

Why support the creation of a community Connectivity HUB?

We know that a student's ability to be successful in school is also tied to their being healthy, well-fed and worrying less about conditions in their community and at home. This is the same with students as it is with adults. Every time we add a point of stress to a student's daily life, it is more difficult for them to concentrate, focus, and have HOPE. Unfortunately, increasingly more of our students have needs that are not being met in and by our families and communities in spite of many peoples' best efforts. This Connectivity Hub (HUB) has the potential to provide more tools in our communities toolbox to better support our young people and families in need. Accepting the HUB grant is ultimately about promoting student success in school and in the future. If approved by the voters of RSU 9, the Grant's conditions will enable RSU 9 to help coordinate enhanced student, family, and teacher support. Based on our projections we do not anticipate costs being added to the district budget for both the purchase of the Ingalls School and the associated maintenance and upkeep for the foreseeable future.

There are two important aspects to this grant: (1) providing multiple onsite services in one place accessible by public transportation and (2) developing increasing capacity for students, families and community members to learn about, use, and access online services. In developing the grant proposal, we, through our Director of Adult Education, spoke to many community services providers who are enthusiastic about the possibilities created by the existence of a HUB.

Providing needed services in one location allows for more access with far less difficulty for those in need of help while expanding the communication and coordination between service providers. As we all know improving service availability and access many times comes down to improving coordination of those services.

Digital literacy combined with the efforts to extend internet access in Franklin County opens many new possibilities for students, families and the wider community. Expanded online services may include remote medical appointments (including for those who have chronic conditions who have difficulty attending the necessary appointments in person), counseling and participation in support groups (including for those who have addiction issues), and workforce training coordination to help individuals work their way out of poverty.

Employment insecurity is an additional stressor that deeply impacts students' families, including food and housing insecurity. Increased job training opportunities in a variety of occupations is also needed, which the space for this HUB provides. Better understanding and training in the use of the internet and digital literacy is needed in today's employment market. Expanding job training possibilities will help stabilize families and allow for economic growth within the communities.

In closing, many have shared, rightly so, that RSU 9 should not be in the business of helping to coordinate social services and community non-profit support; that we should concentrate on Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. We understand, appreciate and value this strong belief within Franklin County. We really do! Our concern, fortified by the data we collect each and every day, is that more and more of the difficulties that our families are facing come into and affect our students progress and our schools ability to support our students. The simple fact is that the

positive support and learning that our staff offers each and every day and that you expect, is being hampered by the multiple difficulties that our children and families are facing on a daily basis. We believe that a HUB of this kind will not solve all concerns but will give our students through their families more tools to enhance student progress, success, and greater HOPE!

We pursued this grant not because we thought it would make our jobs easier or that it would be a magic bullet and address all of our issues. It won't. We pursued this grant to provide RSU 9 voters with the opportunity to decide on a potential vital resource. Our staff, through their daily interactions and dedicated work with students and families, witness firsthand the profound need for enhanced support for our children with multiple needs. **I believe this initiative will directly benefit our community's most valuable asset: our children.** If our students and families with the greatest needs are better supported, then all students in RSU 9 will be better served by the resources/tax dollars that you, the voters, supply to RSU 9 each year.

We appreciate your consideration and especially appreciate you heading to the polls this Monday, March 24th to participate in the democratic process by letting us know if this is a direction you want us to go in through your vote. Thank you very much!

Christian M. Elkington
Superintendent