

Royse City High School-Creating a Culture of Shared Commitments to Transform Learning

Overview and Background

Royse City is located in a rural, yet growing area located 30 miles east of Dallas. Our fast growing district covers roughly 77 square miles and claims a tri-county boundary: Rockwall, Collin, and Hunt Counties.

Royse City High School is home of the Bulldogs! The school was established in the Fall of 1904 and graduated its first Senior class in the spring of 1908. RCHS is a comprehensive four-year public high school enrolling 2,953 students in Grades 9-12. We serve a student body made up of the following ethnicities: 38.96% White, 37.09% Hispanic, 16.76% African American, and 7.9% Other (Asian, American Indian-Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, and 2 or more races). Our Emergent Bilingual population is 12.14% of our campus with 15 languages spoken.

Royse City High School is committed to providing meaningful and innovative learning experiences to all students. Our mission, in alignment with our district, is to empower students, shaping the future. We believe in building relationships first, Capturing Kids Hearts is at the forefront of what we do, we believe in collaboration through professional learning communities and ensuring instructional excellence through use of Fundamental 5. This is how we approach the work together.

Our academic program is structured around an 8-period day. The maximum course load for students is 7 credits per semester, which includes seven classes that each last 46 minutes. Within this schedule, there is a dedicated Bulldog Block period that serves as an intervention, character-building, connection time and study hall time. We offer Advanced Placement courses as part of an open enrollment program, as well as Honors courses. Additionally, students have the opportunity to enroll in Dual Credit courses through partnerships with Paris Junior College and East Texas A&M University. Overall, we provide 26 different programs of study to help our students expand their knowledge in a field of interest.

RCHS is recognized as a CKH National Showcase Campus for 6 consecutive years and has been named the Best Community for Music Education for five consecutive years. It ranks as the 8th fastest-growing district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Additionally, RCHS has received the National Gold Council of Excellence award for its Student Council. The campus has also been honored with the Serving Texas Award from the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP) and is recognized as an All-State Academic Team. Furthermore, RCHS is designated as a Texas College & Career Readiness School Model. We are proud of our Bulldog Family!

Focus Area: Article V: Organizational Transformation

Our focus as a campus in the post-COVID environment has been to establish a team of professionals who share a commitment to providing engaging experiences for students. We aim to build capacity within our team to inspire and support one another in achieving high levels of excellence in student learning just as Article V outlines and empowers us to as leaders. We began by uniting our students with a "One RC" mindset, focusing on building relationships and creating structures that empower students to take initiative and invest effort in their learning. This foundation allowed us to concentrate on delivering quality Tier 1 instruction and refining our Professional Learning Community processes. To achieve this, we recognized the need to build trust and consistency in our efforts, which has been the primary focus this year. We developed an onboarding process and a strategic game plan centered around essential standards. This included identifying areas of proficiency and those that required further development, allowing us to implement effective reteaching strategies in our design. In order to create the necessary conditions and capacities for our leaders, teachers, and students to perform at high levels, we maintained high expectations in the classroom. We emphasized the use of the Fundamental 5 framework, increased walkthroughs, and continuously sought to enhance our practices. The focus on collaboration has empowered teachers, enhancing their confidence and instructional practices. As they share best practices and brainstorm engaging activities, a culture of continuous improvement has developed, leading to significant academic growth and a cohesive learning environment.

Work

With a now clear understanding of the scope of the work to be completed, through collaboration with teachers, central office administrators, students, and community members, it was clear there needed to be set pillars that would guide our campus forward post-COVID. As a new principal, I understood that setting a clear vision and excellence for RCHS would only come from a shared commitment to values and standards. Ultimately, an emphasis on quality Tier 1 instruction through Fundamental 5 proved to be the foundation for what RCHS Tier 1 instruction would come to be. Additionally, knowing that one of a teacher's most important roles is to design engaging experiences for students, our stakeholders understood that collaboration amongst our teaching staff must be prioritized to be able to provide the best experiences for our students. This effort to prioritize and facilitate teacher collaboration manifested in a culture of the PLCs.

With a now clear vision and commitment to Fundamental 5 as our driver for Tier 1 instruction, and the PLC as the process for teacher collaboration, we at RCHS were able to easily buy into the work necessary to positively impact student learning. At RCHS, teachers quickly jumped on board when they saw the power of students interacting with each other and writing for a deeper understanding.

Recognizing the importance of focused collaboration, we continued to create a space for teachers to collaborate across all areas—not just core subjects, but also SPED, CTE, LOTE, Art, and more. This allowed them to share ideas about the types of activities they would like to implement for student engagement. PLCs have been a norm however as a fast growth district, we average approximately 30 new teachers a year it was important for set clear understanding that PLC is what we do at RCHS. Additionally, teacher leaders were quickly tasked with leading these PLC meetings and set roles in the PLC. The amount of capacity built and leadership developed amongst the teaching staff has been a very positive experience for our students and teachers. We also achieved this through targeted data reviews in our administrative Professional Learning Communities. We established designated times for academic and operational discussions on separate days, enabling us to focus our efforts intentionally and provide the best support for our campus. It requires a unified voice working toward the same goal to create transformation. For teachers we gathered feedback and dove into how we use our scheduled data and design PLC time. With now several years of continued focus on the work of these two very important pillars for RCHS, the results of this work have been remarkable for our campus.

Results

The results from the implementation of a clear vision and focus on Fundamental 5, combined with the emphasis on PLCs, have been transformative for RCHS. The establishment of clear instructional pillars allowed teachers to have a solid framework for their daily teaching practices. Students have thrived in an environment where positive behaviors and academic efforts are regularly recognized, able to collaborate with their peers and synthesize information by the act of writing. This structure enabled a consistent and coherent approach to teaching across the campus, ensuring that all students received high-quality, rigorous instruction.

Additionally, the prioritization of collaboration through PLCs fostered a supportive community among teachers. By embedding PLCs into the master schedule, RCHS ensured that teachers had the time and space to share best practices, brainstorm engaging activities, and collectively improve their teaching strategies. This collaboration became an essential component of professional development, where teacher leaders emerged to guide discussions and further cultivate leadership skills within the staff. As a result, teachers felt empowered to take ownership of their professional growth and to work together towards a common goal of enhancing student learning experiences.

Over time, the sustained focus on these two pillars, Fundamental 5 and PLC collaboration, has led to positive outcomes for both students and educators at RCHS. Teachers have reported increased confidence in their instructional practices, as well as greater engagement and success from students. The culture of collaboration and continuous improvement has not only elevated the quality of instruction but has also fostered a sense of ownership and accountability among the teaching staff. With an ongoing commitment to these strategies, RCHS has seen significant academic growth and an overall stronger, more cohesive learning environment for all involved.