ongoing basis. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend all Rtl meetings.

At the high school level, an Academic Resource Center (ARC) is available as a drop-in service or may be placed on a student's daily schedule. The ARC provides support and tutorial assistance to students. A certified teacher and several paraprofessionals are available for individual and small group instruction. Teachers are typically available before and after school to provide individual assistance to students in need.

The Lakolkiciyapi Resource Center is in place at Central High School supported with grant funds to continue the work of increasing the graduation rate and academic performance of at-risk with particular emphasis on American Indian students. As part of this initiative, support staff has been hired to work closely with students to provide them with the necessary support and resources to remain in school and prepare for post-secondary success. Specific emphasis is placed on working with American Indian students to improve academic skills especially in the areas of science and math, with the ultimate goal of improving graduation rates and post-secondary transition.

Overall, the RCAS district has numerous programs in place as drop-out prevention and student success initiatives. A complete list of the initiatives is available from the Office of Federal Programs, Grants and State Assessments.