

Richmond Public Schools - School Board Governance

Richmond Public Schools - Retain Educators, Attract Families, and Build Communities

For too long, decisions aimed at improving Richmond Public Schools have been made without the support of adequate data or sufficient stakeholder input. Too often, promises on spending, instruction, and school climate and culture have been made but not kept, leaving us disappointed and students lacking the resources they need. We need a School Board decision-making process that works to achieve the best possible educational opportunities for our youth.

In order to truly begin to improve our schools and the lives of all of our students, School Board members must work collaboratively with families, educators, and community members. I'm running for School Board because, as a teacher and parent, I understand firsthand what is at stake. I believe that all students have a right to succeed and that parent and guardian participation is essential. As the 4th district representative, I will work for the improvement of all RPS schools. The School Board is where I will work together with my fellow Board members to set policy to: Retain Educators, Attract Families, and Build Communities. I ask for your vote because we need new leadership, a new vision, and because quality education is my life's work.

Retaining Educators

Our teachers and educators truly demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to serve the whole child. To recruit and retain the best educators, we need to stand by our hiring decisions and allow educators the autonomy to demonstrate their expertise. Furthermore, we must listen to them and provide the resources and support they need. Supports like professional development should be targeted to and led by our educators. Opportunities for advancement should be accessible to all. The teacher evaluation process should be clear, concise, and require no more scrutiny than the evaluation process of our most highly paid employees.

The feedback that educators and education support professionals provide about their experiences serving our students and their families needs to be recognized and included in our decision making. We must establish collective bargaining so we can develop agreements that value our employees as the professionals they are. We should develop and advocate for a School budget that provides a living fair wage.

Solutions:

- Establish collective bargaining so that we can improve teaching and learning, provide fair employment procedures, and provide a genuine voice to our educators.
- Develop a plan to collect more educator input before voting on board decisions that affect day-to-day policies, procedures, and instruction.
- Create a system for conducting employee exit interviews so that we can create data-informed solutions to our recruitment and retention issues and foster opportunities for employee advancement.

Attracting Families

Recent events have highlighted the inequities faced by our students and their families. As a pillar of the community, our school division is responsible for ensuring an equitable education for all. The educational services, supports, and opportunities we create must be accessible to every student in every classroom.

The disparities in our education system can no longer be ignored. Like other leading school divisions throughout our state and nation, we must do our part to close opportunity gaps by creating plans for the future without the walls and obstacles of the past. Every child should feel valued, and authentic opportunities for input should be available to all families, regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds.

For far too long, students with exceptional education needs and those with limited English language proficiency have received less consideration than their counterparts. Too often, they have been ignored during board decisions, and division advocacy work rarely targets their specific needs. We are far from developing the needed policies and procedures that provide them the voice and equitable learning experiences they need to thrive in our schools and communities.

Solutions:

- Create a community engagement plan that empowers all families to provide input for school and division wide decision making.
- Develop a plan to close achievement and opportunity gaps in our schools caused by larger systemic disparities and to create solutions to address the root causes of these gaps.
- Identify a process for evaluating and improving policies and procedures that are directly tied to lifting up our underserved student populations.

Building Communities

Healthy communities are built on mutual respect, empathy, and trust. Our public schools provide a common space where we and our children use our differences as assets to develop these values. Across our school district, we have lost the respect and trust of our families and community stakeholders because of poor decision making, especially in regard to our budget. In order to create a budget that is devoid of wasteful spending and mismanagement, we must practice zero-based budgeting that will allow us to thoroughly evaluate our expenditures for the highest return on investment. Our budget should be data-driven, and spending should be evidenced-based to ensure we are using funds wisely. We must also communicate our processes for decision-making and we should provide community members opportunities to provide input.

We need to expand after school programs and wrap around services so that our students have safe places to interact and develop their social emotional skills. We should connect our students and families with our civic leaders, faith organizations, healthcare providers, and law enforcement to help forge relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. The goal should be to use unity practices that are centered in empathy and understanding of our differences and our shared humanity.

RPS's school facilities, older and newer, should contribute to the improvement of our neighborhoods and the city's environment. With the support of community stakeholders, we should expand instruction and after school programs that build awareness of environmental issues and directly involve students in activities that promote the preservation of common and green spaces.

Solutions:

- Extend the budget timeline to allow for zero-based budgeting practices to allow for strict scrutiny of new and old spending decisions, more transparency, and greater community input for improved student success.

- Build relationships with a broader range of community stakeholders who are representative of our student population and who seek to support the mental and physical well-being of all students.
- Research funding and community partnerships that will expand the instruction of environmental and climate change awareness within our schools during daytime instruction and afterschool programs.