SUMMARY OF

FALL LISTENING SESSIONS

RUSH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HOME OF THE TIGERS

2026 2027

LISTEN. REFLECT. TRANSFORM.



STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- State and Local Officials and Employees
- Parents and Guardians
- Community Members
- District Support Staff
- School Board
- Administrators
- Students
- Staff

STATE AND LOCAL OFFICALS AND EMPLOYEES

FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Caring, Invested Staff and Leadership: Teachers, elementary and high school staff, and building leadership are consistently praised for being approachable, pleasant, and genuinely invested in student success. Long-term staff members foster meaningful connections with students, ensuring they feel supported both academically and personally.

2. Small-Town Feel and Personalized Experience: Stakeholders deeply value the district's smaller enrollment and class sizes, which create a personable environment where staff truly know their students. Maintaining local control over services like school busing further reinforces this flexible, student-centered approach.

3. Strong Community Identity and Improved Communication: The school district is viewed as the heart and identity of Rush City, supported by strong civic pride, community engagement, and partnerships with local entities like the city and Pine Technical and Community College. Recent upgrades to email communications, newsletters, and school board updates have been well-received for improving transparency.

4. Accessible Athletics and Extracurricular Opportunities: The district is commended for offering a wide variety of sports, activities, and programs—such as FFA and the Tiger Den—at low or no cost. This accessibility ensures all students in a small town have the opportunity to participate and stay engaged.

5. Focus on Academics and Post-Secondary Readiness: Community members appreciate that academics remain the primary focus, backed by strong scholarship programs and high college-going rates. The district effectively prepares students for life and workforce readiness after graduation, instilling confidence in students that they can succeed.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Life Skills: The most frequent recommendation is to significantly expand hands-on CTE, trades, and practical life skills courses—including shop, automotive, metals, woods, culinary, FACS, robotics, and agriculture. Stakeholders also want students to learn everyday skills like banking, budgeting, nutrition, and basic maintenance, alongside support for non-college-bound pathways.

2. Student Retention and Alternative Learning Pathways: To counter enrollment losses to homeschooling, online schooling, and PSEO, the district needs strategies to keep students on campus full-time. Offering more diverse, alternative learning spaces, programs, courses and CTE can help meet the needs of all learners and encourage part-time homeschooled students to re-engage.

3. Transparent Communication and Public Perception: Stakeholders noted a need for clearer, more consistent communication with parents, non-parent residents, and the broader public regarding school programs, transportation, and safety drills. Improving internal school climate and sharing more open school board discussions will help address negative perceptions and build community trust.

4. Financial Trust, Facilities, and Future Levies: While aging facilities require updates and potential additions, some stakeholders emphasized that rebuilding public trust around past financial stewardship is essential before asking taxpayers for a new levy. Educating the public more clearly on school finances will be critical to overcoming resistance to future funding measures.

5. Academic Foundations and Safety Protocols: Respondents highlighted a need to continually strengthen core curriculum, basic reading and math skills, and the quality of school lunches. Additionally, safety procedures require refinement, specifically establishing a better reunification location and ensuring consistent inclusion of the School Resource Officer (SRO) in behavioral threat assessments.

STATE AND LOCAL OFFICALS AND EMPLOYEES

FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Stronger Civic and Community Partnerships: Officials and employees want to deepen collaboration between the school district, the city, local churches, the fire department, and senior citizens to mutually benefit the community. Specific ideas include regular superintendent check-ins with local leaders, high school field trips to the government center, and joint efforts to attract housing, businesses, and families to grow Rush City's population.

2. Workforce Readiness and Expanded CTE Pathways: A primary shared goal is to graduate qualified "rural workers" equipped with practical life skills, technical training, and exposure to emerging fields like artificial intelligence. Expanding hands-on CTE spaces and work-release opportunities will better serve students entering the workforce directly after high school.

3. Positive School Climate and Community Reputation: Stakeholders aim to make the schools a happier, welcoming environment while eliminating internal and public "drama" that deters new families and businesses from moving to town. Maintaining high standards of professional behavior, supportive school board leadership, and consistent community outreach will help project a positive image of the district.

4. Academic Prioritization and Comprehensive Student Support: The community wants to ensure that education and higher graduation rates remain the top priority ahead of athletics. Achieving this includes strengthening foundational subjects like history and life skills while robustly supporting special education programs and families in need.

5. Thoughtful Facility Planning and Fiscal Alignment: While there is strong enthusiasm for expanding campus facilities—such as adding CTE workshops and a community walking path—there are also some that want to avoid new referendums. A key goal is aligning community expectations around facility needs and fiscal responsibility to move forward sustainably.



PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Passionate, Caring, and Dedicated Teachers: Parents consistently praise teachers—especially at the elementary level—for their kindness, heart, and willingness to take extra time to help students succeed. Across the district, staff members genuinely know both students and families, creating a supportive, small-community feel.

2. Tight-Knit, Invested Families and Community: The district benefits from a strong "village" mentality where parents stick together, look out for one another's children, and actively volunteer or contribute financially. Engaged incoming families and community members are eager to invest their time and energy into making the schools thrive.

3. Whole-School Commitment to Student Success: Beyond classroom teachers, parents value that the entire school staff—including custodians and support personnel—is invested in helping students succeed. Families appreciate the focus on solid academics alongside well-behaved students and strong youth sports opportunities.

4. Optimism Around New Leadership: Parents expressed strong appreciation for the new leadership's openness, visibility, and willingness to meet with and listen to the community. Combined with recent staff departures that were viewed as necessary, there is a renewed sense of potential and direction for the district.

5. Practical Career and Blue-Collar Pathways: Parents value that the district offers career preparation and blue-collar opportunities in addition to traditional college prep. Providing practical alternatives ensures that students with different strengths and post-secondary plans are supported.



PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Proactive Communication and Public Transparency: Communication was the single most repeated concern, with parents urging the district to be proactive rather than reactive and to hold hard conversations openly. Families want clearer lines of communication with students, parents, and the community, particularly when addressing parent concerns.

2. Staff Unity, School Climate, and Community Engagement: Improving overall school culture requires teachers and staff to model positivity and unity, which directly boosts student morale. Additionally, parents want to revamp the school board advisory committee and reopen doors to community involvement after previously feeling shut out.

3. Expanding CTE, STEM, and Accelerated Learning: Parents want to grow career and technical education (CTE) pathways for non-college-bound students while simultaneously adding more accelerated courses. Incorporating hands-on STEM opportunities, such as robotics, is also a priority to engage creative learners.

4. Fiscal Priorities, Space Utilization, and Equipment Upgrades: Some parents feel spending has been top-heavy on administrative offices while spaces like the football field remain underutilized despite volunteer interest. Updating grounds and maintenance equipment—such as robotic field painters, interior cleaners, and snow removal attachments—was also noted as a practical operational need.

5. Policy Adherence and Employee Onboarding: Strengthening internal operations requires consistently reviewing and following established district policies and procedures. Improving the onboarding process for new hires will also help set staff up for success and turn the district's vision into reality.

GOALS

1. Transparent Communication to Build Trust and Squash Rumors: Parents want open, consistent communication that keeps families informed about school topics and decisions while explaining the reasoning behind them. Greater transparency is seen as essential to rebuilding trust and putting an end to community rumors.

2. Community Reunification and Intergenerational Involvement: A primary goal is bringing the school and community back together into "one big happy family." Specifically, parents would love to see senior citizens engaged in the schools as volunteers, mentors, and supportive figures in students' lives.

3. Staff Accountability and Leadership Effectiveness: To move the district forward, parents want to see “toxic staff” addressed and “ineffective staff” either improve or transition out. Ensuring capable, positive personnel are in place will help create a healthier environment for students.

4. Prioritizing Student Safety and Security: Families emphasize the need to put students and their safety first in every district decision. Rebuilding a strong foundation of safety and security is viewed as critical to restoring confidence in the schools.

5. Capitalizing on Momentum for Positive Change: Parents note a renewed sense of hope in the community and a strong desire for progress. Working together to turn this optimism into tangible improvements will help the district realize its full potential.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Close-Knit Hometown Culture and Multi-Generational Pride: Community members deeply value the welcoming hometown feel where generations of families attend Rush City Public Schools and students, parents, and staff genuinely care for one another. Viewed as the most loved institution at the center of town, the school fosters strong connections across all grade levels and staff roles.

2. Kind, Responsive Staff and Proactive Leadership: Teachers are appreciated for being kind, welcoming, active in the community, and willing to adjust to individual student needs, while the elementary school and its principal earn praise for creating an accepting environment. Residents also welcomed the new leadership's proactive approach to getting things done, improving communication, and including youth sports in the community education brochure.

3. Accessible Athletics, Concerts, and Extracurriculars: The district is praised for eliminating athletic and activity fees, enabling broad student participation in a standout women's sports program, concerts, and music offerings. Allowing youth sports clubs to use school facilities at no cost further strengthens community youth opportunities.

4. High Academic Standards and Strong Local Partnerships: Stakeholders commended the district's high standards and excellent curriculum, supported by strong local partnerships with Pine Technical and Community College and major employers like Plastech. Active involvement from local faith and civic leaders further reinforces the school's central role in the community.

5. Attractive Grounds and Pride-Filled Facilities: Community members noted that the school playgrounds look attractive and appreciated hallway displays of sports banners and student photos that celebrate youth accomplishments. Providing clean, accessible spaces for both school and community use remains a clear point of pride.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Transparent Communication and Community Engagement: To rebuild trust, residents urged the district to share better information through local newspapers and continued Facebook growth, while being more transparent about why certain matters cannot be discussed publicly. Hosting school tours and inviting residents into the buildings more frequently will help strengthen community connection.

2. Expanding CTE, Personal Finance, and Career Counseling: Community members want stronger career counseling and more hands-on pathways outside of four-year degrees—including electricians, welders, 3D printing, culinary arts, and nursing, with local offers to host clinicals. Adding practical financial literacy courses in personal finance, accounting, and bookkeeping (teaching debits and credits) was also emphasized.

3. Consistent Leadership, Staff Development, and Teacher Engagement: Residents stressed the need for consistent district leadership alongside leadership development to help staff navigate conflict and step outside their comfort zones. Some noted that certain staff appear to be "going through the motions" and need stronger behavior management training and engagement, alongside efforts to attract high-quality staff.

4. Facility Enhancements and Youth Sports Alignment: While ongoing facility maintenance is important, residents suggested repurposing underused spaces—such as cleaning up the tennis courts and converting them into pickleball courts. Youth sports leaders also asked for closer partnership and greater involvement from high school coaches to support youth athlete skill development.

5. Expanding Arts, Community Education, and Cultural Awareness: Stakeholders highlighted a desire for more plays, arts, after-school programs, and expanded community education classes. Increasing awareness and education around American Indian culture was also identified as a meaningful curriculum enhancement.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Resolving Tension, Rebuilding Trust, and Unifying the Community: A top priority is addressing issues from the past year that created school and community tension so everyone can get back on the same page as a team. Residents want to keep the school at the center of the community while fostering acceptance, harmony, and positive relationships through inclusive team-building across staff, students, and families.

2. Rigorous Academics, Elementary Art, and Career Pathways: Stakeholders want to deliver a "true education" grounded in reading, writing, spelling, math, logical thinking, and bookkeeping/finance, while bringing art back to the elementary school. Partnering with local businesses through facility tours, financial support, and staff mentorship will also build strong career and technical education pathways for students.

3. Student Safety, Holistic Inclusion, and Collective Support: Ensuring every student feels safe at school is a foundational goal shared by the community. Residents aim to partner collectively with the district to support and include all students—not just those who typically participate—within a positive, welcoming environment.

4. Fiscal Responsibility, Positive Governance, and Accessible Giving: Community members want to see a balanced district budget, positive and productive school board meetings, and clearer public education around school finance. Additionally, residents requested offline donation options so senior citizens can easily contribute to support graduating seniors.

5. Collaborative Youth and Student-Athlete Development: Youth sports organizations and community members want to build a stronger working partnership with the school district and its coaching staff. Aligning coaching and youth programming will better support the long-term growth and skill development of Rush City student-athletes.



DISTRICT SUPPORT STAFF
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Deep Hometown Pride and Positive Workplace Culture: Staff members expressed deep personal pride in Rush City—many as graduates themselves—and highlighted the friendly, outgoing, and positive attitude of colleagues. Most staff are motivated by the right reasons and are eager to drive positive change, making it a welcoming place to come to work every day.

2. Dedicated Staff and Happy, Well-Behaved Students: Support staff noted that staff are strong overall and that students are respectful and genuinely happy to attend school, particularly at the elementary level. This positive dynamic creates an encouraging daily atmosphere across buildings.

3. Strong, Supportive District Office Team: Support staff repeatedly praised the district office personnel for being strong, helpful, and dependable. Their leadership and responsiveness contribute significantly to a positive daily work environment.

4. Well-Maintained Buildings, Grounds, and Athletics: Staff take pride in the physical condition of the school buildings, grounds, and recent facility improvements. They also highlighted the athletics department and the availability of free sports as major assets for students.

5. Strong Underlying Community Support: Despite current challenges, staff recognize that Rush City possesses a strong foundation of overall community support. This local backing remains a vital asset as the district works to strengthen relationships.



DISTRICT SUPPORT STAFF
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Reconnecting with the Community and Rebuilding Trust: Staff emphasized the need to actively listen to community members, overcome negative local stigma, and rebuild public trust. Inviting families back into the buildings—such as having parents and community members join students for lunch—was suggested as a practical way to foster positivity.

2. Proactive Two-Way Communication: Improving communication was highlighted as essential both for listening to residents and keeping parents informed. Staff noted a need for more proactive updates regarding everyday school operations, such as class schedules and athletics information.

3. Staff Accountability and Clear Protocols: Support staff stressed the importance of developing clear processes, procedures, and protocols across the district. Ensuring all staff members are consistently held accountable to these standards will improve operational consistency.

4. Mutual Respect Toward School Leadership: Staff pointed out a need for greater respect toward district and building leadership. Fostering a more respectful culture is viewed as an important step toward healthier internal and community relationships.

5. Expanding Building Space to Support Enrollment: While current facilities are well-maintained, staff noted that larger school buildings are needed to comfortably accommodate the current student body. Expanding physical space could also help attract and support future enrollment growth.

GOALS

1. Rebuilding Trust with the Community: A primary goal is restoring public confidence by showing families and residents that district staff are united in their dedication to students. Open engagement and consistent action will help bridge gaps with the community.

2. Clear Communication and Follow-Through: Staff want the district to prioritize transparent, reliable communication both internally and with families. Equally important is following through on commitments so words are consistently backed by action.

3. Modeling Respect and Collaborative Teamwork: Support staff aim to operate as a cohesive team that models mutual respect across all roles and interactions. Setting a respectful tone internally will help reinforce positive relationships throughout the district and community.

4. Comprehensive Human Resources Support: Staff highlighted a goal of strengthening HR resources and guidance for employees. Providing clearer support around FMLA, workers' compensation, and contract comprehension will help staff feel informed and valued.

5. Uniting Around a Student-First Mission: Keeping student success and well-being at the center of every decision serves as the common ground for all district staff. Demonstrating this shared commitment is key to moving the district forward together.

SCHOOL BOARD
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Small-Town Experience and Broad Student Participation: Board members value the small-town school environment that gives students the chance to try many different activities and get involved. Having the elementary and secondary buildings located close together further helps foster a connected, unified school community.

2. Strong Core Staff and Personal Connections: The district is supported by a strong core group of staff members who know all of the students personally. These close relationships ensure students are recognized as individuals and supported throughout their schooling.

3. High Graduation Rates and Post-Secondary Readiness: Strong graduation rates remain a top priority and point of pride for the board. Students leave Rush City well-prepared to participate in a wide variety of post-secondary experiences and opportunities.

4. High Community Value and Family Input: The school system holds central importance to everyone in the community. Board members appreciate that local families care deeply about the schools and have meaningful opportunities to provide input into their children's education.

5. Strong District Potential: Despite current challenges, board members recognize that Rush City Public Schools has significant potential to grow and thrive. This underlying strength provides a solid foundation for future progress.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Public Transparency, Website Upgrades, and System Clarity: While parents want to stay informed, the district must do a better job explaining school systems, structures, rules, and privacy boundaries that limit what can be shared publicly. Upgrading the district website will also improve accessible, reliable communication with families.

2. Internal Communication and Follow-Through: Improving internal communication is a key priority, particularly around ensuring consistent follow-through and follow-up. Strengthening internal alignment will help the district operate more effectively.

3. Career Readiness and Flexible Learning Options: The district can better help students determine their career or college next steps by hosting events such as a dedicated career fair day. Offering on-campus online or remote learning options would also allow students to take courses that Rush City does not currently offer locally.

4. Fiscal Discipline and Budget Management: Board members emphasized the importance of working strictly within the district's budget. Limiting reliance on fund balance spending is seen as essential to maintaining long-term financial health.

5. Organizational Healing and Team Building: Intentional healing and team building are needed across the district to move past previous friction. Strengthening trust and collaboration among adults will create a healthier organizational culture.

SCHOOL BOARD
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Effective, Unified School Board Governance: A primary goal is for the school board to return to strong governance practices, functioning smoothly and staying on the same page. Operating as a cohesive, well-aligned board will provide steady direction for the district.

2. Building a Strong Administrative Team: Board members aim to build and support a capable administrative leadership team. Putting the right leadership structure in place is viewed as vital to guiding the district forward.

3. Improving Staff and Student Morale: Elevating daily morale across both staff and students is a key priority. Creating a more positive, supportive atmosphere in the buildings will benefit teaching, learning, and workplace culture.

4. Opportunity and Hope for Every Student: The board wants to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed and feel hopeful about their future. Recognizing that any student could be the next person to accomplish something amazing drives their commitment to student success.

5. Realizing Rush City's Full Potential: By pairing cohesive board governance with strong administrative leadership and high morale, the board aims to help Rush City Public Schools reach its full potential. Achieving this vision will strengthen both the schools and the broader community.



ADMINISTRATORS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Dedicated, Caring, and Resilient Staff: Administrators emphasize that staff across all levels possess tremendous heart, grit, and dedication to doing what is best for students. Even through challenging years, the district demonstrates resilience, ambition—such as being an early adopter of the READ Act—and a commitment to showing up with a positive spirit.

2. Generous Community Support and Local Donors: Historically strong community backing, generous program donors, and active groups like the education foundation provide vital resources for students. These external partnerships allow the district to offer unique opportunities and maintain valued community assets like the pool.

3. Engaging Student Opportunities and Vibrant Programs: Students benefit from strong academic and extracurricular offerings both during and outside the school day, including standout athletics like the volleyball program and engaging activities at the elementary school. Combined with the district's overall potential, these experiences enrich student life.

4. Facility Improvements and Adaptable Spaces: Recent construction projects and facility upgrades have lifted morale and helped adapt school spaces to meet evolving staff and student needs. Dedicated facilities staff work hard to maintain and improve the physical environment.

5. Strong District Office Foundation: The district office team is repeatedly recognized as a major organizational strength and a solid foundation from which to grow. Collaborative internal partners and positive morale among key personnel help support daily operations across the schools.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Organizational Alignment, Strategic Focus, and Operational Processes: The district must re-norm around shared procedures, keep its strategic plan on track without distractions, and build stronger unity and continuity between the elementary and secondary buildings. Operational improvements are also needed in restructuring transportation, adding middle/high school facilities staffing, introducing more raw food products in food service, and clarifying student release protocols for community events like Fare for All.

2. Rebuilding Internal Trust and School-Community Culture: Fractured trust exists not only between the district and the community, but also internally across collective bargaining groups. Creating systems where people feel genuinely heard, fostering camaraderie, and rebuilding two-way trust are vital to improving overall school and community culture.

3. Human Resources Systems, Staff Accountability, and Professionalism: Administrators identified a critical need for stronger HR infrastructure, including updated job descriptions, banding and grading, business office support, and consistent evaluation processes for all staff. Addressing staff professionalism—such as maintaining appropriate boundaries with students—and improving new-staff training are also essential to holding everyone to clear expectations.

4. Expanding High School Electives, CTE, and Instructional Practices: The high school needs to follow through on promised electives, expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, and utilize available funding like Perkins grants rather than leaving money on the table. Alongside course expansion, teachers need support in consistently applying evidence-based instructional practices and using data to inform decisions at the team, building, and district levels.

5. Proactive Outreach to Increase Student Enrollment: Reversing enrollment losses requires intentional outreach to bring back students who have left the district. Proactively recognizing organizational needs and adapting programming will make Rush City a more compelling choice for local families.

ADMINISTRATORS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Organizational Healing, Harmony, and Meaningful Connection: Administrators want to foster healing and harmony across the district by encouraging staff and community members to trust, support, and celebrate one another. Connecting with people in meaningful, measurable ways will help rebuild relationships and restore community pride.

2. Comprehensive System Overhaul and Strategic Follow-Through: Administrators aim to thoroughly review and rebuild all district systems and positions from the ground up to create a stronger, more effective organization. Turning this vision into reality requires developing clear plans, concrete action steps, and consistent follow-through.

3. Implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Robust Programming: A core academic goal is developing a comprehensive MTSS framework that meets every learner's needs and challenges them to reach their full potential. Restoring and expanding high-quality programming will also demonstrate to Rush City and neighboring communities that the district can recapture students lost to online learning.

4. Excellence in Facilities, Transportation, and Support Operations: Support leaders aim to work collaboratively as a team to deliver the high-quality facilities and transportation operations the district and superintendent deserve. Smooth, supportive daily operations—including positive, stress-free school food services—are key to serving students and staff well.

5. Reclaiming District Reputation and Community Confidence: A shared overarching goal is proving to local and surrounding communities that Rush City Public Schools remains a premier destination for learning. Rebuilding the people of Rush City and showcasing strong student opportunities will restore confidence in the district's future



STUDENTS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Supportive, Caring Staff and Helpful Staff: Students consistently appreciate staff who are approachable, good at their jobs, and genuinely invested in helping them succeed. From offering extra academic help to incorporating fun touches like class pets, staff help create a positive daily learning environment.

2. Inclusive Athletics and Diverse Extracurriculars: Free sports with a "no-cuts" policy and supportive coaches allow every student to participate and stay active. Beyond athletics, programs like music, theater, cheer, student council, and special events like homecoming and pepfests give students strong reasons to stay engaged and connected to their school.

3. Welcoming Spaces, Library Access, and Elementary Favorites: Students enjoy access to valued school spaces and routines, including the large library, after-school media center hours, gym class, recess, and the ROAR Store. These everyday touchpoints help make school an enjoyable place to spend time with friends.

4. Close-Knit Peer Culture and Alumni Pride: Students value the friendly, small-town atmosphere where peers support one another at events—even classmates they do not know well. Strong backing from alumni and the broader community reinforces the feeling that once you graduate from Rush City, you are always part of the family.

5. Balanced Daily Schedules and Manageable Class Sizes: High school students appreciate shorter class periods that keep the day moving, while elementary students enjoy schedules broken up with homerooms, recess, and specials. Although students value current class sizes, many noted they would happily trade smaller classes for a wider variety of electives.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Expanding Electives, Career Pathways, and College Credit: Across all grade levels, students overwhelmingly want more elective choices—including culinary, automotive, woods and metals, medical sciences, child development, robotics, STEM, drivers education, and in-person American Sign Language—alongside bringing back elementary art. High schoolers also want opportunities to earn concurrent college credit, industry certifications, or a two-year degree before graduation, noting they are willing to accept larger class sizes to make these courses possible. Students note they would prefer higher class sizes in order to expand elective and CTE course opportunities.

2. Later Start Times, Aligned Schedules, and Playground Upgrades: Upper elementary, junior high and senior high students suggested moving to a later start time (around 8:30 AM) and aligning elementary, junior high, and senior high schedules to unlock more cross-building elective options. Elementary students focused heavily on upgrading playground equipment, replacing the ground surface with rubber, fixing basketball hoops, and adding indoor movement or sensory spaces.

3. School Lunch Quality, Variety, and Student Communication: Students asked for larger food portions, better meal quality, and more variety at lunch, including grab-and-go and à la carte options. They also emphasized the need for clearer, direct communication with students regarding schedules, lunch shifts, and school programs.

4. School Climate, Mutual Respect, and Student Accountability: Students highlighted a need for stronger mutual respect between peers and adults, noting that some students disrespect staff and disrupt class while repeated misbehavior lacks consistent accountability. At the same time, students want all staff to be welcoming, understanding, and supportive—especially toward students with disabilities—so everyone feels safe and valued at school.

5. Academic Differentiation and Student Choice: High-achieving students feel under-challenged and want tiered pathways or advanced sections in core subjects like math and English to help them excel. Conversely, students who need extra support want effective remediation, alongside greater student choice in classroom projects.

STUDENTS
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Expanding Electives, Art, and Student-Centered Scheduling: Students' top goal is significantly expanding hands-on electives and bringing back elementary art, even if it requires larger class sizes. Aligning building start times—ideally with a later morning start—and ensuring every student gets a schedule they actually want will boost daily attendance and motivation.

2. Upgraded Playgrounds, Classroom Spaces, and School Spirit: Elementary students aim to revitalize their play and learning environments with a new rubber playground surface, monkey bars, expanded equipment, and engaging classroom touches like ceiling stars and new toys. Incorporating fun school spirit traditions, such as a pajama and video game day, also contributes to a joyful school experience.

3. Whole-School Unity and Meaningful Student Voice: Students want to feel strong as one unified school through multi-age activities, mixed-grade assemblies, and inviting elementary students to high school events like the homecoming pepfest. They also want consistent student government and safe channels where student concerns—including discomfort with specific leadership—are genuinely heard and acted upon.

4. Improved School Meals and Cafeteria Offerings: Students want to work together to upgrade breakfast and lunch options with greater food quantity and appealing choices. Specific ideas like adding a coffee machine and offering Friday pizza from popular vendors reflect a desire for a more enjoyable dining experience.

5. Differentiated Academics to Challenge Every Learner: A key academic goal is creating multiple pathways in math and English so both high-achieving students and those needing extra support receive instruction tailored to their needs. Challenging every student at their level will increase classroom engagement and help all learners excel.



STAFF
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

POSITIVES

1. Cohesive, Dedicated, and Caring Staff: Staff across all roles work together like a family, wearing many hats with dedication and longevity. Colleagues are friendly, supportive of one another, and deeply committed to helping students succeed academically and personally.

2. Small-School Atmosphere and Strong Student Relationships: The small-town environment allows staff to build meaningful, long-term relationships with students and witness their entire educational journey. Smaller class sizes, strong special education support, and polite, respectful students create a welcoming daily atmosphere.

3. Strong Building and New District Leadership: The elementary principal receives overwhelming praise for being approachable, empathetic to classroom realities, and empowering staff as professionals. Staff also express strong optimism regarding the new superintendent, new assistant principal, and supportive coordinators who actively connect with employees and the community.

4. Positive Momentum and Resilient Community Support: Staff note a significant improvement in the school climate compared to the previous year, marked by less drama and a stronger focus on student learning. Backed by a resilient, supportive community, the current school year is off to an encouraging start.

5. Accessible Athletics and Solid Overall Facilities: Students benefit from free athletics and strong sports programming that encourage broad participation. Staff also appreciate that overall district facilities provide a solid foundation for daily teaching and learning.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. Streamlined Communication, Cross-Building Unity, and Collaborative Problem-Solving: Internal communication needs to be clearer and more consistent—keeping paraprofessionals informed, utilizing Synergy for attendance, and streamlining operational notices. Staff also want to bridge the divide between the elementary and junior/senior high schools, review Q-Comp, and resolve issues through collaborative dialogue rather than frequent grievances.

2. Special Education Resources, Para Training, and Dedicated PD Time: Expanding special education staffing, providing dedicated due-process prep time, bringing SCRED services in-house, and improving physical spaces for special education are key priorities. Staff also want comprehensive onboarding and training for paraprofessionals and teachers (covering IEPs, trauma-informed care, and conscious discipline), supported by a formal curriculum review process and dedicated professional development days.

3. Substitute Depth, Facility Repairs, and Master Schedule Alignment: Recruiting more substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and custodians—and allowing paras in teaching programs to sub—is critical to smooth daily operations. Staff also highlighted the need to resolve master schedule conflicts for electives, fund consumables, and address specific facility needs such as elective classroom repairs, cafeteria service line flow, potholes, tennis courts, and bus replacement schedules.

4. Substitute Depth, Facility Repairs, and Master Schedule Alignment: Recruiting more substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and custodians—and allowing paras in teaching programs to sub—is critical to smooth daily operations. Staff also highlighted the need to resolve master schedule conflicts for electives, fund consumables, and address specific facility needs such as elective classroom repairs, cafeteria service line flow, potholes, tennis courts, and bus replacement schedules.

5. Expanding Electives, Career Pathways, and Gifted Differentiation: Staff want to expand electives across all grade levels—including elementary STEM and art, junior high career exploration, agriculture, medical sciences, drivers education, work release, and internships—while raising graduation credit requirements. Alongside supporting struggling learners, staff emphasized the need to challenge proficient and gifted students so they stay engaged.

STAFF
FALL 2026 LISTENING SESSIONS

Themes are ranked from highest to lowest in each category for each stakeholder group.

GOALS

1. Streamlined Communication, Cross-Building Unity, and Collaborative Problem-Solving: Internal communication needs to be clearer and more consistent—keeping paraprofessionals informed, utilizing Synergy for attendance, and streamlining operational notices. Staff also want to bridge the divide between the elementary and junior/senior high schools, review Q-Comp, and resolve issues through collaborative dialogue rather than frequent grievances.

2. Special Education Resources, Para Training, and Dedicated PD Time: Expanding special education staffing, providing dedicated due-process prep time, bringing SCRED services in-house, and improving physical spaces for special education are key priorities. Staff also want comprehensive onboarding and training for paraprofessionals and teachers (covering IEPs, trauma-informed care, and conscious discipline), supported by a formal curriculum review process and dedicated professional development days.

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