

DREAMS 4 RPS

Let's Keep Dreaming!

THIRD Draft for Review by the Richmond City School Board

Presented By: Jason Kamras, Superintendent

Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

Date: September 9, 2024

Baseline Data for Goals Based on 2023-24 School Year

We have asked MERC to help us establish research-based, ambitious, and realistic targets for the next 5 years for each of our 10 goals.

Our 3 Big Goals		Baseline Data from 2023-24 School Year
1	School Ratings	24 fully accredited schools (new accountability system will require new baseline)
2	Graduation	78%
3	Academics	Reading: 50%; Writing: 49%; History/Social Studies: 43%; Math: 47%; Science: 45%

Other Key Goals		Baseline Data from 2023-24 School Year
4	Equity	Algebra I enrollment and AP enrollment (gathering data for baseline)
5	Teacher Retention	79%
6	Satisfaction	Student, Teacher/Staff, Family (gathering data for baseline)
7	Enrollment & Diversity	Enrollment: 21,259; Diversity (gathering data for baseline)
8	Attendance	Chronic Absenteeism: 18%
9	Climate	Number of Repeat Suspensions (gathering data for baseline)
10	Funding	General Fund: \$415M; Special Revenue Fund: \$97M; CIP Fund: \$18M

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 1: Exciting and Rigorous Teaching & Learning

Priority 1: Exciting and Rigorous Teaching & Learning

1.1 – Reading

Implement [Passion4Reading](#), a “moonshot” effort to ensure 100% of RPS 3rd graders learn to read proficiently and joyfully. To include:

- Comprehensive and ongoing training, led by RPS literacy coaches, on our evidence-based literacy curricula
- Classroom observation and feedback cycles focused explicitly on enhancing teachers’ skill with evidence-based literacy instruction
- Family workshops to help parents and caregivers learn evidence-based strategies to support their students’ literacy development at home
- Investment in 100-book home libraries for families of preschool-3rd grade students
- Increased compensation for expert reading teachers serving in our highest needs schools

1.2 – High School Redesign

Implement [Passion4Learning](#), a complete redesign of our comprehensive high schools, anchoring them in rigorous theme-based programming that prioritizes peer collaboration, hands-on learning, and intentional preparation for enrollment in higher education, employment in a living wage position, or enlistment in national service. Proposed themes:

- CARE: Health, Human Services, and Education – Armstrong High School
- CONNECT: Global Business, International Affairs, and Languages – Huguenot High School
- CREATE: Engineering, Construction, Energy, and Sustainability – New Maury Street High School
- EXPRESS: Visual, Performing, and Digital Arts – Richmond High School for the Arts
- INNOVATE: Computer Science and Emerging Technology – John Marshall High School
- LEAD: Public Policy, Law & Government, and IB – Thomas Jefferson High School

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Priority 1: Exciting and Rigorous Teaching & Learning

1.3 – Special Education

Continue to prioritize meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities, with the goal of becoming a model school system for students with special needs. To include:

- Additional training for special education and general education teachers on evidence-based inclusion practices
- Expanded training for families on understanding the 504 and IEP processes, as well as how to navigate RPS special education resources
- Intentional programming for “twice exceptional” students

1.4 – Multilingual Learners

Continue to prioritize meeting the unique needs of our multilingual learners, the fastest growing segment of the RPS student body. To include:

- More LIEP teachers to create true co-teaching models at all schools, plus intentional professional learning for both LIEP & non-LIEP teachers to ensure core instruction meets needs of MLs
- Programming to increase a sense of belonging for MLs at high schools
- Dual language programs at 3 more elementary schools, with expansion to middle and high school, including a Spanish Immersion Center for MLs and non-MLs
- Family Advocacy and Literacy series at all Southside schools
- Yearlong orientation to the US and RPS for recent immigrant families

1.5 – Extended Learning Time

Continue to prioritize extended learning time opportunities in partnership with the City of Richmond, including RPS200, based on student outcome data. To include:

- A multi-year research study of RPS200 to better understand its impact and how it can be improved
- Enriching, hands-on after-school and weekend experiences that grow students’ knowledge about the world and vocabulary, both of which are critical to reading comprehension
- Enhanced summer school programming that incorporates more science-focused hands-on learning experiences (e.g., exploration of the James River ecosystem)

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

2.1 – Zero Teacher Vacancies

Launch [Passion4Teaching](#), a multi-pronged effort to ensure that RPS has 0 teacher vacancies. To include:

- Training for school leaders on effective people management skills to ensure they develop school cultures that foster a sense of belonging and share ownership
- Targeted “boutique” outreach and cultivation of our most accomplished educators to ensure that we retain them
- Expansion of our “grow our own” program – SEED – which helps instructional assistants and long-term substitutes who have a bachelor’s degree become fully licensed teachers
- Expansion of recruitment team to enable us to strategically target experienced teachers to come to RPS with the goal of limiting new-to-teaching hires to less than 25% of new-to-RPS hires

2.2 – Teacher Diversity

Expand [RVAMenTeach](#) to increase the number of male teachers of color in RPS. To include:

- Increased investment in the retention of male teachers of color, including intentional cohort experiences that foster a sense of belonging, enhance expertise, and provide leadership development
- Expanded partnerships with HBCUs and fraternities for a stronger pipeline of male teachers of color
- New program to help Black and Latino male RPS students interested in education to become teachers in RPS

2.3 – Leadership Development

Develop an internal leadership development program to train instructional coaches, assistant principals, and principals. To include:

- Residency experience to allow aspiring leaders to learn alongside accomplished RPS coaches, APs, and principals
- Partnership with graduate schools of management and education to provide graduate-level leadership and literacy training for all participants in pipeline program

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

2.4 – Compensation

Continue to invest in RPS teachers to ensure they are the highest paid in the Commonwealth. To include:

- Aggressive advocacy with the General Assembly to ensure the Commonwealth funds the recommendations of the JLARC K-12 education funding study
- Compensation and other incentives (such as down payment assistance) in budget discussions with the City of Richmond to ensure RPS teachers can continue to live in the city
- Expanded bonuses and base salary increases for teachers serving in our highest poverty schools
- External compensation review to ensure RPS remains competitive across all job categories

2.5 – Customer Service

Continue to refine back office practices to ensure an outstanding candidate and employee experience. To include:

- Commitment to respond to all emails and phone calls to the Talent Office within two business days
- Annual review of all HR systems to identify efficiencies and upgrades to the user experience
- Intentional, proactive outreach to employees to ensure they have answers to any questions they may have regarding compensation, benefits, and leave
- Elimination of as many paper forms as possible to allow employees to complete all employment related activity online

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 3: Safe, Healthy, and Loving School Culture

Priority 3: Safe, Healthy, and Loving School Culture

3.1 – Student Mental Health

Implement evidence-based wellness and anti-bullying programs to improve student mental health. To include:

- Training for all students on a set of concrete, research-based, age appropriate strategies for managing their emotions and stress levels
- A cadre of “bullying interrupters,” students of all ages who are trained to identify bullying among their peers and to interrupt it
- Additional clinical mental health services for our students, leveraging all Medicaid reimbursement opportunities

3.2 – Trauma Responsiveness

Train and certify every school based staff member in research-based trauma responsive practices. To include:

- Training for all RPS school based staff on the nature of trauma, its prevalence among students, its potential impact on learning and behavior in the educational environment, and how to support students dealing with it
- Culturally sensitive approaches to supporting students facing trauma
- Certification and increased compensation for teachers/staff who become expert in trauma responsive practices

3.3 – 6th/9th Grade Transitions

Develop 6th and 9th grade academies within middle/high schools to foster student belonging and success. To include:

- Programming to ease the shift from elementary to middle school, and middle to high school, that addresses differences in school structure, expectations, and social dynamics
- Explicit instruction in, and opportunities to practice, time management, note-taking, and study habits to prepare students for increased academic demands
- Enhanced exposure to clubs, athletics, and specialized support supports

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 3: Safe, Healthy, and Loving School Culture

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3.4 – Food

Partner with our most experienced food service team members, local chefs, and restaurants to develop the most delicious, nutritious, and culturally diverse meal program in the Commonwealth. To include:

- Student participation in menu planning, including soliciting ideas for favorite dishes from their cultural backgrounds
- Collaboration with registered dietitians and nutritionists to adapt traditional recipes to meet school nutrition guidelines while maintaining authenticity
- Partnership with local restaurants to adopt schools, provide new meal options, and support ongoing training of staff

3.5 – Athletics

Expand athletic offerings to ensure all middle/high schools offer every VHSL sport. To include:

- Expanded partnerships with local businesses to sponsor RPS athletics teams
- Assessment of existing facilities and identify any upgrades or renovations required to accommodate new sports
- Allocation of necessary funding for equipment, facilities, coaching stipends, and transportation
- Celebration of athletic achievements of all teams, and highlight student athletes in all communication channel

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 4: Deep Partnership with Families & Community

Priority 4: Deep Partnership with Families & Community

4.1 – Attendance

Expand investment in the family liaison program to deepen our connections with families of all backgrounds, support them with whatever needs they have, and foster strong student attendance. To include:

- Increase in the number of family liaisons, with special focus on bilingual ones
- Enhancement of school budgets for attendance incentives and other family engagement activities
- Return to teacher home visit program that was suspended due to the pandemic

4.2 – PTAs/PTOs

Ensure every school has an active, diverse, and empowered PTA or PTO that supports student success. To include:

- Training for parents/caregivers interested in serving in leadership roles
- Seed funding to help PTAs/PTOs plan and execute initial activities
- Intentional involvement of PTOs/PTAs in key decisions of the school community

4.3 – Community Partnership

Organize community partners to more intentionally support our high school redesign and reading efforts. To include:

- Internships, student learning experiences, access to industry professionals, and employment pathways (high school redesign)
- College students, retired professionals, and others willing to participate in literacy training to support students during and after school (reading efforts)

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4.4 – Telling Our Story

Amplify stories about the greatness inherent in our students, and how RPS supports them. To include:

- More in-depth profiles of students and staff, including more video stories in RPS Direct and on social media
- Additional opportunities for students to share their work and talents, building off the success of events like the annual division-wide visual and performing arts showcase
- Clear goals around number of stories highlighting students in all forms of media

4.5 – Richmond/RPS History

Train all staff on the history of Richmond and RPS and its impact on our work today. To include:

- Multi-part professional learning series developed in collaboration with local historians and community leaders
- In-depth focus on the history of K-12 education access, funding, and governance
- Intentional spotlight on the individuals who have worked to create a more just and equitable Richmond

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 5: Modern Systems & Infrastructure

Priority 5: Modern Systems & Infrastructure

5.1 – Facilities

Develop new master facilities plan, advocate for necessary funding, and execute first phase of plan. To include:

- Clear pathway to alleviating overcrowding on the Southside and ending the use of learning trailers
- Annual maintenance schedule for all facilities to safeguard investment in new and renovated buildings
- Clarity around intended use of any remaining vacant properties

5.2 – Building Safety and Maintenance

Continue to invest in building maintenance, with special emphasis on ensuring buildings are always clean, safe, and well stocked with necessary supplies. To include:

- Additional investment in cameras, intercoms, alarms and other safety infrastructure
- Increase in the number of custodians to achieve industry standard as determined by building square footage
- Greater transparency for public on available supplies in each building

5.2 – Systems

Implement new student information system to enhance the student, family, and teacher experience. To include:

- Procurement of new SIS and multi-phase implementation
- Extensive training for students, teachers, staff, and families
- Ongoing investment in enhancements to the SIS and related training

5 “Big Bets” for Priority 5: Modern Systems & Infrastructure

Priority 5: Modern Systems & Infrastructure

5.3 – Transportation

Continue to improve on-time arrival rate, enhance student and family experience, and prepare for electric.

To include:

- Full implementation of student ID system to track student ridership
- More drivers and buses, and development of public facing on-time arrival dashboard, to improve service for students and families
- Plan for a new, larger transportation garage that would include EV charging

5.4 – Technology

Develop a robust AI plan for both students and staff, and enhance division’s cybersecurity. To include:

- Development of AI task force to make recommendations about use of AI by students and staff, and adoption of policy
- Training for all students and staff on new policy
- Investment in cybersecurity to protect confidential student and employee information

Next Steps

Timeline

September 9 Board Meeting	Review and discuss third draft
October 7 Board Meeting	Review and discuss final draft (Community feedback window will remain open until October 1)
October 21 Board Meeting	Adopt final Dreams4RPS 2024-29
