



RICHMOND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dreams4RPS

Final 2018-23 Strategic Plan

Presented by: Jason Kamras, Superintendent

Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

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The Stakes for Our Children

Dear RPS and the City of Richmond,

We are thrilled to present Dreams4RPS, the 2018-23 RPS Strategic Plan! After more than 170 community meetings and the participation of over 3,000 stakeholders, we now have an ambitious, innovative, and inspiring plan for the future of RPS.

The stakes couldn't be higher.

Without a world-class education, true freedom and liberty – the kind that allows you to pursue your dreams whatever they may be – will remain out of reach for far too many of our children. We cannot allow that to happen. Our very destiny as a city rests upon us ensuring that our schools become engines of opportunity for ALL of our children, regardless of background.

If we execute this plan, that's exactly what RPS will become. It won't be easy. We will need to confront decades of systemic injustice, institutionalized racism, underfunding, and mismanagement. And it will take time.

But we remain boundlessly optimistic about our collective ability to bring this plan to life in service of each and every one of our children. Guided by our three core values of equity, engagement, and excellence – combined with a commitment to transparent and inclusive leadership – we will collectively write a historic chapter in the RPS story. Together, as one “beloved community,” there is no limit to what we can achieve.

With the deepest appreciation,

Dawn C. Page



Chair, Richmond City School Board

Jason Kamras



Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools

Our Process

When we began this process last spring, we set a goal of holding at least 150 community meetings to ensure that you – our stakeholders – would have multiple opportunities to share your perspectives and help craft this plan.

We didn't want this to be the Board's plan or the Superintendent's plan or even the Division's plan. We wanted it to be the entire community's plan.

We actually exceeded our goal by holding over 170 community meetings – at our schools, community centers, and in other venues across the city. Over 3,000 students, family members, teachers, administrators, support staff, and community members participated.

First, you shared your dreams for the future of RPS, which dictated the plan's five strategic priorities: 1) Exciting and Rigorous Teacher and Learning; 2) Skilled and Supported Staff; 3) Safe and Loving School Cultures; 4) Deep Partnership with Families and Community; and 5) Modern Systems and Infrastructure.

Next you developed dozens of key action steps for each of these priorities and made tough decisions about which of them we should prioritize for the next five years. Finally, you helped draft our top 10 goals.

Thank you for contributing so much of your time, energy, and creative thinking to help us craft this inspiring blueprint for our future. Dreams4RPS is truly the community's plan.

Onward!

Our Top 10 Goals for the Next 5 Years

Goals

1. Achieve 100% full accreditation.
2. Increase the graduation rate as well as the percentage of graduates attending a 4-year or 2-year college, entering the workforce in a living wage job, or participating in national service – overall and for each subgroup (race, economic status, IEP status, and ELL status).
3. Increase the proficiency and advanced rates in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies – overall and for each subgroup.
4. Increase the proficiency and advanced rates in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies – overall and for each subgroup.
5. Decrease the gaps in proficiency and advanced rates – by race, socioeconomic status, ELL status, and IEP status.
6. Increase student satisfaction (for example, with school culture, building cleanliness, and engagement level of classes); family satisfaction (for example, with school safety, academic rigor, and timeliness of transportation); and staff satisfaction (for example, with level of support, freedom to offer feedback, and availability of resources) – overall and for each subgroup.
7. Increase student enrollment – overall and for each subgroup.
8. Decrease chronic absenteeism – overall and for each subgroup.
9. Decrease suspensions – overall and for each subgroup.
10. Increase funding from local, state, federal, and philanthropic sources.

Note: During the 2018-19 school year, baseline numbers, as well as five-year and annual targets, will be developed for each goal.

Priority 1: Exciting and Rigorous Teaching and Learning

Final Actions

- Action 1.1 – Launch “Passion4Learning,” a comprehensive, multi-year effort to nurture our students’ passion for learning by creating an exciting, hands-on, and rigorous theme at every RPS middle & high school (e.g., arts, technology and engineering, law and social justice, international affairs, biological sciences, environmentalism, etc.); and by ensuring that all elementary students are exposed to a broad array of enriching learning opportunities (e.g., visual and performing arts, instrumental music and music appreciation, world languages, coding, etc.).
- Action 1.2 – Develop and implement an innovative, research-based, equity-focused, “do whatever it takes” literacy plan to ensure that ALL third graders are reading at or above grade level.
- Action 1.3 – Adopt new English and math curricula – not just textbooks – that are rigorous, hands-on, and engaging.
- Action 1.4 – Conduct an audit of course offerings as well as enrollment in advanced courses, “gifted” programs, and specialty schools to identify and actively disrupt any systemic biases and/or gaps based on race, socio-economic status, or country of origin.
- Action 1.5 – Conduct a comprehensive review of the special education referral process as well as IEP meeting protocols and “inclusion” practices. In response, provide updated training for all relevant staff to ensure all students and families receive the supports they deserve.
- Action 1.6 – Develop and implement a more innovative and responsive academic approach to supporting recent immigrant students and their families, taking into consideration students’ age, level of English proficiency, and level of schooling in home country.
- Action 1.7 – Develop and implement a plan to reimagine “alternative education programs” (serving students who are over-age and/or under-credited) by re-engaging young people through “out-of-the-box” learning and leadership experiences (e.g., “outward bound”-type programs, trade-based apprenticeships, etc.).
- Action 1.8 – Collaborate with the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia to expand pre-school to two years (adding three-year-olds), and to provide fee-based access for higher-income families to generate greater socio-economic diversity in our early childhood classrooms.

Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

Final Actions

Action 2.1 – Redesign the human resources department to ensure that: 1) RPS is able to fill every vacancy with a highly skilled professional; and 2) both our employees and our applicants receive outstanding customer service.

Action 2.2 – Launch an effort explicitly focused on increasing and retaining the number of male teachers of color in RPS.

Action 2.3 – Redesign our compensation system to ensure that: 1) RPS teachers are paid at, or above, the Virginia average; 2) RPS teachers serving in our highest-priority schools are the highest paid in the Commonwealth; and 3) all roles have a clear and consistent salary progression, year over year.

Action 2.4 – Provide meaningful, job-embedded, and long-term professional development for teachers and administrators on new, to-be-adopted English and math curricula and launch a one-year intensive training program for new teachers and principals.

Action 2.5 – Provide ongoing training to help RPS staff identify and confront our implicit biases with respect to race, socioeconomic status, country of origin or citizenship status, LGBTQ identification, and other elements of personal identity. In doing so, affirm our commitment to ALL students and staff.

Action 2.6 – Broaden partnerships with local schools of education to target high-need subject areas such as secondary math and science, special education, and ESL.

Action 2.7 – Launch an annual gala celebration to honor our educators.

Action 2.8 – Collaborate with the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia to implement incentives for top educators to come to, and stay in, RVA, including housing credits, tax credits, and tuition reimbursement.

Priority 3: Safe and Loving School Cultures

Final Actions

- Action 3.1 – Make “trauma-informed” practices a core pillar of the “RPS Way” by providing long-term, meaningful training for our educators and support staff on the skills necessary to effectively serve students facing toxic stress in their lives.
- Action 3.2 – Make “restorative justice” practices a core pillar of the “RPS Way” by providing long-term, meaningful training for our educators and support staff on the skills necessary to resolve conflicts, increase empathy, and reduce suspensions.
- Action 3.3 – Increase the number of staff providing mental health and social supports by at least 25% and ensure that all schools have a nurse.
- Action 3.4 – Launch a team-building retreat for each incoming sixth grade class and each incoming ninth grade class to build positive relationships prior to the start of school.
- Action 3.5 – Launch an annual event to celebrate RPS students who have taken extraordinary steps to positively impact the culture in their schools.
- Action 3.6 – Ensure every school has a “celebration plan” that outlines how it will bring joy to the student and staff experience throughout the year.
- Action 3.7 – Provide intensive training on positive, asset-based classroom management techniques.
- Action 3.8 – Collaborate with the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia to launch a School Justice Collaborative to change policies that are contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Priority 4: Deep Partnership with Families and Community

Final Actions

- Action 4.1 – Launch a “Go Far Together” Team (families, educators, community members) in every school that is inclusive and reflects the diversity of the school’s student and family population.
- Action 4.2 – Train every teacher on how to respectfully conduct home visits to ensure that every RPS student receives at least one home visit per year.
- Action 4.3 – Double the capacity of the “Welcome Center” to ensure that every immigrant family in RPS has access to high-quality guidance on how to navigate RPS and how to connect with City social services.
- Action 4.4 – Launch a City-wide program to offer mentorship opportunities to RPS young men of color, leveraging partnerships with the faith, business, non-profit, and civil rights communities.
- Action 4.5 – Provide customer service training for all school front office staff.
- Action 4.6 – Launch a “Family Academy” that provides training for parents and caregivers on topics such as special education processes, student advocacy, and adult literacy.
- Action 4.7 – Partner with local historical organizations as well as Richmond residents of all backgrounds to develop a set of student and staff learning experiences, including a credit-bearing high school course, on the unvarnished history of Richmond.
- Action 4.8 – Collaborate with the City of Richmond on its efforts to increase out-of-school-time opportunities for RPS students.

Priority 5: Modern Systems and Infrastructure

Final Actions

- Action 5.1 – Modernize and better integrate core technology systems (HR, budget, etc.) to provide a better level of customer service to our schools and families, and to allow for data-driven decision-making.
- Action 5.2 – Develop a comprehensive rezoning plan based on demographic projections, actual building capacity, and the Board-approved facilities plan, aiming to reduce overcrowding and create a more integrated school system.
- Action 5.3 – Develop an advocacy campaign to create the political will for a comprehensive funding package for our facilities needs (new construction, renovation, and ongoing maintenance).
- Action 5.4 – Implement an equity-based funding formula that ensures that schools that need the most actually receive the most.
- Action 5.5 – Increase the on-time performance of our bus system by rethinking some routes and adding vehicles/drivers to our fleet.
- Action 5.6 – Improve the nutritional value of, and student satisfaction with, the RPS meals program.
- Action 5.7 – Pilot a “Director of Operations” role in a subset of schools to manage all operational duties so that principals can focus on the core work of teaching and learning.
- Action 5.8 – Collaborate with the City of Richmond on the construction of three new schools by 2020 (Greene, Mason, and Elkhardt-Thompson) and secure the necessary funding for a fourth (George Wythe).