RPS RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FY26 Budget Questions and Answers

Priority 1 – Academics

- *Can you provide an update on the student enrollment at J. Sargent Reynolds?*
    - Fall 2024 Enrollment: 83 students

School	Class of 2025 (Sr)	Class of 2026 (Jrs)	Total
Armstrong High School	5	6	11
Franklin Military Academy	5	6	11
Huguenot High School	5	5	10
John Marshall High School	5	5	10
Open High School	6	5	11
Richmond Community High School	6	5	11
Richmond High School of the Arts	5	4	9
Thomas Jefferson High School	5	5	10
Totals	**42**	**41**	**83**

    - Spring 2025 Enrollment: 72 students

School	Class of 2025 (Sr)	Class of 2026 (Jr)	Total
Armstrong High School	5	2	7
Franklin Military Academy	5	6	11
Huguenot High School	5	4	9
John Marshall High School	5	2	7
Open High School	6	5	11
Richmond Community High School	6	5	11
Richmond High School of the Arts	5	2	7
Thomas Jefferson High School	5	4	9
Totals	**42**	**30**	**72**

- *RPS200: When can the school board receive the data requested by Board Member Rizzi and myself a few months ago on the 200-day schools?*
    - MERC is currently leading the RPS200 study through their Institute for Collaborative Research and Evaluation. The researchers are in the midst of collecting data from the four participating schools and plan on sharing their report to the District later this year.
    - Previously, an RPS200 performance update was provided to the School Board at the December 4, 2023 and February 20, 2024 meetings.

Priority 2 – Talent

- Health Insurance
    - *Can you provide the employee impact of the proposed health insurance cost-share?*
        - The Director of Benefits and Compensation created a resource document that summarizes the Cigna health insurance rates for employees, detailing semi-monthly contributions for different coverage tiers (e.g., employee only, employee + spouse, family, etc.). It includes comparisons of costs and outlines projected rate increases for the 2026 plan year if the cost sharing is approved.
    - *Have we done a cost analysis of alternative health care providers?*
        - RPS currently participates in a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for Employee and Retiree Health Benefits with the City of Richmond, which allows both entities to benefit from discounted pricing due to the combined total number of employees covered. While we can explore alternative health care providers, doing so would require terminating this agreement with a 270-day written notice before the desired termination date. Additionally, the process of selecting a new provider would necessitate a formal RFP process, which typically takes six months. The last time we conducted an RFP was in 2022, when Cigna was re-awarded the contract primarily due to offering the lowest rates.
        - If we were to leave the joint agreement, it would significantly impact both RPS and the City's budgets, likely leading to a reduction in the funding we receive from the City. Furthermore, a marketplace approach is not a viable option for RPS. Multiple providers would struggle to determine competitive pricing without knowing the total number of employees selecting each plan, leading to higher costs. Managing multiple plans across multiple providers would also create administrative complexities and potentially cause confusion for employees. For these reasons, staying within the current agreement remains the most financially responsible and operationally efficient approach for RPS.
    - *Do Chesterfield or Henrico share the cost of their health benefits with employees?*
        - The Director of Benefits and Compensation confirmed that both Chesterfield and Henrico share the cost of health insurance with their employees.

- *Is the administration trying to recover the cost for collective bargaining through a cost sharing for health care insurance?*
  - No. We are simply aiming to fund all the priorities in our strategic plan with our limited resources.

- Retention and Recruitment
  - *How do we define high vacancy schools?*
    - High vacancy schools are defined as those with 15% or greater teacher vacancy rate or those with at least 10 teacher vacancies. Using this definition, the current high vacancy schools are:
      - PS: Blackwell, Mary Scott
      - ES: Amelia Street, Blackwell, Carver, McClenney, Miles Jones, and Woodville
      - MS: Henderson and River City
      - HS: Richmond High School for the Arts, Richmond Success Academy/Thrive/Aspire, Richmond Technical Center
  - *What is the retention rate for teachers who have received any type of bonus this year and last year?*
    - Last year, we distributed bonuses to 344 new hires. As of January 31, 2025, we have retained 87.2% of those hires.
    - This year, we distributed bonuses to 164 new hires. As of January 31, 2025, we have retained 96.9% of those hires.
  - *My former school board colleague's request was for a math coach at Oak Grove Bellemeade ES. I do not see that request honored in the budget? How is this equitable when it has been shared that all elementary schools will have a math coach and interventionist?*
    - Every elementary school already has an FTE for a math coach and math interventionist, including Oak Grove-Bellemeade ES.
  - *Do we know what other surrounding divisions are offering in terms of early hiring commitments?*
    - Surrounding divisions are running recruitment campaigns focused on early hiring efforts; however, we have not seen any advertised incentives specifically tied to early hiring commitments. There is no clear indication that they are offering financial incentives or contractual commitments to secure candidates early. We continue to monitor regional hiring trends to ensure that our recruitment strategies remain competitive and aligned with best practices for attracting top talent.

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- *How were the Richmond Teacher Residency funds repurposed from our FY25 budget?*
  - The funds allocated for the RTR program are currently included in the Title II budget. From 2021 to 2024, an average of $125,000 was set aside annually. Any remaining funds from previous budgets were redirected to the SEED (formerly BOOT) program and other Title II overages.
  - For the 2024–2025 Title II budget, the allocation for the RTR program was reduced to $25,000. This adjustment was based on the number of applications received by VCU in February 2024. Currently, there is an outstanding invoice for $18,049; however, it requires further revision to account for residents who did not fulfill their service requirements.

Priority 3 – Wellness

- *What data is available demonstrating the effectiveness of our mental health partners in our buildings?*
  - While we do not have causal data linking services to specific student outcomes, we do have survey data from our school leaders about our partners. That data is summarized here. For a deeper analysis of the direct impact on student outcomes, we would need to identify a research partner.

Priority 5 – Operations

- *What was the cost for us to move groundskeeping back to the city?*
  - When we moved groundskeeping back to the City more than a decade ago, we removed approximately $477K from our budget plus provided the City with equipment. The cost to move groundskeeping back to RPS now through a contracted vendor would be $1.4M.