About The Education Trust

The Education Trust is a nonprofit organization that promotes closing opportunity gaps by expanding excellence and equity in education for students of color and those from low-income families from pre-kindergarten through college. Through research and advocacy, the organization builds and engages diverse communities that care about education equity, increases political and public will to act on equity issues, and increases college access and completion for historically underserved students.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2018, Richmond Public Schools (RPS) partnered with The Education Trust (ET) to implement phase 1 of an Educational Equity Audit for the district. The purpose of this partnership was to conduct a broad analysis of academic achievement and opportunity in Richmond schools, calling attention to education inequities within schools, among schools, and among groups of students. Using publicly available data and some data provided by the district, ET focused on four audit components for the phase 1 analysis:

- Academic performance
- Course access
- Assignment to experienced teachers
- School culture and climate

The data for this analysis was supplied by two main sources – the Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles and the most recent data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Data from these two sources were from the 2016-17 school year and 2015-16 school year, respectively. Additional data from the 2017-18 school year was supplied by the district to complete our analysis of non-core-academic course offerings.

Our analysis examined data from Richmond Public School’s 26 elementary schools (including one charter school, Patrick Henry School of Science & Arts), seven middle schools, seven high schools, and a handful of special campuses, including Franklin Military Academy and Richmond Alternative School (see appendix for complete list of excluded specialty campuses).

For the purpose of this analysis, schools with fewer than 20 students for a given measure were excluded for that particular indicator. Omitted schools and student groups varied by measure (e.g., a school may have more than 20 students tested in math but not reading). Additionally, when a school contained selective programming (e.g., the IB program at Thomas Jefferson), we did not distinguish between students in and not in the program due to a lack of data.

Key Findings

Generally, elementary and middle schools serving a larger percentage of White and higher income students provide greater access to learning opportunities and have better outcomes overall. But there is a lot of variation in outcomes and opportunity among similarly high-poverty elementary schools. And the schools that appear to be doing well on average often have large within-school opportunity and achievement gaps.

At the high school level, the highly selective schools generally had better outcomes than other schools in the district and better than the state average on many indicators (i.e., reading proficiency, graduation rates, percentage of students getting an Advanced diploma and planning to enroll in a four-year college). But on other indicators (i.e., Advanced Placement pass rates, math Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) rates for Richmond Community), they are not doing nearly as well as would be expected and are below the state average. Measures of learning opportunity and performance varied across the other non-selective high schools in the district, but not always by race and class.
Audit Component 1: Academic Performance
- In Richmond, schools with similar demographics often showed vastly different student outcomes. And although wealthier/lower need schools generally demonstrate better average results, some had large within-school achievement disparities between low-income students and students of color and their White or higher income peers.

Audit Component 2: Course Access
- Although there are not clear patterns in which schools offer classes in the arts, there were big disparities in access to advanced learning opportunities, with low-income students and students of color being less likely to be enrolled in gifted and talented programs, eighth grade algebra or Advanced Placement classes both among and within schools.

Audit Component 3: Assignment to Experienced Teachers
- Schools with the fewest low-income students also had the fewest first-year teachers, but the percentage of first-year teachers in high-poverty, demographically similar schools varied from nearly 0 to nearly 1 in 3.

Audit Component 4: School Culture and Climate
- In 2016-17, Richmond Public Schools suspended more than 4,000 students, including nearly 1 in 3 middle schoolers. Black students and students with disabilities were especially likely to be suspended.
EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AUDIT: RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS – PHASE 1

AUDIT COMPONENT 1: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic performance at the elementary and middle school levels is measured primarily by student performance on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. Standards of Learning assessments are administered annually for reading and math in third through eighth grades. Students also take SOL assessments in writing while in fifth and eighth grades; science in third, fifth, and eighth grades; and history/social studies in third and eighth grades.

At the high school level, SOL assessments are administered as end-of-course assessments, which students take at the completion of various courses between ninth and 12th grades. In addition to proficiency on reading and math SOL assessments, this audit also examined three other measures of academic achievement in high school: Advanced Placement (AP) test taking and success, graduation and type of diploma attained, and post-secondary plans. For SOL results as well as the other indicators of academic achievement, this analysis relied on 2016-17 data publicly available from the Virginia Department of Education website.

Key findings at the elementary and middle school levels showed:

- Elementary and middle schools serving a larger percentage of White and higher income students performed better on indicators of academic performance.
- A wide variation in outcomes among elementary schools with similarly high percentages of students of color and low-income students.
- Overall proficiency rates often masked wide within-schools achievement gaps.

At the high school level:

- The two selective high schools – Open High and Richmond Community High – and Franklin Military were the only schools to exceed the state’s average reading proficiency rate. For math, only Open High exceeded the state’s average proficiency rate.
- Although the selective high schools (Open High and Richmond Community High) performed better than the state average on many indicators, such as reading proficiency, graduation rates, percentage of students getting Advanced diplomas, and percentage of students having a post-secondary plan to attend a four-year institution, they did not fare as expected on indicators such as Advanced Placement passage rates and math SOL rates (for Richmond Community), where their student outcomes were below the state average.

Standardized Assessment Results

The findings from our analysis of SOL proficiency rates revealed:

- Across all school levels, Richmond Public Schools got fewer students to proficiency than the state average.
- Elementary and middle schools serving a greater percentage of White and more affluent students tended to have more students achieve proficiency in math and reading. However, there were wide variations in academic performance across elementary schools serving mostly students of color and low-income students.
- Average proficiency rates often masked large gaps in achievement for students of color and students from economically disadvantaged households.

At every grade level, Richmond Public Schools got fewer students to proficiency in reading/English language arts and math than the state average. For example, while 80
percent of Virginia middle school students were proficient in math, only 43 percent of Richmond’s middle schoolers reached proficiency. Of all high schools examined, only three exceeded the state’s average reading proficiency rate: the two selective schools (Open High and Richmond Community High) and Franklin Military Academy.

Generally, the schools serving the greatest percentage of White and more affluent students had more students achieve proficiency than those with more students of color and those from economically disadvantaged households. For example, Mary Munford and William Fox, the lowest-poverty schools in the district, got most students to proficiency in reading. But academic performance varied widely across elementary schools serving mostly students of color and low-income students. For example: J.E.B. Stuart (now called Obama Elementary), where nearly all students were Black and most were from low-income families, had one of the highest proficiency rates in reading in the district (88 percent). Conversely, Swansboro Elementary, which served a similar population of students to J.E.B. Stuart, got only 35 percent of its students to proficiency in reading (see figure 1). Such disparities among schools serving similar populations offer insight into possibilities for what all students can do, while simultaneously prompting the question of what higher performing schools are doing differently to get these results.

Our examination also found overall proficiency rates often masked large achievement score gaps for students of color and students from economically disadvantaged households in the same school. This was true at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For example, Mary Munford’s schoolwide proficiency rate in math of 87 percent masked the fact that 94 percent of White students achieved proficiency compared with 56 percent of Black students (see figure 2). The school demonstrated similar disparities for its students from lower-income households — 63 percent of whom reached proficiency in reading, compared with 92 percent of non-economically disadvantaged students. Many other elementary schools in the district had similar gaps — Broad Rock Elementary is noteworthy in that it’s one of the few that doesn’t have significant gaps in how it is serving different groups of students. And there were wide proficiency gaps between students of color and White students in the same school, at least among the schools with a large enough population of White students to make achievement comparisons along racial lines. These proficiency disparities tell an on-going story of inequitable outcomes for students of color and those from economically disadvantaged households.

Disparities in outcomes continue in high school. The majority of high schools achieved lower rates of proficiency for students from economically disadvantaged households compared with their counterparts from higher income families. Most glaring among these disparities occurred at Thomas Jefferson, where higher income students had a math proficiency rate of 74 percent and lower income students had a 50 percent proficiency rate in math (see figure 3). Future analyses should be conducted to examine the extent to which pattern of enrollment in Thomas Jefferson’s selective International Baccalaureate (IB) program contribute to these disparities.
**FIGURE 1: Elementary school reading proficiency by percentage of economically disadvantaged students**

![Graph showing reading proficiency by percentage of economically disadvantaged students for various schools in Richmond Public Schools.](image)

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data

**FIGURE 2: Elementary school math proficiency for Black and White students**

![Graph showing math proficiency for Black and White students across different schools in Richmond Public Schools.](image)

Includes only schools with 20+ Black and White students tested. The number of students tested is indicated above each bar prior to the percentage of those tested who passed.

State average = 78%

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data
Advanced Placement (AP) Test Taking and Performance

Key findings from our analysis of test taking and success on AP exams demonstrated that:

- Students at the district’s two selective schools (Open High and Richmond Community High) were far more likely to take an AP exam than students in other Richmond high schools.
- Students at these two selective schools were also more likely to earn a qualifying score on the AP exam they took than those at other Richmond schools. But even at these selective high schools, AP pass rates fell far below state averages.

At most of the high schools in Richmond, very few (less than 10 percent) students took an AP exam, largely driven by lower enrollment in AP courses (discussed further in the academic opportunity section below). The exceptions were the two selective high schools: of students who took an AP course, nearly one-third of students at Open High and nearly all students at Richmond Community High took the corresponding test.

Students at the district’s selective schools also had significantly higher pass rates on their AP exams than students in the district’s other high schools. While nearly half of AP tests taken at Open High and one-quarter at Richmond Community High received a passing score, less than 10 percent of AP tests at other schools in the district received a passing score. It should be noted, however, the rates of AP success in the Richmond’s selective schools were still far lower than the average across the state, where 62 percent of AP tests taken earned a passing score (see figure 4).
FIGURE 4: Percentage of AP tests with a passing score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% AP exams taken that earned a passing score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMSTRONG HIGH</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE WYTHE HIGH</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUGUENOT HIGH</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN MARSHALL HIGH</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN HIGH*</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHMOND COMMUNITY HIGH*</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes selective admissions

Graduation Rates and Diploma Type

The Commonwealth of Virginia offers students the opportunity to graduate with one of five diplomas: Advanced Studies, Standard, General Achievement, Applied Studies, and Modified. (Students who receive a Certificate of Program Completion or a GED are also considered high school completers.) A 2014 Achieve study determined the extent to which each state prepares graduates for success in college and career by examining the rigor of diplomas offered by each state. The study concluded that in Virginia, only the Advanced Studies diploma met college or career-readiness criteria, and the Standard diploma course sequence leaves students underprepared.

As with other areas, our key findings showed:

- Richmond’s graduation rates lagged behind state averages both for students overall and for all individual student groups. While all or nearly all students at selective high schools (Open and Richmond Community High) and Franklin Military graduated on time, all other schools have graduation rates below the state average.

- The more economically disadvantaged students a school had, the fewer students it prepared for college and careers with an Advanced Studies diploma.

In 2017, 77 percent of Richmond students graduated on time, compared with 91 percent of students statewide. The district’s graduation rates were below state averages not just for students overall, but for each individual student group. For example, while 88 percent of Black students in Virginia completed high school on time, in Richmond, only 80 percent did. Graduation rates were critically low for Richmond’s Hispanic students, only 41 percent of whom completed high school on time, compared with 81 percent statewide.

Graduation rates varied from school to school. At the district’s two highly selective schools, as well as Franklin Military, all or nearly all (98 percent) students graduated on time. But graduation rates at all other high schools were substantially lower, falling below the state average.

Moreover, graduation rates alone did not fully convey the extent to which schools in Richmond prepared students for success in college and a career – the type of diploma students received mattered as well. While about half of graduates statewide earned an Advanced diploma,
signaling readiness for college/careers, in Richmond only about 1 in 4 did. Our analysis showed that higher poverty schools in the district generally prepared a smaller percentage of students with an Advanced Studies diploma than schools serving more affluent students. While all graduates at Richmond Community High, 90 percent of students at Open High, and 54 percent of students at Thomas Jefferson High earned an Advanced Studies diploma, less than a third of students at the other schools in the district did. Additionally, the three highest poverty schools in the district — Armstrong, Marshall, and Wythe — had high rates of graduates earning the less rigorous special/Applied Studies diplomas, compared with other high schools in the district or state.

Within school disparities in diploma attainment existed for students from economically disadvantaged households, with Thomas Jefferson having the widest gap. Sixty-eight percent of non-economically disadvantaged students at Thomas Jefferson received an Advanced Studies diplomas, versus only 27 percent of economically disadvantaged students (see figure 5). As noted earlier, future analyses should investigate the extent to which patterns of enrollment in the school’s IB program contribute to these disparities.

**FIGURE 5: Percentage of economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged students receiving Advanced diplomas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Not Economically Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong High</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Wythe High</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huguenot High</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Marshall High</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open High*</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Community High*</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Jefferson High</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Alternative</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes selective admissions

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data

**Postsecondary Plans**

Overall, our findings demonstrated:

- The more economically disadvantaged students in a school, the less likely students were to say they had plans to attend a four-year college after graduation. The converse was true for schools with fewer students from economically disadvantaged households.

For example, nearly all students at Richmond Community and three-fourths of students at Open High planned to attend a four-year college after graduation. In the district’s most economically diverse schools (Thomas Jefferson and Huguenot) about half of students had post-secondary plans to attend a four-year university. Among the district’s highest poverty high schools, less than a third of students had plans to attend a four-year college after graduation.
Equitable access to a well-rounded course of study helps prepare students for college and careers. In this section, we analyzed access to a well-rounded course of study by examining access to: non-core-academic courses, gifted programming, Algebra I in the eighth grade, and Advanced Placement courses. The analysis of non-core-academic courses was based on district-provided data; the analysis of gifted programming and Algebra I in eighth grade was based on Civil Rights Data Collection 2015-16 data; and the analysis of Advanced Placement courses was based on a combination of data publicly available from the state for 2016-17 and, for comparisons of enrollment for individual groups of students, 2015-16 CRDC data. Overall, we found that:

- Elementary and middle schools serving more White and/or affluent students tended to have higher percentages of students enrolled in gifted programs and Algebra I in eighth grade.
- The two selective high schools in the district offered many more Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and students in these schools were more likely to enroll in at least one AP course than other schools in the district. And high schools serving the smallest percentage of economically disadvantaged students, including the selective schools, offered a wider variety of world languages and at higher levels than other schools in the district.
- There were large gaps, including in access to gifted programming and Algebra I, among groups of students within the same school.

**Access to Gifted Programming**

Each school division in Virginia establishes procedures for identification and services for gifted students. The findings from our analyses of which groups of students were most likely to be identified and served through gifted programming mirrored the educational inequities shown in all academic areas:

- Elementary and middle schools serving more White and affluent students tended to have higher percentages of students in gifted programs.
- There were large gaps in access to gifted programming among groups of students within the same school.
- English learners and students with disabilities were significantly less likely to be enrolled in gifted programming than their peers.

Elementary schools serving a larger percentage of White and affluent students tended to have higher percentages of students in gifted programs. At Mary Munford and William Fox, which served significantly larger portions of White students than other elementary schools in the district, more than a quarter of students were enrolled in gifted programming. At many of the other elementary schools serving mostly students of color (e.g., George W. Carver), less than 5 percent of students were in a gifted program. Middle schools showed a similar pattern, except for Albert Hill, which served a larger percentage of White students (26 percent) than other middle schools in Richmond but where relatively few (8 percent) students were in gifted programming.

Additionally, there were large gaps in access to gifted programming within schools. For example, at Linwood Holton, Mary Munford, and William Fox, White students were two to three times more likely to be in gifted...
programs than their Black and Latino peers in the same building (see figure 6).

Finally, English learners were significantly less likely to be enrolled in gifted programming, with two elementary schools (J.B. Fisher and William Fox) not serving any English learners in their gifted programs.

**FIGURE 6: Percentage of elementary students in gifted programming by race**

*Source: Civil Rights Data Collection 2015-16 data*

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**Access to 8th Grade Algebra**

Access to algebra in eighth grade positions students for higher levels of math in high school and places them on a path toward college- and career-readiness. As with all indicators in this review, the key finding in this area continued the trend of disparate opportunities for students of color and those from economically disadvantaged households.

- Districtwide, White eighth-graders were four times more likely to be enrolled in Algebra I than their Black peers.
- These disparities were a result of gaps among schools and within schools.

Huge gaps exist in access to eighth grade algebra. More than half (52 percent) of White students in Richmond were enrolled in algebra in the eighth grade, compared to only 12 percent of Black eighth-graders.

Schools with more students of color tend to enroll fewer students in Algebra I than schools serving more White and affluent students. For example, Albert Hill and Lucille M. Brown enrolled about a quarter of eighth-graders in Algebra I, but at the district’s more racially segregated middle schools (e.g., Binford, Elkhardt Thompson, and Martin Luther King), very few eighth-graders too Algebra I. The exception to this pattern was Thomas C. Boushall Middle, where more than 90 percent of students were children of color and more than one-third enrolled in Algebra I – the highest in the district.

Additionally, White students were at least two and a half times more likely to be enrolled in Algebra I in the eighth grade than their Black peers in the same school (based on analyses of the three schools with sufficient diversity for
comparisons among groups). Of the middle schools where racial comparisons were possible, three demonstrated large gaps in eighth grade algebra enrollment between Black and White students. At Elkhardt Thompson Middle, 5 percent of Black eighth-graders were enrolled in algebra versus 40 percent of White eighth-graders. At Albert Hill Middle, enrollment rates were 18 percent for Black students versus 53 percent for White students, and at Lucille M. Brown, they were 19 percent for Black eighth-graders versus 47 percent for White (see figure 7). The disproportionality in this indicator continued to mirror all other district-wide disparities in providing equitable access to opportunities that sufficiently prepare all students for colleges and/or careers upon graduation. These disparate opportunity gaps linked to all other disparities regarding students of color and students from economically disadvantaged households.

FIGURE 7: Percentage of students enrolled in 8th grade Algebra by race

![Percentage of students enrolled in 8th grade Algebra by race](chart.png)

Source: Civil Rights Data Collection 2015-16 data

**Access to Advanced Placement**

In analyzing Advanced Placement opportunities, our key findings demonstrated disparities:

- The two selective high schools in the district offered many more AP courses than other schools in the district.
- Students in the two selective high schools were far more likely to enroll in at least one AP course than students in other district high schools.
- Across high schools, Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities were nearly shut out of Advanced Placement opportunities.

Although Open High and Richmond Community High each offered more than 10 AP courses, other high schools offered five or less (see figure 8). George Wythe offered only one AP course.

Relatedly, students at the district’s two selective high schools were also significantly more likely to enroll in an Advanced Placement course. More than half of students at Open and Richmond Community High took at least one AP class. At Armstrong and John Marshall, about 1 in 10 students took an AP course, but at the district’s other high schools fewer than 5 percent enrolled in AP.
It should be noted that Thomas Jefferson High School offered almost as many IB courses as the selective schools offered AP courses, but only 10 percent of students at Thomas Jefferson were enrolled in an IB course compared with 50 percent or more of students at Richmond Community and Open High who were enrolled in AP.

Furthermore, only a few Latino students were enrolled in AP courses district-wide. No English learners were enrolled in an AP course, and only a few students with disabilities were enrolled in an AP course. As with all other key indicators of preparation for college and careers, it appeared as though uneven opportunities existed for students of color and those from lower income families, who make up the bulk of the student population in Richmond.

**FIGURE 8: Number of different AP courses in which students are enrolled**

![Bar chart showing the number of AP courses offered at different schools in Richmond Public Schools.](chart.png)

Source: District supplied course file 2017-18 data
Access to strong teachers has implications on student academic achievement success. While there are some excellent first-year teachers, on average, novice educators are less effective than their more experienced counterparts. It is important for all students to have an equitable likelihood of being assigned to novice and experienced teachers. Using data from the 2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection, our findings demonstrated:

- The two elementary schools with the smallest percentage of students of color had the fewest first-year teachers.
- There were a lot of variation in rates of novice teachers across the elementary and middle schools with similarly high percentages of students of color.
- There was also wide variation in rates of novice educators among high schools, but no pattern by race or class.

At Mary Munford and William Fox elementary schools, which served the smallest percentages of students of color in the district, fewer than 5 percent of teachers were in their first year. But findings showed variation in rates of novice teachers across elementary and middle schools with larger percentages of students of color (see figure 9). For example, Chimbarazo Elementary, where nearly all students were children of color, had very few novice teachers (4 percent). But at Overby-Sheppard, which served a similar demographic of students, nearly a third of teachers were in their first year.

At the high school level, findings showed wide variation of novice teacher distribution but with no discernible pattern by race or class. It is important to note that Open High, which is one of the district’s selective high schools, had among the highest rates of novice teachers, while Richmond Alternative had no novice teachers.

FIGURE 9: Percentage of elementary and middle school teachers in their first year by percentage of students of color

Source: Civil Rights Data Collection 2015-16 data
High quality learning environments rest on the hinges of positive and healthy school cultures and climates. Attendance and components of discipline have become proxies for school culture and climate. Chronic absenteeism can often be a sign of disengagement and has been associated with lower achievement in reading and math, particularly for elementary-aged students. Exclusionary discipline practices place students at risk for a multitude of negative outcomes, including dropping out, and high suspension/expulsion rates may indicate an unhealthy school environment.

In the next sections we outline the findings related to chronic absenteeism – defined as missing 10 percent of school days – and suspension and expulsion in the district. These analyses relied on 2016-17 data publicly available from the Virginia Department of Education website. Key findings include:

- Nearly 1 in 5 students were chronically absent. Absenteeism rates are highest in middle and high schools.
- On average, students from economically disadvantaged households, Black students, and students with disabilities had higher chronic absenteeism rates than the district average. But there were wide variations in chronic absenteeism rates across schools for the same group of students.

Moreover, while lower poverty, more diverse schools had lower average absenteeism rates, many demonstrated far higher absenteeism rates for their economically disadvantaged students and students of color than their higher income and White students, respectively. In 2017, about 21 percent of Richmond students missed at least 10 percent of school days – roughly 18 days (see figure 10). Following national trends, absenteeism rates were lowest in elementary school and highest in high school, with an average of nearly 40 percent of students missing 10 percent or more school days.

Chronic absenteeism rates were especially high for students with disabilities, 29 percent of whom were chronically absent, as well as for Black and low-income students, 1 in 4 of whom missed at least 10 percent of school days (see figure 10). But importantly, absenteeism rates varied significantly across schools for the same student groups. At the elementary school level, chronic absenteeism rates for Black students ranged from 3 percent at Mary Munford to 27 percent at Woodville Elementary. At the high school level, non-selective high school absenteeism rates for economically disadvantaged students ranged from 26 percent at Thomas Jefferson to upwards of 50 percent at Wythe and Armstrong. At these two schools, more than half of low-income students missed 10 percent or more school days and roughly 1 in 3 missed 20 percent or more days (see figure 11). Translated, this means nearly half of the students from economically disadvantaged households in these two schools missed upwards to 40 days of school in a year.

Some more racially and economically diverse schools demonstrated vastly different absenteeism rates for...
historically underserved students and their more privileged peers. For example, Albert Hill Middle school had a 20-point gap in chronic absenteeism rates between Black and White students – 28 percent versus 8 percent, respectively.

**FIGURE 10: Percentage of students chronically absent (>10% of days missed)**

![Graph showing percentage of students chronically absent](source)

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data

**FIGURE 11: Chronic absenteeism rates for economically disadvantaged students by high school**

![Graph showing chronic absenteeism rates](source)

* Denotes selective admissions

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data

**Discipline**

Rates of suspension and expulsion offer insight into the health of a school’s culture and climate. Using data from the Virginia Department of Education for the 2016-17 school year, we examined rates of short and long-term out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and expulsion by school and student group. The data showed that:

- In 2017, nearly 3,800 students were suspended from Richmond schools for more than 10 days and more than 400 were suspended for 10 to 45 days. In-school suspensions and expulsions were rare.
On average, middle and high schools had higher suspension rates than elementary schools, with some schools suspending upwards to one-third of their students.

Black students and students with disabilities were over-represented among students who were suspended or expelled; suspension rates for these groups varied substantially across schools.

Nearly 1 in 6 Richmond students were suspended out of school at least once in 2017. Average suspension rates were lowest in elementary schools, with 9 percent of students receiving at least one suspension, and highest in middle schools, at nearly 33 percent (see figure 12).

As we examined suspensions and expulsions, our findings highlighted representational disproportionalities. African American students constitute 71 percent of Richmond’s student population, but more than 90 percent of suspended or expelled students (see figure 13).

Suspension rates for students with disabilities were also above the district average, with more than 1 in 5 students receiving at least one out-of-school suspension.

Importantly, however, suspension rates for both Black students and students with disabilities varied substantially across schools. The percentage of African American elementary school students receiving short-term out-of-school suspensions ranged from zero at Mary Munford to nearly 40 percent at Woodville. Ranges were similarly wide at the middle and high school level (see figure 14), including for students with disabilities. Forty-three percent of students with disabilities attending Armstrong High were suspended at least once on a short-term basis, while only 6 percent were suspended once on a long-term basis. Conversely, 16 percent of students with disabilities attending Thomas Jefferson High were suspended at least once on a short-term basis and none were suspended on a long-term basis.

**FIGURE 12: Percentage of students receiving at least one short-term suspension by grade level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Percentage of Students Receiving at Least One Suspension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Schools</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Schools</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A few schools reported that they suspended between 1 and 10 students, but exact numbers were suppressed to protect student privacy.

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data
FIGURE 13: Suspension and expulsions of Black students

FIGURE 14: Percent of Black students suspended at least once by middle school

Source: Virginia Department of Education 2016-17 data
Conclusion

The story of students attending Richmond Public Schools is the story of children attending public schools across the nation. All indicators of academic success show White students and more affluent students being provided with better educational opportunities than students of color and those from lower income families. From access to a well-rounded education, where students take courses such as world languages, to students being put on the path to college- and career-readiness by having the ability to take Algebra I before high school, to students being identified as gifted, all data point to wide gaps in opportunity, which could be correlated to wide gaps in student test score outcomes. Additionally, our results demonstrate that students of color experience higher rates of suspension and expulsion than their White counterparts, which can also be correlated to gaps in test score outcomes. Finally, the wide disparities within and among schools offer both opportunity in those places where all students performed well and begs questions from schools where it is evident groups of students were not being educated as well.
EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AUDIT: PHASE 2

This first phase of the RPS equity audit provides an initial review of district data, and is a key step in the audit and planning processes. The path forward requires deeper analysis to get behind the numbers and understand why students with similar racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds experience school differently. In Phase 2, Ed Trust would collaborate with RPS to build on Phase 1 findings and provide school- and course-specific analysis alongside on-the-ground facilitation of stakeholder focus groups and classroom observations that examine teaching and learning practices. Additionally, Ed Trust would work alongside RPS as a strategic thought partner in the design and implementation of equity-focused action plans addressing Phase 1 and 2 audit findings.

The data points below are merely suggestive, and contingent on data availability. The Education Trust is committed to working with the Superintendent and senior staff to create a scope of work for Phase 2 that fits the needs of the district and aligns with the district’s long-term strategic plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Data Points – Phase 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Achievement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transcript Analysis that includes:</td>
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<td>o GPA analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Identification of course success/barrier indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Trend analysis for advanced coursework access vs success</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of post-secondary enrollment (as available)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Opportunity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of CCR pathway(s)</td>
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<td>• Analysis of Dual Enrollment</td>
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<td>• Additional analysis on non-core academic programming access</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Rigor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of classroom assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Classroom observations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educator Quality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distribution of effective teachers and school leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of teacher and school leader diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of teacher and school leader retention</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Culture and Climate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focus groups with students, teachers, school leaders, and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of culture and climate surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Imputed weighted student funding analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis of enrollment data to identify patterns in school segregation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Early Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to high-quality early learning opportunities</td>
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Data Sources:

- Postsecondary enrollment data – http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/h5_grads_completers/archive_data.shtml
- AP test taking and test success data, absenteeism data, and some discipline data – http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/
- Additional discipline data – https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/pti/
- Demographic data for 2015-16, gifted programming, eight grade algebra, AP/IB enrollment within each school, and novice teacher data - https://ocrdata.ed.gov
- Course offering data – file provide by Richmond Schools

Appendix B: List of Excluded Specialty Campuses:

- Amelia Street
- Appomattox Regional Governor’s School
- Blackwell Preschool Learning Center
- Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School
- Martin L. King, Jr. Preschool Learning Center
- Mary Scott Regional Preschool Learning Center
- Math Science Innovation Center
- Maymont Preschool Learning Center
- R.E.A.L. School at Henderson
- Richmond Adult Technical Center
- Richmond Career Education & Employment Academy
- Richmond Technical Center
- Summer Hill Preschool Learning Center
- Thirteen Acres at Carver
- Virgie Binford Educational Center