

# Rochester CUSD 3A

Communication, Empathy, Critical Thinking, Perseverance, Adaptability, Leadership

## Superintendent's Report

**To:** Board of Education  
**From:** Dan W. Cox, Superintendent of Schools  
**Date:** February 21, 2024

### **Gratitude & Celebrations**

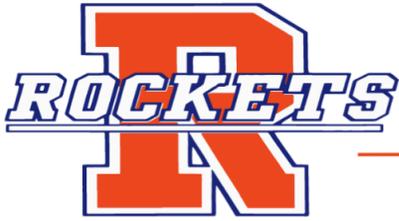
Every month, I start this report with recognition and gratitude for the amazing things happening in our schools by our teachers, staff, students, and administration. While this report will be no different, it will have a different tone.

On Monday, March 11th, the Schuyler-Industry School District received word that one of their buses was involved in an accident that claimed the lives of everyone on board the bus. It was news that sent shockwaves through our district as we imagined what we would do if we encountered a similar tragedy.

Since then, our students and staff have rallied to show support and have truly been Rockets supporting Rockets. Starting with an initial text message to all administrators in the district, students and staff proceeded to hold moments of silence for those lost. Principals at every school then hosted purple and gold days, the school colors for the Schuyler-Industry School District. We've received a flood of images across social media as well, showing our community's support.

Likewise, if you drove past the high school, you likely saw a graphic that says "Rocket Strong" with a blend of our logo and theirs. Mr. Hansen also worked alongside one of our high school art teachers, Ms. Bell, to create a banner for students and staff to sign. Once we've allowed everyone to sign it, the banner will then be presented to the Schuyler-Industry School District.

While there are a lot of amazing things happening, I wanted to underline our staff and students' response to this tragedy. From our youngest Rockets to our most veteran employees, each has demonstrated compassion, empathy, and love for the Schuyler-Industry School District. They've rallied around them during this difficult time and showed that it doesn't matter where you live or what school you attend; you can have a positive impact.



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## When We Last Met

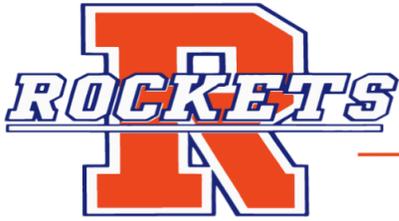
**Stay Interviews Pilot:** After over a year of dedicated effort, our stay interview pilot program has been successfully launched. This initiative aims to understand what makes working at Rochester exceptional from the staff's perspective. Spearheaded by leveraging AI, these interviews represent a proactive approach to addressing employee retention, boosting morale, and enhancing feedback strategies. Progress updates will continue to be shared, with the pilot group underway.

**Access to General Use Medications:** Following the Board's approval of the policy to administer general-use albuterol, EpiPens, and Narcan, our team has been actively collaborating with the nursing staff to refine and establish administrative procedures. Most standing orders have been successfully implemented, with an ongoing focus on streamlining access to medications, developing safety plans, and conducting comprehensive training. This initiative is crucial in ensuring the efficient and safe administration of essential medications, with updates forthcoming as implementation progresses.

**Blastoff Kids Academy:** In response to a growing need for accessible childcare services, Rochester CUSD #3A is launching Blastoff Kids Academy, a comprehensive daycare program for children ages 3-12. This initiative will provide a safe and enriching environment during after-school hours, teacher institute days, and breaks. The pricing structure, inclusive of discounted rates for RCUSD families and staff, aims to cater to diverse needs, promoting a supportive community environment.

**Salary Adjustment:** All staff members are set to receive a one-time bonus and an additional raise, totaling a 5% increase at the beginning of the 2024-25 contract year. Communication and wage verification have been sent to all employees. To qualify, employees must be current Rochester staff members on May 15th, 2024, excluding certified retirement track employees.

**High School Improvement Project:** At our last meeting, the board approved the schematic designs for the new science wing and student services suite that will become part of RHS. The concept designs will bring a college feel to our high school and create a space that will set the



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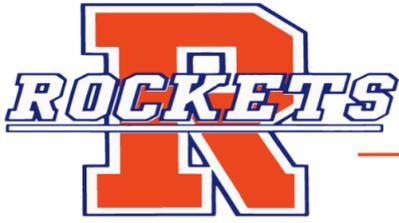
high school above other area buildings. The vision includes five new modern science classrooms, a new commons area, an administration/office area at the front of the school, and a health and wellness suite. Not only will this enhance learning by bringing our facilities up to date, but it will also create areas to help our students and staff thrive.

## Rochester CUSD #3A Strategic Planning



As the current Rochester CUSD #3A Strategic Plan nears expiration, the district aims to embark on a reinvigorated strategic planning process, integrating it with the Journey of a Rocket Learner framework developed last spring. Recognizing the importance of adapting to the evolving educational landscape, the district emphasizes the acquisition of rigorous academic content and critical skills for both present and future success.

The strategic planning process, facilitated by Battelle for Kids, unfolds in six phases. It begins with Phase 3 - Inquire, where the district leadership team assesses the current state using tools like SWOT analysis and system assessments. Phase 4 - Design broadens stakeholder input to outline priorities and goals, leveraging the Journey of a Rocket Learner and the Current State Analysis Report. This phase involves strategic design and writing team meetings to refine the plan.



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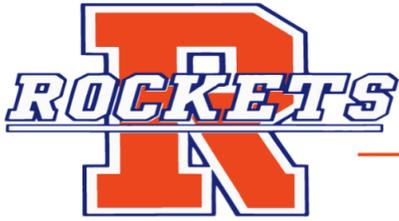


Phase 5 - Launch brings the strategic plan to life, with a Leadership Action Planning Meeting and promotion through various channels.

Finally, Phase 6 - Succeed focuses on successful plan implementation, featuring a virtual status check six months post-launch to review progress and address challenges.

Key milestones, including team meetings and status checks, are outlined in a structured timeline. Battelle for Kids commits to providing ongoing support, coaching, and capacity building throughout the process.

This strategic planning reflects the district's commitment to fostering a transformative educational experience, equipping students with the skills needed for success in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.



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## **District Spotlight**

**IASB Meeting:** Rochester #3A was proud to host the Illinois Association of School Board's Abe Lincoln Division meeting at RIS. Our intermediate fine arts programs were highlighted with attendees being treated to artwork by RIS students, a performance by the 6th-grade jazz band, and two student vocalists. Their hard work put Rochester in an extremely positive light and we're grateful for each individual involved.

Likewise, I was able to present alongside our communications director, Mr. Hansen, to help school boards understand the critical role communication plays. It was a huge success and we received positive feedback from every party involved.

**RHS Robotics:** Our robotics team not only made it to the state competition, they set a new district record for how far they made it by making it to the quarterfinals! Their hours of hard work and dedication are helping spark interest in robotics and helping Rochester become a known name in robotics in Illinois.

**Ring Ceremony and Capitol Visit:** Our 4A State Championship football team was honored to be invited to the Illinois State Capitol by State Representative Mike Coffey. Rep. Coffey recognized them during a working session at the capitol and congratulated them on their dedication and hard work. Each athlete was also given a certificate of recognition from state lawmakers. Our team also received their state championship rings which were created by Jostens. The excitement in the room was palpable and every athlete was excited to receive their ring and the part they played in wearing a Rochester jersey.

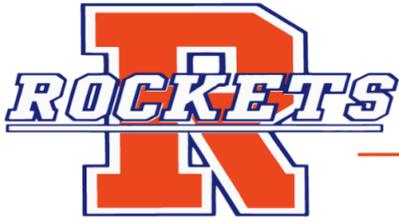
**Regional Champions:** For the first time since 2005 our boy's basketball team claimed the title of regional champions after beating Chatham Glenwood. It was an amazing moment that excited the school and the athletes.

## **Meeting at a Glance**

### **RJHS Rocket Shop**

As part of the Leader in Me Program RJHS students have collaborated together to start a Rocket Shop where students will design, manufacture, and sell their own Rocket apparel. Mr. Lauber and RJHS student leaders will be present to share details about the grand opening.

### **Presentation of District Audit and Annual Financial Report**



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The annual financial audit provides Board of Education members, stakeholders, and the community with a comprehensive overview of the financial conditions for Rochester CUSD #3A. The presentation will summarize the findings and outcomes of the audit, highlighting key financial aspects such as budget management, fiscal responsibility, and adherence to accounting standards. Rochester CUSD #3A maintains high standards for transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making by offering insights into the District's financial health and its commitment to sound fiscal practices.

## **Discussion of Statement of Economic Interest**

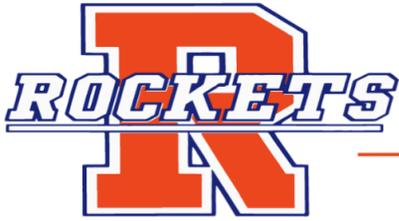
Per the Sangamon County Clerk's office, it is a statutory requirement for Board of Education members and administrators to complete a Statement of Economic Interests for 2024 per the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act (5 ILCS 420/4A-101). The deadline to file is May 1, 2024

Statements of Economic Interests are now filed online. Information has been emailed to all individuals required to complete the form. Failure to file will result in the following financial penalties: In accordance with state statute, failure to file by May 1, 2024, shall result in a penalty of \$15. Failure to file by May 15, 2024, shall result in a penalty of \$100 per day until the date of filing along with the \$15 fee. Failure to file by May 31, 2024, shall result in forfeiture of office or position of employment.

## **Approval of Owner's Representative Contractual Agreement for Scoreboards**

An owner's representative contract for scoreboards establishes a formal agreement between the venue owner and the school district responsible for overseeing all aspects of scoreboard procurement, installation, and maintenance. This contract delineates the representative's duties, which include:

- Leveraging expertise and experience in scoreboard management to ensure efficient and effective processes.
- Acting as a mediator between the owner and relevant stakeholders to mitigate risks, ensure compliance, and resolve disputes.
- Employing cost estimation, budget management, and procurement strategies to optimize project costs without sacrificing quality.
- Providing continuous oversight and coordination from planning through installation and maintenance phases.
- Conducting thorough quality assurance measures to verify that scoreboards meet specifications and performance standards.



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- Facilitating streamlined communication and collaboration among stakeholders to enhance efficiency and cohesion.
- Advocating for the owner's interests throughout the project lifecycle to realize their vision for the scoreboard system.

In essence, the contract is crucial for successful scoreboard projects as it enables the owner to delegate responsibilities to an experienced representative, thereby minimizing risks, controlling costs, maintaining quality, and achieving desired outcomes efficiently.

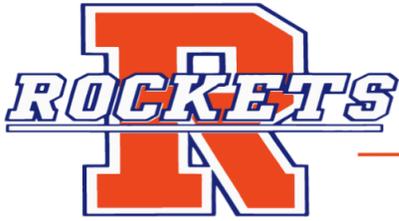
## Approval of Performance Contract Addendum for Phase 4 Projects

Article 19b Energy Management Savings Work (commonly referred to as “Performance Contracting”) – Article 19b provides for a specific means of selecting a “qualified provider” and applies only to the installation of “guaranteed energy savings measures.” Such measures are related to improvements that will reduce energy consumption or reduce operating costs. The procurement process begins with the school district issuing a RFP seeking “energy conservation measures through a guaranteed energy savings contract.” (105 ILCS 5/19b-1.4). Selection is made after evaluation of the proposals, with analysis by an architect or engineer contracted directly by the school district. (105 ILCS 5/19b-2). Selection is not based on a “lowest responsible bidder” standard, but instead on a standard of “the qualified provider that best meets the needs of the school district” (as determined by the board). (105 ILCS 5/19b-3). After selection, a contract is negotiated with the successful provider. Work may be added to the original contract without need to go through the RFP process if the work was included in the original proposal (even if not originally included in the contract), or is germane (related and necessary) to the original work described by the contract, or is made necessary due to “emergency conditions” for which there is not time to engage in the Article 19b or the bidding procurement process.

## Discussion and Possible Action on School Bus Lease Agreement

The board will consider the potential advantages of opting for a lease agreement to acquire school buses. This summary emphasizes key benefits, including:

- **Cost Savings:** Leasing requires lower upfront costs and manageable monthly payments, freeing up capital for other essential expenditures.
- **Financial Flexibility:** Spreading costs over the lease term enables better budgeting and allocation of funds, eliminating the need for large cash reserves.



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- **Access to Modern Fleet:** Leasing ensures access to updated buses with the latest safety features and technology, enhancing student safety and efficiency.
- **Maintenance and Service:** Leasing agreements often include comprehensive maintenance plans, relieving the district of internal maintenance burdens and minimizing downtime.
- **Risk Mitigation:** By transferring ownership risks to the leasing company, such as depreciation and obsolescence, the district can focus on its educational mission without the complexities of ownership.

## **Discussion and Possible Action of School Bus Route Audit**

Following the direction set forth by the Transportation Committee and previously communicated to the Board, a meeting was convened with First Consulting to discuss conducting a route audit for the District. This audit, scheduled for spring, entails an estimated cost of \$18,500, with recommendations expected for possible implementation in the fall. The benefits of this audit include:

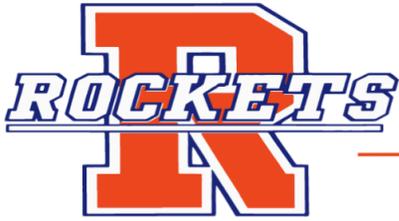
1. **Analysis of Hazardous Routes:** Evaluating whether we are transporting students through areas where transportation is not mandatory.
2. **Time Analysis:** Assessing start and end times to optimize efficiency.
3. **Stop Analysis:** Identifying opportunities to streamline stops for improved efficiency.
4. **Analysis of Adjacent Routes:** Examining neighboring routes to ensure maximum efficiency, potentially resulting in adjustments to meet our goals of timely arrival and early drop-off for students.

First Consulting will utilize the District's routing software, maps, and fleet capacity data to facilitate these objectives and help us achieve our transportation goals.

## **Positive Launch**

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the dedication shown by our teachers, staff, and administration at Rochester CUSD #3A. Together, we're shaping a brighter future.

Exciting initiatives like the athletic complex upgrades and the science wing at RHS are underway, enriching our students' learning environment. Our upcoming strategic planning, anchored by the Journey of a Rocket Learner framework, underscores our commitment to lifelong learning and success.



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From the Blastoff Kids Academy to salary adjustments, we're focused on supporting our staff and providing exceptional educational opportunities.

Let's continue to share our story authentically, highlighting our positive impact. Together, we're making a difference.

It's a great day to be a Rocket!!!

Be the Difference,

*Dan W. Cox*

Superintendent of Schools

*It's a great day to be a Rocket!!!* 

*"A Tradition of Excellence!"*