

# City of Richmond



**LEVAR M. STONEY**  
MAYOR

July 18, 2017

Honorable Members of City Council and School Board:

On Monday, City Council introduced a resolution endorsing the launch of the RVA Education Compact. A parallel resolution will be considered by the School Board in August. This resolution represents a historic step forward to institutionalize collaboration between the School Board, City Council and the Mayor. The final language of the resolution reflects the input of not only elected officials but also of hundreds of residents who participated in public meetings or provided feedback throughout the drafting process.

The compact takes, as a starting point, the defined responsibilities of each body:

- The School Board sets school policy, develops strategies for academic improvement, oversees school administration and makes funding requests based on defined needs;
- The Mayor oversees the administration of city agencies, including those touching the lives of children and families, and makes budgetary recommendations for investments in both the school system, other agencies and partners working with children and families;
- The City Council acts as the ultimate authority for approving funding plans for both RPS and city agencies.

This division of responsibilities already requires us to work together, and by adopting this resolution, we are choosing to work together *well*, through an intentional process designed to facilitate communication, promote inclusive policy making and to build trust.

The Education Compact establishes a framework by which we can work together more effectively on shared goals. It will also establish a process by which the needs of schools and children receive the focus and attention they deserve on a year-round basis, not just at budget times. It is designed to multiply the opportunities the School Board has to express the needs of schools to City Council and is designed to ensure City Council has a clear understanding of the rationale of funding requests made by both RPS and city agencies. It is also designed to make sure we are paying attention and working together on the needs of the whole child, both inside and outside the classroom.

Last but not least, it is designed to give RPS and community stakeholders a seat at the table as we work toward community-wide solutions to our most urgent challenges: funding for facilities, long-term operating funding for schools and child-strengthening investments as well as the development of a shared framework for progress and mutual accountability.

Let us again be clear about what the Compact is not: It is not, and will not be, a vehicle for promoting privatization of our schools or other ideologically-driven strategies. Instead, it will be a vehicle for developing practical solutions that promote our shared goals of advancing academic achievement and reducing child poverty.

I was very encouraged by the tone and substance of the joint City Council and School Board meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup>. The pending resolution before you reflects several changes to the previous draft. It is focused on ensuring public access to the Compact process by making it clear the Mayor and Superintendent will fully participate in the quarterly Council-School Board meetings. It also adds specificity to the composition of the Education Compact team to ensure an appropriate balance of perspectives.

Upon adoption of this resolution by City Council and the School Board, I will instruct my staff to move expeditiously to work with Interim Superintendent Thomas Kranz to draft an operating plan to guide the work of the Compact over the next year, to include proposed meeting dates, timelines and other logistical details.

We all know our city and community has difficult challenges ahead in addressing the needs of our schools and children. The process of collaboration we are embarking on together will not be easy because the problems we are addressing are not easy. We have a far greater chance of making meaningful progress on behalf of our children and our community if we commit to working together. That's what the RVA Education Compact is all about.

I look forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting to work to create the educational opportunities our children deserve. Together, we'll make it happen.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Stoney', is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with a large loop on the left side.

Levar M. Stoney