

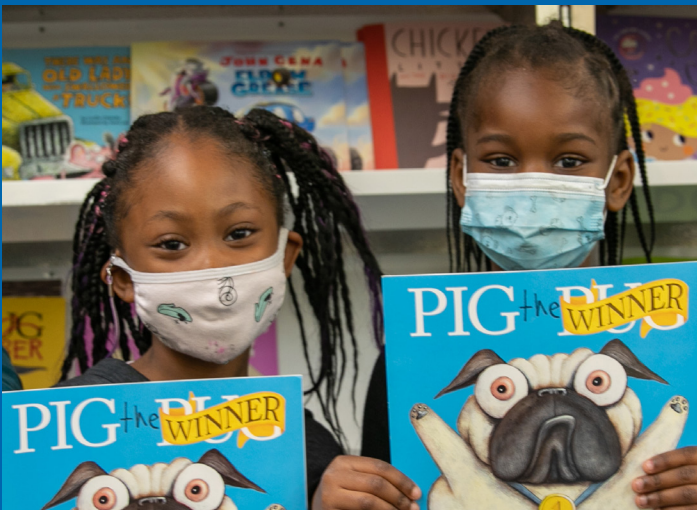
2018-23 Dreams4RPS Outcomes Report

A Look Back at the
Last Five Years

RPS
RICHMOND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Let's Keep
Dreaming! ✨



January 2024

Dear RPS Community,

It's been a remarkable five years.

When we launched our strategic plan, Dreams4RPS, in February of 2018, we knew that Richmond Public Schools had big challenges and big opportunities. We resolved to #LeadWithLove, and with input from 3,000 stakeholders in more than 170 community meetings, we developed a plan with five priorities:

- Exciting and Rigorous Teaching and Learning
- Skilled and Supportive Staff
- Safe and Loving School Cultures
- Deep Partnership with Families and Community
- Modern Systems and Infrastructure

The plan was ambitious. It was exciting. It was transformational. And so, we — RPS, our families, and the larger Richmond community — got to work. We were determined to rise to any challenge.

And then came COVID-19.

The global pandemic changed everything for us. In just a few months, we went from a school system with fewer than 2,000 computers to one with a Chromebook for each of our 23,000 students. We set up a food delivery system using school buses, ultimately providing more than 3 million meals to our students. We added HEPA filters to every school's HVAC system and installed air scrubbers in every classroom and office. Most of all, we kept our students and staff safe.

COVID-19 not only disrupted school — it also exacerbated long-standing inequities in our community. Racial and economic disparities widened in healthcare, employment, housing, and more — just as the nation was coming to terms with the horrific murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

These events strengthened our resolve to do everything humanly possible to provide RPS students with a world class education that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and social capital needed to pursue their dreams and create a more just and equitable future for our city, state, and nation.

The pandemic undoubtedly knocked us down. As they did across the country, academic scores dropped and mental health challenges skyrocketed. But we are #RPSStrong. We dusted ourselves off and got back up. Our scores are rising, we now have more accredited schools, and our attendance is improving faster than anywhere else in the state.

As we look forward to the next five years, we know that we still have much to do. But we also know the power of our students' dreams, and our solemn obligation to help them become reality. Please join us on this journey, as we continue to Teach, Lead, and Serve with Love.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Rizzi
Chair, School Board



Jason Kamras
Superintendent

DREAMS4RPS *Top 10 Goals*

Five years ago, we joined together as a community to draft Dreams4RPS, an ambitious list of goals to help every RPS student pursue their dreams. The pandemic threw us off course, but we're proud of how we cared for each other during those difficult years and kept pushing towards our goals.

Here's a snapshot of how we did — our successes and where we still need to improve.

GOAL 1: ACCREDITATION



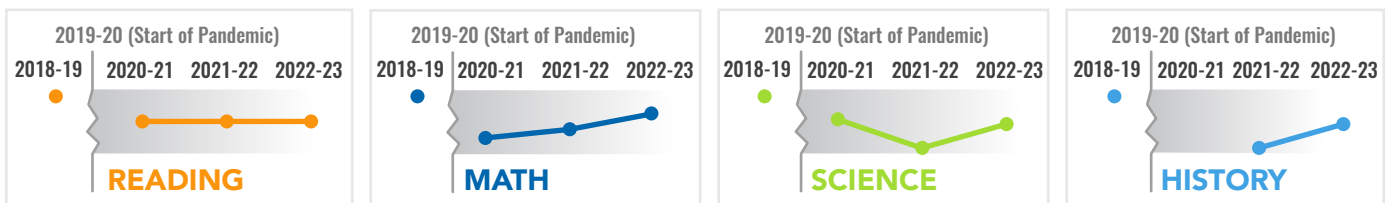
We have **20** accredited schools now, **four** more than we did in the 2018-19 school year, including our first high school — John Marshall HS — and our first middle school — Albert Hill MS!

GOAL 2: GRADUATION



Graduation rates increased just slightly — from **71%** to **72%** — in the last five years. Like school systems across the country, we struggled to keep high school students engaged during the pandemic. We have lots of work to do here, but need to highlight one very bright spot: our graduation rate for Black students increased by **8 points**!

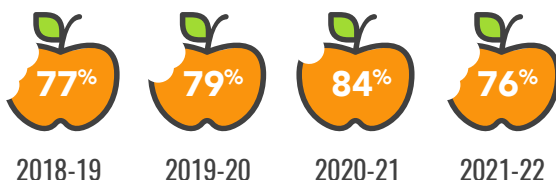
GOAL 3: ACADEMICS



The pandemic had a huge impact on our reading, math, science, and history scores. But we're bouncing back — in most cases, faster than the state.

GOAL 4: TEACHER RETENTION

Fall Retention Rates



The last few years were some of the hardest for teachers, but our educators rose to the occasion.

We're proud we were able to increase average teacher pay by **\$12,000** over the last five years and can't wait to do even more to increase retention.

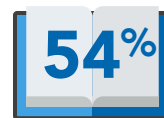
GOAL 5: EQUITY



218%

increase in middle school students enrolled in Algebra 1

Research shows that exposure to advanced coursework is critical to success in college and beyond. The number of RPS students — **particularly economically disadvantaged students** — taking these classes increased significantly over the last five years.



increase in students enrolled in AP courses

GOAL 6: SATISFACTION

Teacher & Staff Satisfaction Rates

35% 2018-19 **47%** 2021-22

We want our schools to be joyful, and that starts with teacher satisfaction. We've made strides here, but we also know the pandemic took a toll. We're grateful to be heading in the right direction, and know we have more work to do.

GOAL 7: ENROLLMENT



21,706

enrolled students in SY 2022-23

Many districts across Virginia face lower enrollments today because of the pandemic. At RPS, we're down from about **23,000** to roughly **22,000**. We're working hard to bring students back and attract even more families to join us.

GOAL 8: ATTENDANCE



Attendance also became a national challenge after the pandemic. Five years ago our chronic absenteeism rate was **15%** and in the 2021-22 school year, it peaked at **28%**. The good news is that we were down to **25%** last year and are continuing to see improvements.

GOAL 9: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Suspension Days per 100 Students



Since 2018, we've been on a journey to #LeadWithLove and decrease the number of suspensions, particularly for students of color and students with disabilities. We're still trying to solve this. We know the trauma families felt during the pandemic continues to show up at school, which is why we created our first-ever Wellness Office. Our goal: ensure every student feels they belong at school and has the mental health support they deserve.

GOAL 10: FUNDING



Because of your advocacy and the leadership of the School Board, Mayor, and City Council, we've seen an increase of **\$62 million** in local and state funding over the last five years — and this year we received **\$27.7 million** from the Virginia School Construction Assistance Program. But we need to keep the pressure on — particularly at the state level. As the Virginia General Assembly's research arm concluded, Virginia underfunds public education by over **\$3 billion** every year!

PRIORITY 1

Exciting and Rigorous Teaching and Learning

ACTION

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE'VE DONE



Passion4Learning

Nurture students' passion for learning through exciting themed programs at middle and high schools

- Started the design process for a new high-tech CTE high school and a new arts high school
- Launched STEM academies at Henderson MS and Martin Luther King, Jr. MS
- Hired nearly 20 new art, music, and world language teachers
- Launched a dual language immersion program at Broad Rock ES



Literacy

Set every student up for success with high-quality literacy instruction

- Added more than 40 reading coaches and reading interventionists
- Adopted a reading intervention program based on the latest science of reading
- Increased funding for school and home libraries
- Launched the Lit Limo, book vending machines, and author visits to cultivate a love for reading



Curriculum

Spark a love of learning through hands-on, engaging curricular materials

- Led the state in adoption of a new reading curriculum based on the latest science of reading
- Adopted a new math curriculum that teaches students to understand concepts, not just formulas
- Hired more than 25 curriculum coaches and interventionists to support deep student learning



Equity

Ensure every student can access challenging coursework that prepares them for college and career

- Ensured for the first time that every middle school offers Algebra
- Increased 8th grade Algebra enrollment by more than 200%
- Launched more than a dozen new AP courses and increased AP enrollment by more than 50%



Special Education

Ensure students with disabilities receive the supports and services they deserve and have a right to access

- Released from our state-mandated special education corrective action plan because of widespread improvements
- Hired more than 25 new special education teachers and staff
- Reduced the number of students with disabilities placed outside the school division in private day schools



English Language Learners

Enhance support for English learners and their families to meet the needs of this rapidly growing demographic

- Hired nearly 50 new ESL teachers and bilingual staff
- Launched the Welcome Center, Newcomer Academy, and Con Ganas programs to support our recent immigrants
- Created a Language Justice team to improve translation and interpretation services



Alternative Education

Redesign alternative programs so students have more flexibility in how, where, and when they earn credit

- Reimagined Amelia Street School as a therapeutic center for elementary students needing additional behavioral support and skill-building
- Launched the THRIVE program to provide a non-traditional learning environment for over-age and under-credited high schoolers



Early Childhood

Collaborate with the city and state to expand both the quantity and quality of preschool programming

- Added a principal position to all five of our preschools to provide stronger instructional leadership for early childhood programs
- Added three-year-old seats to the Head Start program for the first time
- Added more art and music classes to preschools

PRIORITY 2

Skilled and Supported Staff

ACTION

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE'VE DONE



Top Talent

Fill vacancies with highly-skilled professionals and provide an outstanding experience for applicants

- Became first division in Virginia to adopt collective bargaining, which led to pay increases, protection of planning time, and other improvements in working conditions for teachers
- Offered signing bonuses of up to \$12,000 for teachers in high-need schools
- Launched regional marketing campaign that reached over a million people



Diverse Teachers

Increase and retain the number of male teachers of color

- Launched RVA Men Teach to attract, support, and retain male teachers of color
- Enhanced recruitment at HBCUs throughout the East Coast
- Created signing bonuses for teachers fluent in Spanish



Compensation

Redesign compensation to ensure teachers are paid more and roles have a clear salary progression

- Increased average teacher pay from \$52,000 to \$64,000
- Updated salary schedules to address pay freezes from the 2008 recession
- Added stipends for an array of additional duties to compensate staff for their time



Professional Development

Create job-embedded and long-term professional development for teachers and administrators

- Started shift from one-size-fits-all professional development to school-based professional learning communities
- Created virtual professional development opportunities to give teachers more flexibility
- Increased funding for tuition reimbursement so teachers can earn additional endorsements



Equity and Inclusion

Implement policies and practices to make RPS a more inclusive and equitable school division

- Renamed every school that was originally named for Confederacy-linked individuals
- Adopted progressive policies to support LGBTQ staff and students
- Expanded parental-leave policies to be inclusive of all families and caregivers



University Partnerships

Increase pipeline of teachers into high-need subject areas with university partners

- Launched the Build Our Own Teachers program with VSU and VUU to help instructional assistants and long-term subs earn their teaching licenses
- Launched advanced literacy-training cohorts with UVA
- Invested in the Richmond Teacher Residency with VCU



Celebration

Launch an annual gala celebration to honor our educators

- Launched RPS Shines, an annual ceremony to celebrate our Teachers of the Year and other award-winning staff
- Created the Lucille M. Brown Impact Award and the Rodney A. Robinson Equity Award to recognize RPS staff who have made a long-term impact and have advanced equity
- Created "shout-outs" section of RPS Direct to recognize teachers and staff every day



RVA Incentives

Collaborate with the city and state to implement incentives for top educators to come to RVA

- Partnered with the city to increase average teacher pay by \$12,000
- Marketed Richmond's diversity, culture, food, and outdoor recreation in recruitment campaigns
- Launched partnership with the Richmond Fire Department to certify teachers in CPR (needed for license) for free

PRIORITY 3

Safe and Loving School Cultures

ACTION

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE'VE DONE



Trauma Informed Practices

Provide training for staff to support students who have experienced trauma

- Launched trauma-informed morning community circles in every school
- Created staff "wellness rooms" and provided teachers with social-emotional learning supplies
- Started an annual two-week Wellness Institute to provide training for teachers and staff



Restorative Justice

Provide training for staff on the skills necessary to resolve conflicts, increase empathy, and reduce suspensions

- Changed in-school suspension rooms to "restorative rooms" which aim to help students repair relationships
- Launched PASS program to divert students from the juvenile justice system
- Changed school security role to "care and safety associate" with more extensive training on trauma-informed and restorative practices



Whole Child Supports

Grow mental health and social supports staff by at least 25%

- Launched Wellness Office to focus on students' physical, mental, and emotional health
- Added more than 50 wellness positions, including nurses, social workers, counselors, and psychologists



Relationships

Hold a retreat for each incoming sixth grade and ninth grade class to build positive relationships

- Paused work on these retreats given the pandemic, but planning to revisit them next year



Student Leaders

Celebrate RPS students who have positively impacted the culture in their schools

- Created the Maggie L. Walker Award to recognize students who make a positive impact on their school culture and climate
- Enhanced the role of Student Representative to the School Board
- Launched Superintendent's High School Student Advisory Council



Joy

Cultivate joy for students and staff throughout the division

- Added dozens of art, music, PE, and STEM positions to elementary schools
- Set aside funds for each school to hold more student celebrations
- Developed staff appreciation plans at each school



Classroom Management

Provide intensive training on positive, asset-based classroom management techniques

- Launched professional development on trauma-responsive classroom management
- Added dozens of mental health professionals to help students address issues that sometimes lead to classroom disruptions
- Provided teachers with \$150 gift cards to help them set up warm and inviting classrooms



School Justice Collaborative

Collaborate with the city and state to change policies that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline

- Paused work with the Richmond Juvenile Court given the pandemic, but planning to revisit it next year

PRIORITY 4

Deep Partnership with Families and Community

ACTION

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE'VE DONE



Community Teams

Launch teams in every school that are inclusive and reflect the diversity of the student and family population

- Launched Family Liaison team to strengthen connections between school and home
- Started "community walks" to meet families and community organizations in their neighborhoods
- Supported efforts to launch more parent/teacher organizations at schools



Home Visits

Train every teacher to conduct home visits so each student receives at least one home visit per year

- Paused home visit program given the pandemic, but planning to revisit it next year



Welcome Center

Double staff capacity so immigrant families have the support to navigate RPS and connect with social services

- Launched two Welcome Centers to support recent immigrant students and their families
- Launched Newcomer Academy to provide academic support tailored to the needs of Newcomer students
- Hired dozens more bilingual and English learner staff



Mentorship

Leverage partnerships with local organizations to offer mentorship opportunities to young men of color

- Paused mentorship program, Brothers United, given the pandemic, but planning to revisit it next year



Customer Services

Provide customer service training for school front office staff

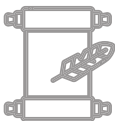
- Provided initial customer service training for front office staff
- Added customer service as one of the key competencies in staff evaluation process
- Established new email response-time norms



Family Academy

Provide training for families on topics such as special education, student advocacy, and adult literacy

- Launched training for parents and caregivers to navigate RPS and city services
- Developed toolkit for families and community members to advocate for RPS at the local and state levels
- Created new family-friendly informational materials such as "SCORE At-A-Glance"



Richmond History

Deepen student and staff understanding of the unvarnished history of Richmond

- Developed "Real Richmond" course to teach high schoolers the full history of Richmond
- Renamed all schools that were originally named for Confederacy-linked individuals
- Resisted calls for the banning of books and other materials that teach the unvarnished history of Virginia



Out-of-School Time

Collaborate with the city to increase out-of-school opportunities for RPS students

- Partnered with the city and community providers to ensure quality after-school programs at all RPS elementary and middle schools
- Added half a million dollars to expand our athletic offerings
- Expanded the number of clubs and other extracurricular opportunities for students

PRIORITY 5

Modern Systems and Infrastructure

ACTION

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE'VE DONE



Modern Systems

Modernize technology and databases to improve customer service for schools and families

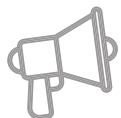
- Implemented a new budget and HR platform to replace outdated system from the 1980s
- Launched a more user-friendly and efficient enrollment and specialty school application platform
- Launched public data dashboards for our goals



Rezoning

Reduce overcrowding and boost integration through new school-assignment patterns

- Completed a divisionwide rezoning of all schools in 2019
- Updated middle school zones in 2022 to decrease overcrowding at River City MS
- Changed admissions policies to the Governor's Schools and RPS Specialty High Schools to increase economic diversity



Advocacy

Create the political will for a comprehensive funding package for facilities needs

- Developed annual advocacy campaigns — e.g., “No more non-cents!” — to increase funding for RPS
- Partnered with local General Assembly members to create a statewide school construction fund, from which RPS recently received \$26 million
- Secured the largest-ever funding increases from the city



Equitable Funding

Direct funding so schools that need the most receive the most

- Increased funding at our highest need schools (50% or higher poverty rate) by millions of dollars
- Provided signing bonuses for teachers choosing to serve in our highest need schools
- Increased funding for AP courses at our highest-need comprehensive high schools and Algebra courses at our highest-need middle schools



Transportation

Increase performance of the bus system and add vehicles and drivers to the fleet

- Added more than 25 bus drivers to eliminate “double-backs” and “triple-backs”
- Purchased more than 60 new buses to improve the student experience
- Launched new routing system that will give parents and caregivers real-time information about bus locations



Nutrition

Improve the nutritional value of and student satisfaction with the RPS meals program

- Served more than 3 million meals via our buses during the pandemic
- Added new menu items to reflect the diversity of students' diets, tastes, and cultures
- Relaunched the Student Health Advisory Board to help guide school nutrition



School Operations

Improve school operations through increased capacity and streamlining

- Completed \$40 million in facilities upgrades, including new HVAC systems, roofs, and windows
- Invested in upgraded and new security infrastructure including cameras, access control systems, intruder alert systems, intercoms, and fire panels
- Launched new crossing guard program that expanded the number of guards from fewer than 10 to more than 100



New Construction

Build new schools, and secure additional funding to rebuild three more buildings

- Built entirely new buildings for Henry L. Marsh III ES, Cardinal ES, and River City MS
- Started work on new Richmond High School for the Arts (former George Wythe HS) and started renovation of William Fox ES
- Launched planning for new advanced CTE high school on the Southside and new Woodville ES



Share your dreams and find out how
to host your own dream session!

rvaschools.net/dreams4rps





rvaschools.net/dreams4rps

Richmond City School Board

Stephanie Rizzi, Chair, 5th District
Cheryl Burke, Vice-Chair, 7th District
Elizabeth Doerr, 1st District
Mariah White, 2nd District
Kenya Gibson, 3rd District
Jonathan Young, 4th District
Dr. Shonda Harris-Muhammed, 6th District
Dawn Page, 8th District
Nicole Jones, 9th District

Superintendent

Jason Kamras

301 N. 9th Street, Richmond, VA