

IMP(P)ACT Report

Integrity, **M**aking a Difference,
Positive Attitude, **P**erseverance,
Acceptance, **C**ollaboration, **T**eam



**Rocky Point Union
Free School District**

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2023-2024

Mission

The **Rocky Point Union Free School District** fosters positive relationships in a nurturing and inclusive learning environment and provides meaningful opportunities for students to achieve their full potential. We develop skills in creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and empathetic leadership to serve our communities.

Vision

The **Rocky Point Union Free School District** creates large school opportunities with a small town feel where every student can realize their educational and personal goals and become productive members of the local and global society.



Dear Rocky Point School Community,

As another remarkable school year comes to a close, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible accomplishments and progress we have made together. As I reflect on our journey during this first year of implementing the strategic plan, it is my pleasure to share with you some of the highlights.

Furthering our commitment to student-centered learning, one of the significant achievements this year was the successful implementation of a nine-period day. This innovative schedule provided enhanced learning opportunities and empowered students to explore a broader range of subjects.

Additionally, I am thrilled to announce that the planning is underway for renovating the High School library. This revitalization project will transform our library into a modern, dynamic learning space that reflects our dedication to academic excellence and innovation.

Our efforts to improve academic rigor, consistency and transparency were furthered through grading practice research. This policy, in development, will not only support academic achievement but will also foster a culture of equity and inclusivity within our school community.

Furthermore, we have strengthened our social and emotional support systems through the implementation of mentoring programs at Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School as well Rocky Point Middle School. These programs provide invaluable guidance and support to our students, nurturing their personal and academic growth.

This year also marked the inaugural Rocky Point Day, a celebration that brought our entire school community together. This event showcased the rich diversity and talents within our community, reinforcing our commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

In the ongoing efforts to enhance communication and engagement, the District will be introducing Parent Square, a platform designed to facilitate two-way communication between families, community members, and our schools. This tool will serve to strengthen our connections and partnerships with the broader community.

I want to extend my sincerest gratitude to the 100 plus school community members who have dedicated their time and expertise to serve on our project teams, focus groups, and advisory teams. Your input and feedback have been instrumental in shaping our strategic initiatives, and I am truly grateful for your ongoing support and collaboration. I encourage more community members to join us in this important work, as your insights are invaluable in shaping the future of our schools.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I am filled with excitement and optimism for the continued progress and growth of our Rocky Point School community. Your dedication and commitment to our shared vision make our community truly special, and I am honored to serve as your Superintendent. Together, we will continue to strive for excellence and innovation as we embark on the next phase of our strategic plan.

With warmest regards,

Scott T. O'Brien
Dr. Scott O'Brien
Superintendent

Implementation: By The Numbers



65 members across 4 focus area teams, comprised of students, teachers, school based staff including a social worker, school related professionals, clerical staff, school nurse, school and district leaders resulting in diverse perspectives



10 full day or half day Focus Area Team meetings and countless smaller meetings to make our strategic plan a reality



2 Advisory Nights where members of our local community including parents, board members, business owners, and organization leaders came together to provide feedback and input on implementation



6 school visits conducted to view recently renovated libraries at neighboring districts to support the vision for the future of our HS library



33 teachers completed a Personalized Learning Bootcamp, kicking off the focus on student centered learning practices in the district



34 nominations for the IMP(P)ACT Awards demonstrating an eagerness to celebrate all of the individuals who exemplify our values



10 surveys developed and administered with **2,850** total responses, demonstrating a continued commitment to community engagement throughout the implementation process

Top 5 Lessons Learned

1. Go slow now to go fast later
2. Celebrate not just at the end, but celebrate successes along the way
3. Focus on "Safe Enough to Try" over perfection
4. Many voices together matter
5. Creative tension is powerful - we can stand still or create tension to move things in a forward direction

Throughout the year, staff and students from various departments across our district collaborated in four Focus Area Teams to advance the district's strategic plan. Academic Supports Focus Area Team member and JAE teacher **Annemarie Oliveto** shared, "The most valuable part of being a Focus Area Team is working with colleagues from all over the district in various roles. I loved the positive approach to making changes both big and small." Starting the initial year of a five-year plan, our efforts have encompassed research, learning, and data collection.

You might have contributed by filling out a survey or participating in a focus group conducted by one of these teams to ensure community input guides future decisions. You may have observed other initiatives being piloted (tested on a small scale before full implementation district-wide) such as teachers participating in a personalized learning bootcamp. Other initiatives are fully implemented and in practice across the district, such as the 9-period day and expanded course offerings. Please give a round of applause to these individuals for their diligent work, both behind the scenes and in public-facing roles!



"I like being part of a focus area team, one little thing that you can say can lead to a chain reaction of big things to fix the issue."

- Phoebe Graham, 7th grade student
Focus Area Team Member



"Seeing what we are talking about, and then seeing it - it is actually happening."

- Ryan Fink, 8th grade student
Focus Area Team Member

Rocky Point Day Brings the Community Together

The Start of a Great Tradition

Rocky Point Day was more than just a celebration; it was a testament to the tight-knit fabric of the community. The day was an event to proudly showcase **Rocky Point's** identity and the culture of belonging that is palpable across the district. Reflecting on that sense of community in **Rocky Point**, Board of Education President Jessica Ward noted, *"When I moved to Rocky Point, we really loved the small town feel; neighbors knew neighbors, kids went to the same set of schools, and I met all my life-long friends on day one."*

Inspired by the success of a neighboring district's event, **Rocky Point** saw an opportunity to showcase the richness of their own town, and what began as a modest idea blossomed into an event with more than 70 clubs and activities slated for the day's festivities. *"It's truly been a team effort, we put it out there to community-minded individuals who are dedicated to our district and the business community, and they started to reach out to their contacts,"* **Ward** said. The community responded to the call. **Rocky Point Day** highlighted an array of constituent groups including sports teams, musical groups, artists, food vendors, and community organizations.

As plans for **Rocky Point Day** took shape, it became a symbol of collective ambition and possibility. Beyond a mere celebration, it was a catalyst for deeper connections and collaborations. **Ward** expressed *"I think that when the community at large sees what **Rocky Point Day** could be, it will create a desire to do more, together and bigger. I want to see more outreach, more connection across the community."*



Mark your calendars for Rocky Point Day 2025 on 5/10/25

*"I love who we are; I love living here; I love the opportunity to make our community better. **Rocky Point Day** highlights all of those good things."*

- Jessica Ward, Board of Education President



Rocky Point Day: By The Numbers



500+

attendees



70+

community organizations
and local businesses
participated



11

staff got dunked in
the dunk tank

Strengthening our Community Through Living our Values IMP(P)ACT Awards



The RPUFSD IMP(P)ACT awards recognize members of our Rocky Point community that exemplify the district's six values. This is our first year of celebrating IMP(P)ACT award winners. The term "IMP(P)ACT" is an acronym for our values: **I**ntegrity, **M**aking a Difference, **P**ositive Attitude, **P**erseverance, **A**cceptance, **C**ollaboration + **T**eam.

Our district community is a team that ties these values together. Our seven award winners (pictured from left to right: **Ms. Amy Schecher**, **Mrs. Susan Sullivan**, **Mr. Mark Yashowitz**, **Ms. Marianne Barber**, **Ms. Lisa Celentano** accepting on behalf of **Ms. Betty Loughran**, **Ms. Jennifer Meschi**, and **Ms. Raffaella Nash**) were recognized at our first annual **Rocky Point Day** on May 19, 2024. We were honored to recognize these winners, who are such important parts of the fabric of **Rocky Point**.



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Student Voice and Choice in the Classroom

Building Investment in Social Studies Class

Middle and High School Social Studies teacher **Mr. Reilly** is a firm believer that if students *“feel like their voice matters, when they walk into class they will simply be more engaged.”*

During his first year at **Rocky Point**, **Mr. Reilly** has taken intentional actions to create a classroom culture where student voices are the forefront. For direct instruction, he focuses on making it *“less of a lecture and more of a conversation,”* providing opportunities for quick role playing activities, asking questions like *“If you were the president, what decision would you have made?”* By focusing on building students' empathy to the people in events they are studying, his students are better able to make connections between their lives and the past, making events that occurred long ago more relevant to their lives today.

In his classes, it is important that students are not afraid to share, even if they are not sure they have the correct answer. When that is the case, he focuses on affirming their thinking, finding the positive, and remembering that *“the things that the kids contribute to class keeps them coming back, feeling welcomed and like their voice matters.”* He encourages students to draw their own conclusions and speak often with classmates *“because sometimes the thing that a student says helps another student understand the material.”*

“Everybody is not in the same place in eighth grade. So finding ways to allow students to take a different amount of time to complete a task is really, really important.” Recently, when a few students finished an assignment early, they had a challenge activity focused on doing deeper learning around their choice of different historical posters and preparing to share that with the rest of the class. Students found the activity interesting and meaningful, jumping right into what could be perceived as extra work. *“I feel that it was an excellent way to make students feel enthusiastic about learning.”*

Looking to the future, **Mr. Reilly** plans to continue to evolve his student-centered learning practices, focusing on finding more opportunities for his class to be student-directed and guided by the decisions that they make.

> If students *“feel like their voice matters, when they walk into class they will simply be more engaged.”*

- **Mr. Reilly, Social Studies Teacher**

Mr. Reilly supports a student individually during class.



Fostering Deeper Connection Between the District and Community

1st Grade Field Trip to Pompei Pizzeria

Stop by Pompei Pizzeria when school lets out, and you will likely see a table of RPUFSD students. It is a staple in the **Rocky Point Community**, and co-owner **Vinny Prestigiacom** has come to know many students over the years. Many work as “counter kids,” and then return to the pizzeria many years later with their own kids.

At first Vinny opened his restaurant for his son’s class on a field trip to learn about his business and make pizza. *“The experience was great because seeing their faces light up after making something with their own hands was priceless,”* he says. It was such a hit that the following year, all of the 1st grade classes got to go down the street for a pizza making field trip. The excitement around making pizza did not stop there. *“Parents and kids will come in and talk about the field trip,”* he shares, showing the lasting impact the event had on students.

In recognition of their support for the district, Pompei Pizzeria was recognized as a local business supporter. *“It made us feel great when Mrs. Pletka presented us with the wall cling and magnet to display because we have been a staple of the community for 23 years and being recognized by the school district is special to us.”* As part of their continued partnership with the district, Pompei Pizzeria sold pizza at **Rocky Point Day** for just a \$1 a slice, covering their costs and then making a donation back to the district.

> *“We have been a staple of the community for 23 years and being recognized by the school district is special to us.”*

- Vinny Prestigiacom, Co-owner of Pompei Pizzeria



Wearing their new Pompei Pizzeria shirts, 1st grade students enjoy making and then eating their own pizza.

Expanding Opportunities through the 9-Period Day

American Sign Language Class Opens Doors for Future Careers

What does adding one more course to the academic day do for students? It helps them determine their college major, in one experience.

How does this sound? During her final year at **Rocky Point High School**, senior **Erin Lynch** has had the opportunity to take American Sign Language (ASL) as part of the expanded 9-period day. Having this experience before going off to college shaped her career aspirations, she is planning to *"pursue a career in speech pathology and language in college, specifically focusing on working with students with disabilities."* **Erin** emphasized the importance of communication and the value of being able to engage in meaningful conversations with individuals from all walks of life. Through ASL, she has learned how to express language in a nonverbal form, which has provided her with a unique and invaluable skill set, *"Sign language has allowed me to convey emotions in ways that words alone cannot capture."*

Erin praised the engaging nature of the ASL course, highlighting that it stands out from other academic classes she has taken. She expressed gratitude for the introduction of ASL into the curriculum, emphasizing that it offers students the opportunity to learn a language they may never have had access to otherwise. She hopes that more individuals will have the chance to explore ASL. *"I hope ASL will contribute to creating a more inclusive environment at Rocky Point for all students."*

The change from 8 to 9 periods has allowed for the expansion of course offerings and provided students with a wide array of new academic opportunities.



ASL is just one of 30 new classes offered as part of the 9-period schedule, including Animation, World Cultures and Travel, Robotics, and True Crime.



Centering Student and Staff Voices in Decision Making

Reimagining Possibilities for the Future of the HS Library

As **Rocky Point UFSD** prepares its proposal for a long-awaited renovation of the high school library, **Principal Jim Moeller** has been intentional about centering students' perspectives and insights in the development of the renovation plan. With the support of the Academic Supports strategic implementation team, **Mr. Moeller** leveraged interest surveys, focus groups, and empathy interviews to collect input from students on what the library should be, what services it should provide, and what resources should offer students to support their academic success. He shared the new space will, *"allow us to bring in additional courses; cutting edge resource center; add tools we lack; and expand our honors, research, and AP courses."* Students can use this space as a tool to go to the next level and enhance the academic research components of the Rocky Point experience.

Mr. Moeller noted that the goal is to make the most user-friendly space that we can for 21st century learning. There is much that we can improve upon in terms of aesthetics and infrastructure. We want to maximize the resources within the library to increase student and classroom environment.

By leveraging input from students, **Mr. Moeller** has not only been able to gather insights that will help inform the proposal for the library's renovation, but he has also fostered a sense of shared decision-making with students that will increase students' ownership and engagement in other ways, too. He said, "We sat with students in the library to have a genuine conversation about their challenges." **Mr. Moeller** understands the importance of genuine connection with students and the integration of student voices. By empowering students to participate in conversations they are often left out of, Mr. Moeller is reshaping the very essence of the educational environment at **Rocky Point High School**.

Academic Supports Focus Area Team Co-leads, Mr. Moeller (HS Principal) and Mr. Williams (teacher and K-12 ENL & World Language Chair) gather feedback during the April 2024 Advisory Night.

Listening to student and staff feedback, the renovated Library Media Center will aim to:

- be the center of inquiry, knowledge, and creativity for the school.
- bring new literacies (digital and media) to students through the use of technology.
- provide diverse media resources, such as books, magazines, newspapers, video, electronic sources, audiobooks, and e-books.
- partner with classroom teachers to ensure effective use of library resources and continued instruction in current and future technologies.
- maintain a strong web presence to meet the needs of students beyond the school day.

Reinstatement of Mentoring Program

Strengthening Connections at the Middle School

The word that 6th grade student, **Grayson Ernst**, uses most often to describe the reinstated Mentoring Program at the middle school is “fun.” Before joining the mentoring program, Grayson was not involved in any clubs or activities, but he decided to join when guidance counselor **Mrs. Honan** presented the opportunity. Grayson shared, *“At first, I was pretty skeptical of the program, thinking that it might not be for me – I was very wrong.”* Very quickly, being a part of this program greatly improved his school experience.

The group of staff and students came together for monthly gatherings, where they *“would have fun playing board games or doing something else like making towers out of marshmallows and toothpicks. All the while we would talk about things that have happened or that we were interested in, and just have fun.”* These gatherings quickly became the starting point for a close knit group of students and staff to build trust and community, providing a space to connect, and converse about real life experiences.

In addition to whole group gatherings, Grayson was able to meet individually with his mentor assistant principal, **Dr. Herbert**. This provided a space to process stressors that middle schoolers experience. During these meetings, Grayson was able to work through these with a trusted adult who he describes as *“someone who really understands me and what I am going through.”*

Grayson is optimistic about the future of the Mentoring Program, believing that it can have a big impact on other students by *“helping them develop and grow.”* Next year, the Mentoring Program will expand to JAE and continue to grow at the Middle School, giving more students, like Grayson, access to the benefits of mentoring.




Students and staff pose for a group photo after a monthly Mentoring Program gathering.



Streamlining Communication

Preparing for the Full Implementation of ParentSquare

A community organization leader and parent shared, "If there is some consistent way that we could speak with one another, that would be great - some sort of systemic way." The upcoming implementation of ParentSquare, a unified communication tool, will do just that. In anticipation of a full implementation on July 1, 2024, the past year has been spent preparing for that to be a success.

 May 2023	The Community Engagement Focus Area Team decides that replacing the current communications systems will be a focus for the 23/24 school year.
 Fall 2023	Meetings occur with multiple providers to explore their features and offerings.
 Winter 2024	The decision was made to select ParentSquare based on its features such as two way communication, translation and ability to link all teachers and parents with one account.
 Early Spring 2024	The Community Engagement Focus Area team, comprised of staff in many roles, uses the "sandbox" account to explore features, and identify areas where it is anticipated staff would have questions or need extra support.
 April 2024	Staff training was piloted at JAE, every staff member received training in a small group no larger than 10, allowing trainers to perfect the training.
 May & June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporating lessons learned at JAE, all staff at the other 3 schools received training in small groups• Supports are built in anticipation of educating families on how to use the platform

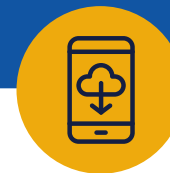
Summer 2024



ParentSquare will be fully implemented on July 1, 2024, replacing ConnectED



ParentSquare will streamline communication between schools and families, as well as with community members



All are encouraged to download the ParentSquare app and be on the lookout for more information about this change coming this summer. Families, please ensure that your information is up to date on eSchool, so it will be correct in ParentSquare

What's next?

Continuing our efforts to expand course offerings, 15 new courses were added to our Middle School and High School course catalogs

- Computer Graphics
- Dystopian Literature
- American Sign Language II
- Sampling the Arts
- Robotics 2
- Project Based Learning in Theater Level II
- AP Cybersecurity
- Jazz Ensemble
- Game & App Design
- Create Your Own! Graphic Novels, Comic Books and Children Books
- History's Heroes and Villains
- Movies, TV and Media
- AP Research
- Perspective, Mindset and Critical Thinking
- Acting Theater II



The Mentoring Program will expand to JAE and continue to grow at the Middle School, giving more students access to the benefits of mentoring.



The proposal for the library will move into its next phase with a goal to have a proposed renovation plan shared with the Board of Education by December 2024, obtaining an estimate with projected costs by January 31, 2025, with the project presented at budget presentations in spring 2025.



Research will continue to be done around grading practices, and as well as continuing to gather input from teachers, families, and students, culminating in the development of recommendations for Board of Education approval in June 2025.



Additional security personnel will be at each campus starting Fall 2024, increasing the level of safety for students, staff and visitors.

