

Reader's Guide to the Draft Education Compact Resolution

What is the Education Compact?

The RVA Education Compact is an agreement among local elected officials to work collaboratively to improve children's lives and family outcomes in Richmond.

Why Does Richmond Need an Education Compact?

- 1. Improving public education is the key to our City's long-term success. To make meaningful progress, everyone has to be on board.**

Our public education system faces severe challenges. To make real progress, each of our governing bodies and institutions must play their part. This means clearly articulating common goals, and clearly defining responsibilities for each body. That's what the Education Compact is about: organizing what Richmond has never had, a shared game plan to help our children succeed.

- 2. To help children reach their full potential in the context of high poverty, we need to embrace a "whole child" approach that addresses the needs of children inside and outside the classroom.**

Schools play a critical role in preparing young people, but they fill only a portion of young people's lives. To ensure that all young people develop their full capabilities and are prepared for life after high school, we must also pay attention to critical support services, from early childhood education to out-of-school-time programs to workforce readiness programs. And particularly in the context of Richmond's 40% child poverty rate, we must also address the needs of parents and caregivers of our students.

The whole child approach recognizes that schools cannot be asked to do it all. To help teachers and principals succeed in the classroom, the entire community must do its part outside of the classroom. While Richmond now has many initiatives in place to support children, it does not have an integrated, shared plan aimed at achieving *change* and driving sustained progress, inside and outside of the classroom. The Education Compact, by aligning the efforts of Richmond Public Schools with those of the City of Richmond and its partners, will be a key catalyst in getting the entire community on the same page and ensuring our children's needs receive the priority they deserve.

- 3. To address the funding needs of schools and support the goals of improving academic success and reducing child poverty, we must embrace collaboration.**

Richmond's governing bodies historically have often had an adversarial relationship, due in part to the fact that the School Board sets education policy but City Council controls the purse strings. Absence of regular communication and a sustained effort to work together exacerbates distrust and leads to missed opportunities to work together.

The collaboration involved in the Education Compact will change this dynamic in three ways. First, the formation of a Children's Cabinet involving key agencies within the City of

Richmond and Richmond Public Schools provides a mechanism for agencies touching the same families to work together for greater impact. Second, the establishment of regular, quarterly meetings between City Council and the School Board as full bodies will promote more sustained communication and greater mutual understanding of the efforts of both RPS and the City of Richmond to help support children, and help assure that the public's attention remain squarely on education year-round, not just at budget season or when the results of standardized tests are released.

Third, an Education Compact team including representatives from City Council, School Board, the administrations of the City of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools, and community stakeholders will be established to make recommendations on challenging issues touching both the City and RPS. At the top of this list is developing a concrete strategy and funding plan to meet schools' facilities needs, and developing a long-term funding plan to meet the operating needs of schools. This process will assure that schools have a seat at the table as critical funding discussions take place, and will assure that possible solutions are explored and vetted from as many possible angles as possible before recommendations for action are made. All meetings of the Compact team will be public, and the work of this team will help assure the entire community remains focused on the needs of schools, year-round.

4. Making progress is long, hard work—which is why we must start now

Improving the lives of our children is a community-wide responsibility, and there is much urgent work to be done. Putting in place a process to develop well thought-out recommendations to address the operating and facilities needs of RPS, with RPS stakeholders at the table, cannot wait. Developing an integrated plan to meet the needs of the whole child, inside and outside of the classroom, cannot wait. And developing a strategy to meet those needs, including advocacy at the state level, cannot wait. This work must begin *now* to make it possible to enact meaningful policy changes in the FY 19 and FY 20 budget processes and support the efforts of the School Board and the next Superintendent on behalf of the children. Getting going now in no way interferes with the ability of the School Board and RPS administration to develop its own strategic plan and set its own priorities for academic improvement. Rather, it will help make sure that the resources are in place to be sure those plans can be successfully implemented.

Education Compact Timeline:

- Mid-January: School Board and City Council passed Resolutions stating that Council/School Board “welcome[d] the idea of developing an Education Compact among all Richmond elected leaders as a shared framework for establishing goals, metrics for success and accountability, and a shared strategy for identifying and meeting the needs of our students and families inside and outside of the classroom”
- Mid-January – February: Education Compact Working Group met biweekly to sketch out an initial framework and developed a draft Education Compact.¹

¹ Working Group Members included: Nadine Marsh-Carter (School Board), Liz Doerr (School Board), Dr. Cynthia Newbille (City Council), Michael Jones (City Council), Selena Cuffee-Glenn (Richmond City CAO), Dr. Dana Bedden (RPS)

- March – May: Twelve community meetings were held in every district of the city to solicit public feedback on the Compact
- June 7th: An update on the Education Compact was released.
- June 16th: Text of the current draft Education Compact resolution was released.

What We Learned from Community Meetings:

- There is broad community support to increase collaboration between Mayor, City Council and School Board.
- Two initial priorities of the Compact should be to focus on funding Facilities Improvement and developing a Shared Funding Strategy for RPS and related support services.
- It is critical that future meetings of the Compact Team are public with participation from the Mayor and Superintendent.
- The Mayor, City Council and School Board should develop specific policy goals within their defined scope of responsibilities. The Education Compact should integrate these plans into a community-wide vision for improving education and the lives of children.
- It must be made clear that the Education Compact Team’s role is to make policy recommendations on matters of shared concern, *not* to set policy.
- It must be made clear that the Compact is about bolstering public education, not supporting privatization of schools or a shift towards charter schools.
- There needs to be a strong commitment to continued public engagement as the work of the Education Compact proceeds

What’s in the Resolution?

Based on the community’s feedback, the second draft of the Education Compact focuses on a framework for increasing collaboration. The final resolution to be approved by City Council and School Board contains three parts:

- **Quarterly Joint Meetings Between City Council and School Board:** A commitment for City Council and Richmond School Board to meet on a quarterly basis in order to focus on issues of mutual concern with respect to education and the holistic needs of children and families in Richmond.
- **Development of Education Compact Team:** A commitment for two members of City Council, two members of School Board, the administrative leadership of the City of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools (including the Superintendent), and broad cross-sector community representation to include voices from the following stakeholders: parents, teachers, philanthropic community, nonprofits, and other cross sector partners to serve and actively participate on an Education Compact Team. This Team will meet monthly and be charged with exploring in depth and making advisory policy recommendations on matters of shared concern to Council, the School Board, and the Mayor.

- **Establishment of a Children’s Cabinet:** A commitment of City of Richmond administrative units directly impacting children and families to meet on a regular basis with Richmond Public Schools officials on matters of common concern, to facilitate improved communication, identify opportunities for productive collaboration, and facilitate implementation of projects and initiatives.

What are the Initial Priorities for the Education Compact?

- Developing concrete plan to fund urgent **schools facilities needs**
- Establishing a long-term **operating funding solution** for RPS and for needed support services outside the classroom
- Developing **citywide goals** for children and youth, **specifying clear strategies for progress** in each area as defined by RPS and the City of Richmond, and **specifying the funding** required to drive progress
- Developing a **shared funding strategy** to meet the articulated needs, including but not limited to advocacy at the General Assembly level for more funds

Further Questions and Answers

Will the Compact take away power from the School Board?

No. The RVA Compact Team will make policy recommendations on matters of shared concern, particularly funding. The decision to implement these policy recommendations will be subject to a majority vote by City Council and/or the School Board, as appropriate. In fact, the RVA Education Compact Team assures that Richmond Public Schools will have a seat at the table in critical discussions of funding issues.

Is the Compact an attempt to privatize our public schools?

No, the goals of the RVA Education Compact have never been and will never be to increase charter schools or to privatize our public schools.

Who will manage the Education Compact?

The Education Compact Team and the Children’s Cabinet will vote on a chair and determine an appropriate organizational structure. The Quarterly Joint Meetings between City Council and School Board will have rotating chairs. Mayor Stoney’s policy team will offer administrative support for these operating bodies and may consider hiring a dedicated staff member to support the overall Education Compact. Additional support will be provided by staff of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Children’s Cabinet as part of the statewide Challenged Schools Initiative.

How will the Education Compact promote transparency?

All meetings of the proposed Education Compact Team will be public meetings and presentations and documents associated with these meetings will be publicly available. A website will be established to allow the public to track the progress of the Compact and as a repository for data and documents.

Why is it important to move forward with the Compact now? Can't it wait until a new Superintendent is in place?

Certainly finding a strong superintendent to lead Richmond Public Schools is a critical priority. Nothing in the Education Compact impacts the ability of the next superintendent to shape a strategic action plan to improve schools, in partnership with the School Board. Establishing a framework of citywide cooperation to support the work of the new superintendent will make Richmond more attractive to potential candidates. It will also help set in motion long-overdue work on finding feasible solutions to funding on both the facilities and operating side, and do so with all stakeholders at the table. Moving forward with the Compact sends a clear message that the Mayor and City Council are squarely committed to working with the School Board to move public education in Richmond forward, and are prepared to get to work on addressing our most challenging issues.