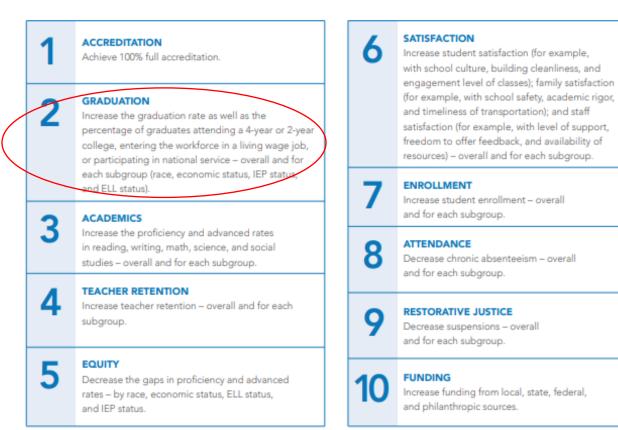RPS RICHMOND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dreams4RPS Goal 2: Graduation

Update for the Richmond City School Board

Presented by: Tracy Epp, Chief Academic Officer

Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

Date: November 16, 2020

Dreams4RPS Goal 2: Graduation

Dreams4RPS, the RPS strategic plan, outlines 10 key goals for the next five years.

1 ACCREDITATION
Achieve 100% full accreditation.

2 GRADUATION
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 ACADEMICS
Increase the proficiency and advanced rates in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies – overall and for each subgroup.

4 TEACHER RETENTION
Increase teacher retention – overall and for each subgroup.

5 EQUITY
Decrease the gaps in proficiency and advanced rates – by race, economic status, ELL status, and IEP status.

6 SATISFACTION
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 ENROLLMENT
Increase student enrollment – overall and for each subgroup.

8 ATTENDANCE
Decrease chronic absenteeism – overall and for each subgroup.

9 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Decrease suspensions – overall and for each subgroup.

10 FUNDING
Increase funding from local, state, federal, and philanthropic sources.

Historical Context

During the summer of 2018, at the request of the Administration, the VDOE conducted an audit of RPS high school transcripts. This process revealed numerous problems with internal practices and procedures, including:

- Failing to align scheduling of courses with a Board-approved High School Program of Study;

- Failing to secure Board approval for locally-developed courses;

- Scheduling that led to English Learners taking years of coursework that did not count towards state graduation requirements; students taking duplicate courses; and students being prevented from meeting other requirements such as "sequential electives;"

- Defaulting student diploma types to "Standard" for students at comprehensive high schools, and "Advanced" for students at specialty schools;

- Overusing "Applied Studies" diplomas for students with an IEP (which made them ineligible for post-secondary enrollment in colleges and universities);

- Misusing locally-awarded verified credits; and

- Preemptively using lower-caliber alternative assessments to meet verified credit requirements (e.g., having students take Work-Keys instead of being given the opportunity to attempt the end-of-course SOL assessment).

Historical Context (continued)

Beginning with the 2018-19 school year, the Administration began addressing these issues by:

• Ensuring an accurate and Board-approved High School Program of Studies;

• Developing high school courses to support English Learners while still earning credit towards graduation;

• Establishing clear guidelines for scheduling as well as protocols for monitoring those guidelines;

• Making the default diploma type "Advanced" for all students, and only allowing changes when school counselors meets with students to discuss their post-secondary plans;

• Monitoring the use of "Applied Studies" diplomas, and requiring documentation to justify this designation;

• Establishing a division-wide review and approval process for awarding locally-awarded verified credits;

• Eliminating the preemptive use of Work-Keys, and now only allowing its use for students who require an alternative assessment based on academic needs; and

• Conducting transcript audits to verify proper practices and identify any issues proactively.

As result of these steps, RPS was no longer essentially "rubber-stamping" its diplomas. Because of this, our graduation rate fell from from 75.4% in 2017-18 to 70.7% in 2018-19. Though our rate is still unacceptably low, we are now trending up. From 2018-19 to 2019-20, we saw an increase from 70.7% to 71.6%.

Summary of Highlights and Concerns

Highlights

- Overall, we increased our on-time graduation rate and decreased our drop-out rate from 2018-19 to 2019-20.
- Most notably, Armstrong High School increased its graduation rate by 11 percentage points and decreased its dropout rate by 10 percentage points; and RAS increased its graduation rate by 18 percentage points and decreased its dropout rate by 19 percentage points.
- John Marshall High School and Thomas Jefferson High School also improved their graduation rates and decreased their dropout rates.
- We increased the percentage of students earning an "Advanced" diploma by 9 percentage points, including doubling the percentage of students with IEPs earning this diploma type.
- We recently launched three new graduation/dropout programs to respond to the concerns listed below, with a particular focus on our Hispanic/Latino students.

Concerns

- Our graduation rate remains the lowest in the Commonwealth, and our dropout rate remains the highest.
- George Wythe High School experienced a significant drop in its graduation rate and a significant increase in its dropout rate.
- Huguenot High School experienced a slight drop in its graduation rate.
- The graduation rate for our Hispanic/Latino students is extremely concerning.

On-Time Graduation Rate (OGR) by School

School	2018-19 OGR	2019-20 OGR	Change
Armstrong	65.5%	76.8%	+11.3%
Franklin Military Academy	100%	100%	0
George Wythe	60%	50%	-10%
Huguenot	68.1%	67%	-1.1%
John Marshall	89.9%	91.6%	+1.7%
Open	100%	100%	0
Richmond Community	100%	100%	0
Thomas Jefferson	89.2%	96.2%	+7%
RAS	25.5%	43.6%	+18.1%
Division	**70.7%**	**71.6%**	**+.9%**

OGR by Subgroup

Subgroup	2018-19 OGR	2019-20 OGR	Change
Black/African-American	77.2%	80.8%	+3.6%
Hispanic/Latino	40.1%	33.1%	-7.0%
White	78.9%	86.2%	+7.3%
Multi-Racial	100%	92.3%	-7.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	74.0%	79.5%	+5.5%
Students with Disabilities	67.3%	70.2%	+2.9%
English Learners	50.6%	38.5%	-12.1%

Dropout Rate by School

School	2018-19 Dropout Rate	2019-20 Dropout Rate	Change
Armstrong	28.4%	17.9%	-10.5%
Franklin Military Academy	0%	0%	0%
George Wythe	34.7%	46.9%	+12.2%
Huguenot	29.1%	28.9%	-0.2%
John Marshall	8.7%	7.1%	-1.6%
Open	0%	0%	0%
Richmond Community	0%	0%	0%
Thomas Jefferson	8.9%	3.2%	-5.7%
RAS	46.1%	26.3%	-19.8%
Division	**24.3%**	**23.2%**	**-1.1%**

Dropout Rate by Subgroup

Subgroup	2018-19 Dropout Rate	2019-20 Dropout Rate	Change
Black/African-American	17.3%	12.5%	-4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	57.3%	64.6%	+7.3%
White	15.0%	11.6%	-3.4%
Multi-Racial	0%	0%	0%
Economically Disadvantaged	20.0%	12.5%	-7.5%
Students with Disabilities	32.1%	24.6%	-7.5%
English Learners	48.2%	61.5%	+13.3%

Diploma Type

Diploma	2018-19 OGR	2019-20 OGR	Change
Advanced	31.1%	40.2%	+9.1%
Standard	61.9%	57.8%	-4.1%
Applied Studies*	7.0%	2.0%	-5%

*Of note, due to many of the changes we implemented in response to the transcript audit, **the percentage of exceptional education students earning an Applied Studies diploma dropped from 37.9% in 2018-19 to 13.4% last year; and the percentage earning an Advanced diploma increased from 2.5% to 5.5%.**

Overall Three-Pronged Strategy to Increase On-Time Graduation Rate

2020 RPS Graduation Initiative

Data-Driven Senior Graduation Strategy

Analysis at the district level → Data-driven student profile → **Aligning** the appropriate **intervention**/supports → **Progress monitor** towards graduation

Dropout Recovery Strategy

1. Building Success Centers
Create an alternative pathway for students where a traditional school setting is not enough.

2. Recovering our Dropouts
Account for every dropout in RPS where we partner with the community in the efforts towards getting students back into school.

Dropout Prevention Strategy

1. Identify students through an RPS **Early Warning System**
2. **Define & identify the supports/intervention** offered at our high schools
3. Create clear **pathways for student support & intervention**
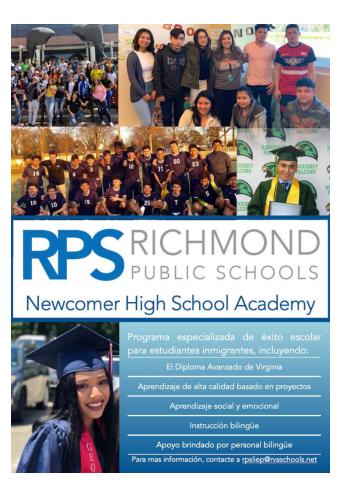4. **Progress monitor** towards graduation

In addition, the data has clearly called for a very targeted strategy for our English Learner students. See the following slides for programs that we have launched specifically for this population.

New Program for English Learners: ¡Con Ganas!

¡Con Ganas!, which means "With Determination" in Spanish, is a specialized program for English Learners who are 17 or older. It provides intensive language and academic support to help students graduate in three years or less. The program provides students with flexible scheduling as well as evening courses focused on critical academic vocabulary. **Fifty-seven students are currently enrolled in ¡Con Ganas!**
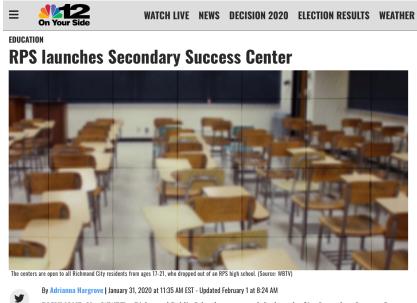
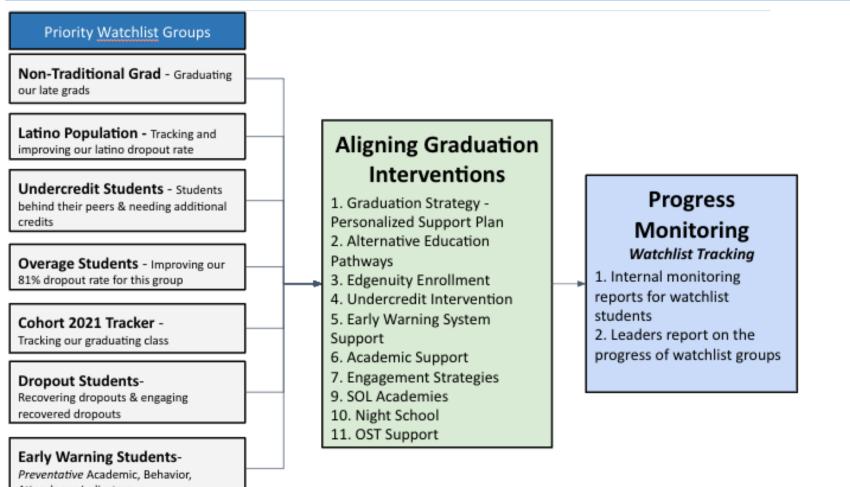# New Program for English Learners: Newcomer Academy

The **Newcomer Academy** is for newly arrived, immigrant English Learner students, ages 14-17, who have been in the country for up to one year. Through project-based, bilingual instruction, newcomer ELs receive instruction that helps them acquire English language skills at an accelerated rate, improve literacy in their native language, and ultimately graduate with an "Advanced" diploma. Students in the Newcomer Academy also receive wrap-around services, scheduling support from a bilingual school counselor, college and career support from the bilingual Newcomer Academy coordinator, and specialized outreach from bilingual parent liaisons. **One hundred eighty 9th and 10th graders are currently enrolled in the Newcomer Academy.**

New Program for Dropout Recovery: Secondary Success Center

The **Secondary Success Center** is open to all Richmond City residents, ages 17-21, who previously dropped out of an RPS high school. The program is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of adult learners and to make participation as convenient as possible. Through flexible academic programming and scheduling, students attend evening courses on timeline that works best for them. The program also includes individualized academic counseling, post-secondary and career exploration, and wraparound supports. **Fifty-one students are currently enrolled in the Secondary Success Center.**

EDUCATION

RPS launches Secondary Success Center

The centers are open to all Richmond City residents from ages 17-21, who dropped out of an RPS high school. (Source: WBTV)

By Adrianna Hargrove | January 31, 2020 at 11:35 AM EST - Updated February 1 at 8:24 AM

RICHMOND, Va. (WWBT) - Richmond Public Schools announced the launch of its Secondary Success Center.

Additional Efforts for the 2021 Cohort

Priority Watchlist Groups

Non-Traditional Grad - Graduating our late grads

Latino Population - Tracking and improving our latino dropout rate

Undercredit Students - Students behind their peers & needing additional credits

Overage Students - Improving our 81% dropout rate for this group

Cohort 2021 Tracker - Tracking our graduating class

Dropout Students- Recovering dropouts & engaging recovered dropouts

Early Warning Students- *Preventative* Academic, Behavior, Attendance Indicators

Aligning Graduation Interventions

1. Graduation Strategy - Personalized Support Plan
2. Alternative Education Pathways
3. Edgenuity Enrollment
4. Undercredit Intervention
5. Early Warning System Support
6. Academic Support
7. Engagement Strategies
9. SOL Academies
10. Night School
11. OST Support

Progress Monitoring
Watchlist Tracking

1. Internal monitoring reports for watchlist students
2. Leaders report on the progress of watchlist groups

Early Signs of Progress With the 2021 Cohort

School	2019-20 Dropout Rate	2020-21 Dropout Rate	Change
Armstrong	17.9%	14%	-3.9%
Franklin Military Academy	0%	0%	0%
George Wythe	46.9%	25%	-21.9%
Huguenot	28.9%	13%	-15.9%
John Marshall	7.1%	4%	-3.1%
Open	0%	2%	+2%
Richmond Community	0%	0%	n/a
Thomas Jefferson	3.2%	3%	-0.2%
RAS	26.3%	5%	-21.3%
Division	23.2%	11%	-12.2%

This data is promising, as we know from earlier years that most dropouts occur before the winter of 12th grade.

Appendix

How do we measure the graduation rate?

We use the VDOE On-Time Graduation Rate (OGR). To calculate this measure, the VDOE first calculates the number of first-time 9th grade students in a given cohort year (the denominator). Four years later, the VDOE calculates the number of these students who earned a diploma to determine the number of students who graduated on-time in four years (the numerator). Then, they subtract from the denominator any students who transferred out of the division over the four years and add any students who transferred into the division over the four years.

$$\frac{On - Time\ Diploma\ Graduates\ in\ Year\ X}{[(\#\ of\ 1st\ time\ entering\ 9th\ graders\ in\ Year\ X - 4) + (Transfers\ In) - (Transfers\ Out)]}$$

Notes and Caveats

- The measure adjusts for student groups who, in accordance with federal/state law, may take longer than four years to earn a diploma.
- Students earning a GED or a Certificate of Completion are not counted as graduates when calculating the graduation rate.