

Richland County Community Unit School District No. 1



State of the District Report
2026

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RCCU 1 Annual State of the District Report

January 15, 2026

Introduction

Each January since 2003, the Richland County School District has created an annual State of the District Report to communicate with the Board of Education the state of education in the district. This communication typically includes an assortment of student data, specific initiatives in the different schools, financial data for the District, and much more.

This year's report includes a review of 2025 accomplishments and a snapshot of what is planned for 2026.

Review of 2025

The 2025 calendar year was a year of many positive changes and outcomes for RCCU#1. Those changes came in a variety of ways and forms. Some of those areas included academic awards, curriculum changes, the addition of new staff positions and programs, and facility improvements.

Academic Programs

- The district created advanced coursework opportunities within Richland County Middle School for students who are excelling at higher rates and needed to be challenged academically. These opportunities began at the 7th-grade level in 2025 and will continue into 8th grade in 2026.
- The district officially opened the Rise Up alternative education facility which serves up to 30 students who need alternative programming in order to find academic success.
- Richland County High School began the process of replacing their Math curriculum which has been in place for many years. As part of the process, RCHS will return to a traditional program after using an integrated approach for years.
- Richland County Middle School saw the implementation of TCI Social Studies curriculum in the fall. They had previously used a wide variety of curricular sources for their classes. This change has allowed them to truly scaffold the learning of their students.
- The Social Science Department at Richland County High School adopted new curriculum after using their previous curriculum for over 15 years. The new curriculum allows for a strong vertical alignment with what is happening at Richland County Middle School.
- Richland County Elementary School began its second year using the CKLA language arts curriculum with the Dibels Reading Intervention Program. They have seen great growth through the use of this program and even began adding Skills from CKLA at the 3rd grade level.
- With the change by the Illinois State Board of Education to move from the SAT to the ACT as the standardized test for high school students, Richland County High School teachers and district staff have undergone significant professional development. The district's curriculum director, academic coaches and some members of core subject area have participated in ACT Mastery Courses to better understand what students will experience and need to know before taking this new assessment.

The Addition of New Positions and Programs

- Richland County Middle School added a second school counselor. This will provide one counselor for approximately every 225 students. This will be a major improvement from the current one counselor for every 450 students.
- Richland County CUSD #1 implemented a structured mentoring program for our first and second year teachers in the district. This program allows for new teachers to have an experienced mentor to rely on for assistance and guidance throughout the year. There are currently 49 new staff members involved in the program.
- Richland County CUSD #1 implemented another component of its communications plan through the development of a quarterly newsletter that is mailed directly to the homes of every resident that lives within RCCU #1 boundaries. This newsletter aids the district in spreading the news of what is happening throughout the district in a different manner than just through social media.
- Richland County CUSD #1 implemented the Raptor security system in 2025 equipping every employee with a safety badge for better communication, a visitor admission system that allows better screening of guests and a district wide notification system in the case of emergencies.

Facility Improvements

- Richland County Elementary School saw the installation of a new playground system. The new system replaced the original system that was installed 26 years ago.
- Richland County Middle School underwent phase 2 of the lighting project started in 2024. This phase finished the first floor and made the building considerably brighter while improving electrical efficiency.
- Richland County Community Unit #1 began the process of replacing the mechanical automation control systems at RCES and RCMS. The system at RCES was replaced first and the building has seen a drastic improvement in temperature control, electrical efficiency and a more comfortable learning environment.
- Richland County Middle School started to receive a playground overhaul in 2025. The old tennis courts and basketball courts were resurfaced into eight pickleball courts and three basketball courts, two gaga ball pits and a nine square play area. This project was started in the fall of 2025 and will see completion in the spring of 2026.
- The Board of Education selected GEO Surfaces as the contractor for the new athletic complex and selected an overall design for the facility. In December, GEO Surfaces began demolition and the process of preparing the site for our new fields.
- Richland County Community Unit #1 began work to design a lighting upgrade project at Richland County Elementary School similar to the one being completed at RCMS. RCES is the last school building in the district still using fluorescent light bulbs.

What has us excited about 2026?

The 2026 calendar year brings a great deal of excitement to Richland County Community Unit #1 as we continue to build upon the growth and momentum of our district. RCCU #1 has a long-standing tradition of academic excellence and strong extracurricular programs, and the year ahead reflects our commitment to that legacy. In 2026, we will see continued expansion of academic offerings, the addition of new staff, and ongoing improvements to district facilities. As a progressive district, RCCU #1 remains dedicated to seeking new opportunities that enhance the experiences and expand the possibilities available to our students and staff.

Academic Programs

- Richland County Elementary School will begin to build out a more detailed and structured Math Intervention program. This will allow students to receive more strategic interventions to directly impact areas of weakness and specific skill sets.
- Richland County Elementary School will also see more focus on Math core work in the areas of hands-on learning through the use of a centers approach. This will allow more discovery in the learning process and greater opportunity for differentiation.
- Richland County Middle School will be looking to incorporate more Career and Technical Education opportunities through the use of the PACE Framework and a Family and Career Services class.
- Richland County Middle School will also be implementing a new Reading Intervention program as a way of continuing the support for students who struggle in this area. This will align vertically to what is already happening at RCES.
- Richland County High School will be implementing their new Math curriculum moving back to an Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II format. This will also align vertically with the advanced coursework happening at RCMS.

The Addition of New Positions

- Richland County CUSD #1 will be partnering with the Richland County Sheriff's Department to add a third School Resource Officer. This will allow the district to have a full-time officer at all three of the large campuses.
- Richland County High School is looking to add a part-time construction teacher to head up the newly designed construction trades program.

Facility Improvements

- RCCU #1 will see the completion of the Athletic Complex project and the impact that it will start to have on the school and community.
- Richland County High School and Middle School will have solar arrays installed on their rooftops. This will allow the district to produce approximately half the electricity currently being consumed by each of these facilities. That is a significant savings each year and especially over time.

- Richland County Elementary School will also see the design and installation of a new canopy for the parent pick up/drop off areas. This canopy is needed to keep our students out of the weather as much as possible while waiting to be picked up.
- Richland County Middle School started to receive a playground overhaul in 2025. The old tennis courts and basketball courts were resurfaced into eight pickle ball courts and three basketball courts, two gaga ball pits and a nine square play area. This project was started in the fall of 2025 and will see completion in the spring of 2026.
- Richland County Community Unit #1 will begin the process of replacing the mechanical automation control system at RCMS. The replacement of this system will allow for better control of the educational environment and ultimately a more comfortable learning environment.
- Richland County CUSD #1 will be finalizing the athletic buildings that will be built as part of the overall facility plan at Richland County High School. One building will be located on the north side of the high school and located within the athletic complex. The other will be located on the south side of the high school.

In closing, Richland County Community Unit #1 remains steadfast in its commitment to academic excellence and continuous growth that positively impacts both students and staff. Our district is strengthened by the dedication and talent of our teachers, support staff, and administrators who collaboratively design, develop, and lead initiatives that foster an exceptional educational environment across downstate Illinois. The progress achieved in recent years, along with the work planned for 2026 and beyond, reflects our ongoing commitment to our students and community by providing high-quality academic and extracurricular experiences that prepare learners with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability needed to thrive as productive citizens in an ever-changing society.