

DREAMS 4 RPS

★ *Let's Keep Dreaming!* ★

FINAL Draft for Review by the Richmond City School Board

Presented By: Jason Kamras, Superintendent

Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

Date: October 7, 2024

Baseline for Goals Based on 2023-24 School Year Data

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	New accountability system will require new baseline (RPS currently has 24 fully accredited schools)
2	Graduation	On-Time Graduation Rate: 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 8th Grade Enrollment: 93%; Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate/Dual Enrollment by Senior Year: 42%
5	Teacher Retention	Returning the Following Fall: 79%
6	Satisfaction	Student: 54%; Teacher/Staff: 57%; Family: 76%
7	Enrollment & Diversity	Enrollment: 21,259; Diversity (Metric TBD)
8	Attendance	Chronic Absenteeism: 18%
9	Climate	Percentage of Students with Repeat Suspensions: 7.2%
10	Funding	General Fund: \$415M; Special Revenue Fund: \$97M; Capital Improvement 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 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 high earning career path, or enlistment in national service. 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 International Baccalaureate – Thomas Jefferson High School

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

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 Individual Education Program processes, as well as how to navigate RPS special education resources
- Specialized programming for “twice exceptional” students (those with learning disabilities as well as advanced abilities)

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 Language Instruction Education Program teachers to create true co-teaching models at all schools, plus intentional professional learning for teachers to ensure core instruction meets needs of multilingual learners
- Programming to increase a sense of belonging for multilingual learners at high schools
- Dual language programs at three more elementary schools, with expansion to middle and high school, including a Spanish Immersion Center for multilingual learners and non-multilingual learners
- Family Advocacy and Literacy series at all schools with high multilingual populations
- Yearlong orientation to the country and to 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:

- An independent research study of RPS200 to better understand its impact
- 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 shared ownership
- Targeted “boutique” outreach and cultivation of our most accomplished educators to ensure that we retain them
- Expansion of our “grow our own” program – Supportive & Empowering Educator Development (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 reducing new-to-teaching 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 Historically Black Colleges and Universities 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, principals, and central office leaders. To include:

- Residency experience to allow aspiring leaders to learn alongside accomplished RPS coaches, assistant principals, and principals
- Partnership with graduate schools of management and education or other providers to offer graduate-level leadership training for all participants in pipeline program

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

Priority 2: Skilled and Supported Staff

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| 2.4 – Compensation | <p>Continue to invest in RPS teachers to ensure they are the highest paid in the Commonwealth. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy with the General Assembly to ensure the Commonwealth funds the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission 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 and hardest to staff schools• External compensation and benefits review to ensure RPS remains competitive across all job categories |
| 2.5 – Customer Service | <p>Continue to refine central office practices to ensure an outstanding candidate and employee experience. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop clear standards for customer service across the school division and collect annual feedback on our progress.• Commitment to respond to all emails and phone calls to all central office staff within two business days• Annual review of all human resources 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	<p>Implement evidence-based wellness and anti-bullying programs to improve student mental health. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training for all students on a set of concrete, research-based, age appropriate strategies for managing their emotions and stress levels• Age appropriate training to help students identify bullying among their peers and interrupt it• Additional clinical mental health services for our students, leveraging all Medicaid reimbursement opportunities
3.2 – Trauma Responsiveness	<p>Train and certify every school based staff member in research-based trauma responsive practices. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training for all RPS school-based staff and relevant central office staff on the nature of trauma, its prevalence among students and staff, its potential impact on teaching and learning, and how to support students and staff 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	<p>Develop 6th and 9th grade academies within middle/high schools to foster student belonging and success. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 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 and Activities

Ensure all Virginia High School League sports and activities are offered to all middle and high school students. To include:

- Expanded partnerships with local businesses to sponsor RPS athletics and activities (e.g., debate)
- Assessment of existing facilities and identify any upgrades or renovations required to accommodate all sports
- Allocation of necessary athletics funding for equipment, facilities, coaching stipends, trainers, tournament fees, and transportation
- Allocation of necessary activities funding for materials, advisor stipends, competition fees, and transportation
- Celebration of achievements of all teams, and highlighting of student athletes and activity participants in all communication channels

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

Priority 4: Deep Partnership with Families & Community

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| 4.1 – Attendance | <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional 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 pilot that was suspended due to the pandemic |
| 4.2 – PTAs/PTOs | <p>Ensure every school has an active, diverse, and empowered parent-teacher association or parent-teacher organization that supports student success. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training for parents/caregivers interested in serving in leadership roles• Seed funding to help these groups plan and execute initial activities• Sharing of best practices and funding across schools to promote equity• Intentional involvement of these groups in key decisions of the school community |
| 4.3 – Community Partnership | <p>Organize community partners to more intentionally support our high school redesign and reading efforts. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paid internships, student learning experiences, access to industry professionals, and employment pathways (for high school redesign)• College students, retired professionals, and others willing to participate in literacy training to support students during and after school (for reading efforts) |

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

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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
- Increased emphasis on school-based communications, including school websites and newsletters

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 and are working 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
- Additional use of solar and other “green” technologies

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 availability of 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 student information system and multi-phase implementation
- Extensive training for students, teachers, staff, and families
- Ongoing investment to integrate student information system with other RPS systems

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

Priority 5: Modern Systems & Infrastructure

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| 5.3 – Transportation | <p>Continue to improve on-time arrival rate, enhance student and family experience, and prepare for electric buses. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 central depot that would include electric vehicle charging |
| 5.4 – Technology | <p>Update division technology standards to include a robust AI plan for both students and staff, and enhance division’s cybersecurity. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of artificial intelligence task force to make recommendations about use of this technology 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 |