



**For Each and Every Child!**

**BE EXCEPTIONAL!**

“In the RCS EC Department, *each and every student* receives an **exceptional education** in an **inspiring environment** with **caring educators.**”

**RCS EC Department Mission:**

RCS Exceptional Children’s Program empowers students to reach their maximum academic and social-emotional potential through promotion of self-advocacy and collaboration with parents, staff, and community in order to build positive relationships and life success.

**RCS EC Department Core Beliefs and Affirmations:**

- We believe each and every student matters and makes meaningful contributions to their learning community.
- We believe each and every student deserves a safe and respectful environment in which they are appreciated, valued, and empowered to learn.
- We believe each and every students is unique, exceptional, and defined by who they are- not their disability.
- We believe each and every student deserves collaboration and open, effective communication between home and school.
- We believe each and every student deserves appropriate EC services that are strengthened by engaging in a systematic problem-solving process to improve student outcomes.

Manage Performance!

Operational Excellence

Instructional Excellence

Graduation and Post Secondary Outcomes

Improve Student Outcomes!

**Operational Excellence**  
High Quality Operational Support and System of Monitoring and Accountability

**Instructional Excellence**  
High Quality Instruction and Services for Each and Every Student!

**Graduation and Post-Secondary Focus**  
Improve Outcomes for Each and Every Student

***For Each and Every Child!*****Letter from Director of Exceptional Children's Program**

It is my honor and privilege to lead the Exceptional Children's Department, which provides programs and services for approximately 2062 students with disabilities in Rockingham County Schools. My focused intention from my first day forward is to listen and to provide the support necessary to earn your trust. I believe that with strong connections and commitment, together, we can develop the whole child and create an effective learning environment for both our students and staff members. To achieve the goal of creating the professional learning community we all desire will require continued collaboration and commitment from our school board, administration, EC Leadership team, RCS staff, EC teachers, and students! My mission as your EC Director is to maintain and grow an environment that provides every student with a sense of belonging; while helping students to grow intellectually, emotionally and socially. For me, it is critical to every student's success that they graduate from high school... prepared for both the workplace and post-secondary education with the habits of mind and skills necessary to pursue and achieve their goals and dreams. I am eager to contribute to these efforts and look forward to building great new personal and professional relationships of and about learning with each of you! Thank you for selecting me to serve our students, staff, and community!

Recently, Rockingham County Schools has released its new Strategic Plan 2020, charting a course of action that is intended to make every graduate college-prepared and career-ready. The District's Strategic plan is our roadmap for academic success that transforms teaching and learning at every school. To view the District's Strategic Plan, please visit the RCS webpage, which is available on the District's homepage.

The Exceptional Children's Department has developed an aligned strategic instructional improvement plan to: (a) support implementation of the District's Strategic Plan, (b) focus our efforts on continuing to improve outcomes for students with disabilities; and (c) meet the core elements that are monitored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The RCS Exceptional Children's Department truly has exceptional children, exceptional staff, and exceptional schools for each and every child. "In the RCS EC Department, ***each and every student*** receives an **exceptional education** in an **inspiring environment** with **caring educators.**"

The Exceptional Children's Department Aligned Strategic Plan reflects our beliefs that each and every student matters and makes meaningful contributions to their learning community; student deserves a safe and respectful environment in which they are appreciated, valued, and empowered to learn; unique, exceptional, and defined by who they are and not their disability; deserves collaboration and open, effective communication between home and school; and deserves appropriate EC services that are strengthened by engaging in a systematic problem-solving process to improve student outcomes. This Aligned Strategic Plan crystallizes the Exceptional Children Program's commitment to implement the District's Plan and to provide exceptional instruction, services, and supports for students with disabilities. The purpose of this Aligned Strategic Instructional Improvement Plan is to seamlessly support the implementation of the District's plan to ensure that all students graduate life-ready, college prepared, and/or career-ready. This Aligned Strategic Instructional Improvement Plan is meant to be a dynamic document which will support the District's Plan, and as such, will continue to undergo revisions as measures of success are achieved and new challenges are presented. I look forward to our collaborative work and building on our success for all students in the Rockingham County School District.

Educationally Yours,

*Stephanie Lowe Austin*

Stephanie Lowe Austin, Director of Exceptional Children  
Rockingham County Schools



*For Each and Every Child!*

# Operational Excellence

*High Quality Operational Support and System of Monitoring and Accountability*

**Goal 1:** Maintain efficient and effective special education operational support to enhance general and special education services and support.

- 1.1 Create a Shared Vision and Instructional Improvement Plan
- 1.2 Create Team Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) and Data Literacy Training for all EC Staff.
- 1.3 The EC leadership will solidify the audit system to collect EC file compliance data to obtain a broader, more accurate picture of baseline compliance data. (This will be completed through the use of an audit tool used to monitor overall compliance.)
- 1.4 Based on baseline data collected and staff survey results the leadership team will identify staff needs to plan and provide PD for compliance and professional growth plans, with at least 80% compliance in each of the areas of Consent, Prior Written Notice, Evaluation, Eligibility, and Transition.
- 1.5 Staff expectations will be taught and modeled to ensure strong communication and collaboration, with data collected through student and parent contacts.
- 1.6 In addition, research based practices will be monitored through a walk-through tool that focuses on communication, research based practices, progress monitoring, and overall fidelity of implementation of specialized instruction with every school meeting at least 80% by 2017-2018.
  - Implement data warehouse tool to improve instructional planning and access to data
  - Share strategic plan that address department goals with staff and stakeholders
  - Develop PDP Plan to address identified areas of need
  - Deliver PD to address needs and provide coaching as needed
  - Solidify system for compliance data collection
  - Obtain baseline data using compliance system (Year 1)
  - Provide feedback to teachers
  - Staff Surveys-identify areas of need for trainings
  - Trainings-go to meetings, in-service
  - Provide staff expectations
  - Minimal compliance- check BIP, reports,
- 1.7 RCS EC leadership will use updated data collected through state audit, surveys, compliance audit system and walk-throughs to identify areas of need to provide in-services, with at least 90% compliance in each of the areas of Consent, Prior Written Notice, Evaluation, Eligibility, and Transition by year 2018-2019.
- 1.8 RCS EC staff will use updated data collected through state audit, surveys, and walk-throughs to identify areas of need, with at least 95% compliance in each of the areas of Consent, Prior Written



*For Each and Every Child!*

## Instructional Excellence

*High Quality Instruction and Services for Each and Every Student!*

**Goal 2:** Strengthen instructional support to students through creating a systems of monitoring educational excellence and individualized education plans for the purpose of improving student outcomes.

Therefore, the EC Department will:

- 2.1 Continue to offer and implement Behavior Foundations Training for EC staff with the goal of all EC staff completing this training by the year of 2020.
- 2.2 Identify and develop tools for progress monitoring student IEP goals;
- 2.3 Provide professional development on progress monitoring procedures;
- 2.4 Develop coaching structures in order to promote fidelity with implementation.
- 2.5 Develop Walk-Through Tool focused on three areas of instructional improvement plan (Instructional Excellence, Operational Excellence, and Graduation and Post-Secondary Outcomes).
- 2.6 Baseline progress monitoring data will be collected in scheduled increments by all EC Case managers.
- 2.7 Goal is 80% at each school by Year 3. Need base line data. Walk-through tool will be developed by August 15, 2016 and initial baseline data will be collected by October 15, 2016.
- 2.8 The EC Department will develop progress monitoring walk-through tool to assess fidelity of implementation with goal of 65% of teachers reporting that they have consistently utilized progress monitoring (PM) tool by end of year (2016-2017).
- 2.9 The EC Department will use progress monitoring walk-through tool to assess fidelity of implementation with goal of 80% of teachers reporting that they have consistently utilized progress monitoring tool by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.
- 2.10 Based on data obtained by EC coaches during walk throughs, 90% of EC teachers will report that they have consistently utilized progress monitoring tool by end of the 2018-2019 school year.
- 2.11 Based on data obtained by EC coaches during walk throughs, 100% of teachers will report that they have consistently utilized progress monitoring tool by end of the 2019-2020 school year.



*For Each and Every Child!*

## Graduation and Post-Secondary Focus

*Improve Outcomes for Each and Every Student!*

**Goal 3:** Create a collaborative and integrated system of support in the Least Restrictive Environment to attain high levels of academic, behavioral, and social attainment.

- 3.1 Create an EC Problem Solving Committee with general and special education representatives to support improved outcomes for each and every student.
- 3.2 Effectively deliver instruction and services described in the IEP in alignment with the RCS Strategic Plan and Common Core Standards. (This is ensured through completion of Instructional and Operational Excellence Goals and Action Steps.)
- 3.3 Support and deliver instruction through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.
- 3.4 Support behavioral and social outcomes through implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention & Support.
- 3.5 Engage parents, families, and communities in partnerships to support students with special education needs through hosting at least three family nights for students with disabilities during the school year.
- 3.6 Expand opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the general education curriculum and participation in transition activities. This will be monitored through transition progress monitoring tool described below.
- 3.7 High School EC leads and staff will develop and implement a progress monitoring tool to gather baseline data to document the completion of transition activities at each high school by the end of the 2016-2017 school year.
- 3.8 High School EC staff will utilize the progress monitoring tool to increase the documentation of the completion of transition activities to 65% by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.
- 3.9 High School EC staff will utilize the progress monitoring tool to increase the documentation of the completion of transition activities to 80% by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.
- 3.10 High School EC staff will utilize the progress monitoring tool to increase the documentation of the completion of transition activities to 100% by the end of the 2019-2020 school year.



*For Each and Every Child!*



“By working together and focusing our efforts, we will continue to use performance data to refine our strategies and implement our strategic initiatives to provide each and every student with the highest quality educational experience, and we will support all employees as they help students with disabilities equip themselves with the skills, knowledge, and resources they will need to be independent, successful, and productive during their preschool through school-age years and into adulthood. The RCS EC Department is EXCEPTIONAL!”

-Stephanie Lowe Austin, Director of Exceptional Children

In order for each and every student to achieve, all employees must work together toward a common vision. The Exceptional Children’s Department has aligned its strategic initiatives with the District’s goals to clearly focus all staff who work with students with disabilities on an aligned course of action toward instructional improvement. By providing instructional excellence, operational excellence, and a focus on graduation and post-secondary outcomes, the Exceptional Children’s Department will create a collaborative system of support in the least restrictive environment to attain high levels of academic, behavioral, and social achievement outlined in this improvement plan. By providing high quality instruction, services, and supports, the Exceptional Children’s Department will prepare students with disabilities for independent living, meaningful work, or post-secondary education, as well as facilitate the effective use of learning strategies, resulting in greater student independence and reducing their reliance on special education supports and services.

The District’s and Exceptional Children’s Department’s success resides in the effectiveness of every employee. Our accomplishments will be measured through the specific results outlined the plans. Critical to our success is our belief that in the RCS Exceptional Children’s Department, each and every student deserves an **exceptional education** in an **inspiring environment** with **caring educators!**

***BE EXCEPTIONAL!***

**Exceptional Children**  
**Exceptional Staff**  
**Exceptional Schools**

*For Each and Every Child*



*For Each and Every Child!*

Exceptional Children Department  
 Aligned Strategic Instructional Improvement Planning Committee

A huge thank you to the RCS EC Leadership Team and EC Staff. Their dedication, loyalty, support, and constant unwavering commitment to the improvement of outcomes for students with disabilities. Your work ethic and commitment is second to none. We will be forever grateful for your influence on many lives.

Henry Adams said, "A teacher effects eternity, he/she can never tell where his influence stops."

Aligned Instructional Improvement Planning Committee	
Rebecca Moore Kathryn Davis Debbie Lassiter Stephanie Lowe Austin Amy Wilson Amy Rose Pam Watkins Leslie Mauney Tammy Barker Kristi Harris Angie Harte Susan Long Rhonda Brown Cindy Corcoran	William O'Neil Nancy Bernier Mike McCullough Alyssa Slater Amy Dowdle Jessica James Elizabeth Covell Tracy Curtis Connie Cromer Jennifer Tucker Barbara Byrd Holly Williamson Janet Winn Stephanie Moore