BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM

Roanoke City Public Schools
STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2020
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2015-2020 Strategic Plan is based on the continued philosophy that all students can achieve academic success. Roanoke City Public Schools is committed to its beliefs and will strive to meet and exceed the expectations laid out in our Strategic Focus Areas. Our journey will not end until all students achieve at high levels.

The current plan was prepared by a Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of Board members and a combined team of students, parents, teachers, support and professional staff members, administrators, community leaders, and members of the faith-based community. Before the final plan was approved, a draft copy was made available to staff, Board members, and student, parent, and community representatives.

This plan was facilitated under the direction and guidance of Hastings Design Corporation in Roanoke, Virginia. It builds on the previous Strategic Plan.

Each year in November a Balanced Scorecard is presented to the School Board and is made available on the Division’s website to students, parents, teachers, support and professional staff members, administrators, community leaders, and members of the faith-based community. The Balanced Scorecard reports the progress in meeting the strategic priorities set forth in the Strategic Plan.

Rita D. Bishop  
Superintendent  
July 14, 2015

Adopted by the RCPS school board on February 9, 2016.
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From its roots as a railroad boomtown in 1883 to its place as a regional urban center today, Roanoke is a combination of forces and opportunities. The City has its origins in a blue-collar work ethic and a belief that hard work can result in upward mobility. Within its first seventy years, Roanoke’s growth led to its nickname, *The Magic City*, and a brilliant star was constructed on Mill Mountain to celebrate the *Star City*, a progressive middle-class American town.

Despite the progress of the first century, not all of Roanoke’s citizens have reached a state of comfortable middle class and many still struggle. The median household income is $44,603. In 2009 – 2013, 22.4 percent of individuals living in the City of Roanoke were below the poverty level versus the state level of 11.3 percent. Approximately 75 percent of our students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The median home price in Roanoke is half the median in Virginia and the cost of living is 9.4 percent below the national average. There are neighborhoods of great diversity measured in terms of economics, race, or culture and there are neighborhoods of remarkable uniformity.

The common meeting ground for the young people of Roanoke City is less frequently their neighborhood and more often their school. In the schools, Roanoke City students interact with students who live in homes like theirs and with others who are homeless; they see students who look like them and talk like them, and they see others who look different and speak different languages. The strength of our schools lies with our students and their acceptance of diversity. Students are the foundation and future of our City.

Roanokers possess pride of place. They value their neighborhoods and have settled in one neighborhood or another for multiple reasons based on economics, race, culture, or lifestyle. And no matter the neighborhood of residence, there is a commonly articulated belief that the quality of life here in Roanoke is worthy of celebration. The City provides access to medical care, arts and cultural events, business opportunities, educational institutions, environmental and recreational amenities. What good fortune to find big city amenities in a small town venue!

What is the connection between the City of Roanoke and its schools? It is the legacy of public schools to provide a safe place where students can discover and build on individual strengths and talents, where they can practice democracy, learning to value and preserve the past while growing as leaders who will invent the future of Roanoke. The civic leaders, doctors, lawyers, teachers, philanthropists whose names are linked to Roanoke history and heritage are linked as well with their individual schools — Jefferson High School, Lucy Addison High School, William Fleming High School, Patrick Henry High School. We grow our leaders in the schools of our City.

Our roots as a blue-collar railroad community with aspirations for the future have brought us to an era of development as a health care, retail, and financial center for the region. There are citizens who look back to past prominence as a rail center, others who recall rapid growth, as Roanoke became an urban center in the midst of the Blue Ridge Mountains; today many others look forward to the promise of Roanoke. There are families who have generations of history in Roanoke and families whose history in Roanoke begins with this generation.

As we examine our commitment to all the children of Roanoke, we are faced with making good decisions in difficult times. The future of our city demands that our students learn to respect individual identity while building strong relationships with their neighbors in the school, in the community, and across the City.
Today’s students are connected to the local community and to the world community through technology. It is essential that our schools be a place where all students are challenged by the state of the art learning experiences provided under the leadership of teachers who understand and accept the challenges of working in an urban school Division. The combination can be magical for our students and our City. The outcome? Strong Students. Strong Schools. Strong City.

ROANOKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High Schools
Patrick Henry
William Fleming

Middle Schools
Lucy Addison
James Breckinridge
Stonewall Jackson
James Madison
Woodrow Wilson

Programs
Forest Park Academy
Noel C. Taylor Academy at Oakland
Roanoke Technical Education Center

Regional Program
Roanoke Valley Governor’s School

Elementary Schools
Crystal Spring
Fairview
Fallon Park
Fishburn Park
Garden City
Grandin Court
Highland Park
Hurt Park
Lincoln Terrace
Monterey
Morningside
Preston Park
Roanoke Academy for Mathematics & Science
Round Hill
Virginia Heights
Wasena
Westside
Roanoke City Public Schools
2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

ROANOKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS 2014-2015

Student Population PK-12: 13,649

- American Indian: 3%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 3%
- Black: 45%
- Hispanic: 10%
- MultiRacial: 3%
- White: 39%

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 2009 Virginia Teacher of the Year
- 2013 and 2015 Region 6 Teacher of the Year
- 2013 Superintendent of the Year
- Patrick Henry High School's Orchestra performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City and Orchestra Hall in Chicago
- Fishburn Park Elementary won the National Green Ribbon Award in 2012
- Stonewall Jackson Middle School was selected to participate in a NASA program two years in a row
- RCPS has ten 21st Century Learning Centers
- The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) has named RCPS one of the Best Communities for Music Education three years in a row
- The William Fleming girls’ basketball team was second in the state in 2014
- All 17 elementary schools received instruments from the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, valued at $510,000
- Patrick Henry High School’s Forensics Team won the State Championship two years in a row
- Fallon Park (2009) and Preston Park (2014) were recognized as best urban schools in the country by National Center for Urban Transformation (NCUST)
- Community College Access Program (CCAP) was a finalist for the 2014 Bellwether Award
- Westside Debate Team won the prestigious Magna Award
- The interpretive performances of the William Fleming Theatre Company have become a highlight of the annual Downtown Roanoke Dickens of a Christmas event
- Launched RCPS+, a summer enrichment program, in 2013
- Nearly 800 students have graduated from Forest Park Academy

REALITIES

- 76.17% Poverty Rate (free/reduced lunch)
- 83.4% On-Time Graduation Rate
- 14.57% Special Education students
- 1,054 Gifted & Talented Students
- 1,326 English Language Learners
- 58 native languages represented (includes English)
- 2.26% drop-out rate (grades 7-12)
- 600 Homeless Students

SCHOOLS

- Elementary Schools: 17
- Middle Schools: 5
- High Schools: 2
- Additional Instructional Sites: 4
  - Forest Park Academy
  - Noel C. Taylor Academy
  - Roanoke Technical Education Center (ROTEC)
  - Roanoke Valley Governor’s School
MISSION

Graduate students prepared for life in a rapidly changing world.

VISION

To be a model for urban public education.

While individual schools around the country have risen to this standard, no Division has comprehensively performed at this level. We owe it to our children to set a very high bar. With persistence, dedication, creativity, and student focus, we will reach our vision.

What does the vision mean?

Our students will have the skills to be successful and the opportunities to reach their full potential regardless of income, ethnicity, disabilities, or other challenges.

CORE BELIEFS

We believe:

- Our diversity is a source of strength.
- Our schools must be safe.
- All students are capable of meeting high expectations.
- We are accountable for our students’ success.
- Every individual in our Division contributes to student success.
- We have a responsibility to work collaboratively with our families.
- Respect, trust, and honest communication are the foundation of successful and productive relationships.
- The vitality of our community depends on a strong school system.

STRONG STUDENTS. STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG CITY.
ROANOKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS KEY GOALS

RCPS’ focus must be to:

- Raise the level of academic achievement for all students
- Intentionally close the achievement gap
- Graduate 100% of our students

With these three primary goals in mind, the Division has identified five performance measurements that will be the foundation for achieving its vision: *To be a model for urban public education.*

They are:

- All schools will achieve and maintain accreditation based on Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.
- All schools will meet and sustain federal government standards as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- The high school graduation rate will meet or exceed that of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Roanoke City Public Schools will continue to submit evidence as a high performance organization.
- The City’s strategic plan and other community organizations’ strategic plans will have components addressing the success of our students.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS: 2015 – 2020

- Master teaching in a diverse urban environment
- Create an optimal urban learning environment
- Develop a high-performing organization
- Collaborate with the City, business, community and faith-based organizations to provide a better prepared student
Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust in Washington, D.C., presents numerous examples of school divisions combating the issues of poverty, language barriers, and homelessness that post excellent student outcomes. Their strategies include stressing high expectations, committed teachers, embracing diversity, engaging parents, and having a wide range of community partners.

Roanoke City Public Schools has made significant strides in closing the achievement gap between African-American and white students in mathematics, reading, and graduation rate. More needs to be done.

As part of the strategic planning process, our teachers, principals, administrators, and professional support staff were asked if RCPS should set higher expectations for our students considering they were working in an urban environment where many of our children face formidable challenges on a daily basis. The prevailing belief was that regardless of the student and their life challenges, which often translate into teaching challenges, RCPS has the responsibility to educate its students and to educate them well.

One teacher said it best when she said, “We are professionals and that means regardless of the circumstances and challenges, our job is to find a way to educate each student. Many times it isn’t easy and it can be frustrating, but we cannot and will not fall victim to the false belief that some kids cannot be taught. That just isn’t so.”

We all know that the level of expectation plays a prominent role in an individual’s mindset and the extent to which they “push” themselves to perform and succeed. That widely accepted principle in the workplace should be the norm in our schools.

In short, we must raise the level of academic achievement for all of our students and we must close the achievement gaps between different sub-groups of students.

At the end of the day, if a child can’t learn the way we teach, then we had better start teaching the way the child can learn. This is particularly true in an urban school division with a very diverse student body. That is why we need teachers who want to work in an urban school division; who love working with our diverse students; who take pride in overcoming the built-in challenges of working in an urban setting; who believe their students are just as capable of succeeding as any other students.

We want teachers who are committed to our students and to their profession.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #1: (cont.)
Master teaching in a diverse urban environment

We believe professional, dedicated, motivated teachers are the single most important determining factor in achieving educational excellence. Our goal must be to hire highly qualified teachers and then provide an environment that supports professional growth, integrated mentoring, and ongoing education. RCPS understands that the single most important determinant of what students learn is what the teachers’ knowledge base and the teachers’ ability to share that knowledge with students.

Just as we must set higher expectations for our students, we must establish a culture within the Division that sets a very high standard for our teachers’ performance and for the performance of those who support our teachers.

Teaching is about relationships – relationships between our teachers and their principals; between our teachers and their mentors; and most importantly between our teachers and their students. The students participating in the strategic planning focus groups told us that those teachers who had relationships with their students were the teachers for whom they wanted to work and for whom they did their best work.

“Some teachers just get it. They treat us with respect, like we are people; they really care about us not just as students, but as people. You want to try harder for these teachers.” That quote from a former student at RCPS is why we must ensure all the critical relationships necessary to support excellent teaching are achieved.

We also know that excellence in teaching will be achieved only if RCPS develops a culture of shared responsibility. That means that every employee must understand that our students are our customers.

Excellence in teaching can be measured in numerous ways, but one of the most compelling measurements for RCPS will be an increase in our graduation rate, which is currently at 86% — up from 67% in 2009, the first year of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. We set a goal to achieve a 75% graduation rate by the conclusion of our Strategic Plan in 2014. Clearly, we met and exceeded that goal.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Attract and retain highly qualified, diverse teachers who want to teach in an urban environment including recruitment from historically black colleges and universities.
2. Examine the data to design and deliver a comprehensive, urban-specific professional development program.
3. Maintain and enhance the mentoring program to support new teachers.
4. Embed strong instructional coaches in Title I schools to support teachers and administrators.
5. Provide instruction tailored to our Division’s diverse students.
6. Professional development will be designed and delivered to ensure that teachers are able to effectively embed state-of-the-art technology into instruction.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #1: (cont.)
Master teaching in a diverse urban environment

SUCCESS INDICATORS

1. All schools are fully accredited every year.
2. All schools meet federal government standards every year as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
3. Increase high school on-time graduation rate by 1% annually until it meets or exceeds the on-time graduation rate for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
4. Increase student participation and success in the arts by 1% annually while reflecting the diversity of our students.
5. Increase student participation in athletics and other activities by 2% annually while reflecting the diversity of our students.
6. Raise the level of academic achievement by increasing:
   • advocacy for universal preschool;
   • the percentage of students reading on grade level by third grade;
   • mathematics proficiency for all students to maximize the opportunity to participate in Algebra I by grade 8;
   • enrollment of high school students in college-level courses with a focus on obtaining an Associates Degree and a high school diploma simultaneously;
   • the percentage of graduates with advanced diplomas and industry certifications.

CRITICAL MILESTONES

Achieving these critical milestones will involve many employees across the Division; will involve dozens of tasks and activities; will require adequate resources; and will require months, even years, to complete.

Internally these milestones will be used by management to monitor our success in completing strategic priorities and achieving our success indicators. In addition, the milestones allow our external stakeholders to monitor our progress.

1. Maintain teacher retention at 89% or above as measured annually.
2. Monitor professional development programs to ensure they support urban education.
3. Teachers and administrators in Title I schools will participate in a two-year mentoring program modeled after the New Teacher Center.
4. All teachers at Title I schools will work with embedded coaches to improve their effectiveness in an urban setting.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #2: Create an optimal urban learning environment

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
— Nelson Mandela

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF AN OPTIMAL URBAN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

• Effective principals who ensure safety, effective instruction, and a positive school culture and climate

• Adhere to all aspects of the Division’s Equity Policy

• Rigorous, relevant, data-driven curricula that challenges our diverse student population

• Daily instruction based on an effective instructional model that addresses the specific needs of a diverse student population

• Student-centered instruction, concentrating on engaging the student in the learning process (for example: teachers are teaching 7th graders mathematics, not teaching 7th grade mathematics)

• All teachers and students have access to up-to-date materials, tools, and technologies

• One-to-one technology is provided to students grades 8-12

• Athletic and other activities are encouraged and supported, and arts education will be expanded

• College and career opportunities provided for all secondary students

• Safe schools and buildings with minimal distractions where students feel safe and can focus on learning, and all security procedures are monitored and enforced.

• Clean, efficiently used, and maintained facilities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Provide a rigorous, culturally responsive PK-12 curriculum.

2. Attract and retain highly qualified administrative leaders who are committed to Roanoke City, its schools, and most of all, its students.

3. Develop a leadership “bench” from within Roanoke City Public Schools.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #2: (cont.)
Create an optimal urban learning environment

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (cont.)

4. Provide students with intentional and equitable opportunities to participate in enhanced arts, athletics, and other activities.

5. In accordance with the Equity Policy, the Division will maintain equity in staffing, facilities, and materials.

6. Promote a positive school climate where students, staff, and parents feel safe, supported, and respected.

7. Reduce campus and classroom disruptions to maximize the use of instructional time.

8. All secondary students will have college and career opportunities and training.

9. Develop and strengthen our relationships with families and guardians.

10. Lead and manage based on our “Core Beliefs” (for example: all students are capable of meeting high expectations, diversity is a strength to be leveraged).

11. Secure adequate funding and allocate financial resources equitably throughout the Division.

12. Ensure that all facilities and grounds are safe, ADA compliant, and well maintained.


SUCCESS INDICATORS

1. All schools are fully accredited every year.

2. All schools meet federal government standards as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

3. On-time graduation rate will increase 1% annually until it meets or exceeds the on-time graduation rate of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

4. Student participation and success in the arts will increase 1% annually while reflecting the diversity of our students.

5. Student participation in athletics and other activities will increase 2% annually while reflecting the diversity of our students.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #2: (cont.)
Create an optimal urban learning environment

SUCCESS INDICATORS (cont.)

6. Raise the level of academic achievement by increasing:
   • advocacy for universal preschool;
   • the percentage of students reading on grade level by third grade;
   • mathematics proficiency for all students to maximize the opportunity to participate in Algebra I by grade 8;
   • enrollment of high school students in college-level courses with a focus on obtaining an Associates Degree and a high school diploma simultaneously;
   • the percentage of graduates with advanced diplomas and industry certifications.

7. The Capital Improvement Plan will set the direction for facilities that support learning and safety.

8. The Facilities Department will create and maintain facilities that support learning and safety.

9. Reduce campus and classroom disruptions as evidenced by a 5% reduction in discipline incidents reported in the Discipline, Crime, and Violence Annual Report.

10. Improve stakeholder perceptions of safety and school climate as measured by the state and local school climate survey.

CRITICAL MILESTONES

Achieving these critical milestones will involve many employees across the Division; will involve dozens of tasks and activities; will require adequate resources; and will require months, even years, to complete.

Internally, these milestones will be used by management to monitor our success in completing strategic priorities and achieving our success indicators. In addition, the milestones allow our external stakeholders to monitor our progress.

1. Review curriculum and instructional practices annually to ensure rigor and fidelity of alignment between Virginia’s Standards of Learning, curriculum, and instruction.

2. All PK-12 curriculum and instruction will be culturally responsive and address the unique needs of English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and other at-risk groups.

3. Train a cadre of administrators and provide appropriate professional development opportunities geared towards leading in an urban division.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #2: (cont.)
Create an optimal urban learning environment

CRITICAL MILESTONES (cont.)

4. Develop procedures and guidelines that focus on reducing suspensions and law enforcement referrals, and promote alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices (for example: progressive discipline, suspension criteria, restorative practices).

5. Develop a system of early identification and supports to address behavioral, health, and social-emotional needs.

6. Collaborate with the Roanoke City Police Department, Sheriff’s Department, fire and emergency medical services, Department of Social Services, and mental health agencies to improve student and staff safety and well-being.

7. Increase student participation in the arts by 1% and in athletics and other activities by 2%. These data will be disaggregated by sub-group.

8. Monitor and report annually on compliance with the School Board Equity Policy.

9. Show annual improvements and increased participation in school climate surveys administered to parents, guardians, teachers and students.

10. Identify and secure an increased number of competitive grants to support the Division’s mission.

11. Use annual financial and budgeting formulas to equitably allocate financial resources across all schools.

12. Ensure that the Capital Improvement Plan reflects the environmental needs of RCPS students; progress on the Capital Improvement Plan is reported annually to the Board.

13. Increase efforts to secure universal preschool for all four year-olds in the Division.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #3:
Develop a high-performing organization

“An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success.”

— Stephen R. Covey

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Integrate evidence-based policies, practices, and expectations.
2. Focus on leadership capacity.
3. Communicate the Strategic Plan to all stakeholders to ensure the plan is successfully executed.
4. Create structures where “knowledge sharing” occurs throughout the Division.
5. Elevate internal and external strategic communication practices.
6. Continue to produce Balanced and Equity Scorecards and report the contents annually.
7. Share fiscal responsibility and stewardship and promote by all RCPS leaders.
8. Advocate for adequate funding for public education by the Commonwealth of Virginia – an investment in our children.
9. Continue the commitment to RCPS competitive employee compensation.
10. Advocate for universal preschool.

Characteristics of a High-Performing Organization

- Efforts revolve around a roadmap outlining where we are going and how we intend to get there.
- Goals are met, on time.
- Engaged, energized, motivated employees.
- Organization-wide agility.
- Excellent systems, processes, and operations.
- Dynamic synergies.
- Change is embraced, and success celebrated.
- Employees treat one another as internal customers.
- Willing to change and change again in order to achieve the vision.

— Author Unknown
SUCCESS INDICATORS

1. The measure of success of our indicators will be reported annually in the Balanced and Equity Scorecards.

2. Lobby the Commonwealth of Virginia to increase the public school expenditures greater than the 2008 amount — an investment in our children.

3. 85% of RCPS personnel (principals, teachers, professional and administrative staff) are evaluated as proficient on the Division’s evaluation instruments.

4. Annual climate and culture surveys will be conducted.

5. External stakeholders are made aware of and understand critical RCPS messages.

6. All salaries are competitive in comparison to divisions with similar characteristics and private employers, as applicable.

7. Benefits, including medical and dental insurance, are strategically positioned to offer employees excellent choices at the lowest possible cost to the employee.

8. Funding availability and responsible spending eliminate the Division’s reliance on fund balance to meet basic operating needs.

Characteristics of Strategic Communications

- Timing is everything.
- Consider all forms of social media.
- Communicate with intent.
- Communicate as a Division; not as an individual, school, or operational area.
- Always start with the “big picture”.
- Those who need to know it first, hear it first.
- Provide consistent, coordinated messages.
- Be responsive and agile with our communications.
- The purpose/outcome of the message is strategically determined prior to framing the message (always asking what we want the reader/listener to believe, feel, think, and/or do).
- Critical messages are framed and are consistently presented and incorporated into all communications and messaging.
CRITICAL MILESTONES

Achieving these critical milestones will involve many employees across the Division; will involve dozens of tasks and activities; will require adequate resources; and will require months, even years, to complete.

Internally these milestones will be used by management to monitor our success in completing strategic priorities and achieving our success indicators. In addition, the milestones allow our external stakeholders to monitor our progress.

1. Review all policies, procedures, and practices to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan.
2. All hiring and evaluation practices will be directed toward ensuring effective, quality staff.
3. All coaching models will be evaluated to determine if student performance is improved.
4. Survey similar divisions or private employers, as applicable, to ensure that RCPS’ salaries are competitive.
5. Monitor medical and dental plans annually to ensure that they meet or exceed the offerings of surrounding school divisions.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #4:
Collaborate with the City, businesses, community and faith-based organizations to provide a better-prepared student

“The problem is not who we serve, but how they are served.” — Pedro Noguera

Local employers, non-profits, city government, and faith-based organizations all have a vested interest in the success of our students. As has been said many times, as goes our schools, goes our City. RCPS believes this is indeed the case and consequently views its relationships and partnerships with the City’s various organizations and businesses from a strategic perspective.

We recognize and value the important role of businesses, organizations, and city government as we educate the City’s next generation of employees, managers, and entrepreneurs who will help to drive our local economy.

RCPS recognizes that it must understand and be responsive to the needs of businesses and our community in order to maximize our relationships. To that end, RCPS will continue to work with Virginia Western Community College so that as many of our students as possible have an opportunity to attend college; we will continue to work with our businesses to find ways to “give” as well as to “get.” We know we must be an active partner in creating a skilled workforce for the Roanoke Valley. Our desire is to create a mutually beneficial partnership where reciprocity is the norm, not the exception.

We are committed to strengthening our relationships with all of our constituents. The programs provided by our faith-based organizations and the partnerships they have formed with our schools epitomize the best in grassroots initiatives. We must find ways to better embrace the partnerships that continue to be so helpful to our students. We are especially grateful for our collaboration with the City of Roanoke and it’s public library system, United Way, Congregations in Action, and professors with the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute Drs. Craig and Sharon Ramey.

We are committed to responding to the input from our businesses, our non-profits, our colleges, our public sector officials, and our faith-based organizations. In short we were told:

1) make it simple to work with the Division
2) be specific about what you want
3) tell us why it is important and how it will help our students learn
4) be responsive and accessible
5) tell us how you are going to measure success
6) advise us of the outcomes

Not once did any individual we met with refer to what is in it for them, their business, their goals, their bottom line. The strategic priorities that follow were designed to address this very fair, straightforward list.

If we do this right, our students will benefit, our teachers will benefit, our businesses will benefit, our City will benefit.

We are going to get it right.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #4: (cont.)
Collaborate with the City, businesses, community and faith-based organizations to provide a better-prepared student

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Earn and maintain public respect.

2. Continue to update the database of the Valley’s businesses and community, civic, and faith-based organizations.

3. Be responsive to business and community organization needs.

4. Continue to pursue collaborations that simultaneously address critical RCPS needs and provide a direct or indirect benefit to participating businesses and community, civic, and faith-based organizations.

5. The Community Relations Department will continue to explore ways to expand communication with all of our stakeholders. They include:
   - Our rapid notification system sends automated phone messages to staff and parents
   - RCPS website
   - Social Media- Facebook and Twitter
   - Annually published Parent Handbook

Additionally, the department will continue to strengthen its partnerships with businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations to assist teachers and students of RCPS.

6. Strengthen joint partnerships with the Roanoke City Police Department, Sheriff’s Department, fire and emergency medical services, Department of Social Services, and mental health agencies to continue to improve safety.

7. Establish more links between the RCPS Strategic Plan and other organizations’ strategic plans.

8. Explore ways to engage in joint services between RCPS and Roanoke City (Joint Services Committee).

9. Acknowledge the contributions of businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations on an annual basis.

10. Identify and cultivate collaborative opportunities with businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations within each school neighborhood.

RCPS COLLABORATIVE POSSIBILITIES

- Chair critical RCPS undertakings
- Targeted financial support
- In-kind services
- Internships
- Materials
- Mentorships
- Provide public support for RCPS initiatives and needs
- Service learning opportunities
- Student scholarships
- Provide RCPS support for community initiatives
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA #4: (cont.)
Collaborate with the City, businesses, community
and faith-based organizations to provide a better-prepared student

SUCCESS INDICATORS

1. The Division will be transparent in all of its operations.

2. The community organization database will be maintained and updated.

3. Continue to identify and increase the number of businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations that want to partner with RCPS to help achieve its goals.

4. Groups, organizations, and individuals view collaborations with RCPS positively and believe there are substantive outcomes as a result.

5. Collaborators feel vested in the Division’s success and can point to concrete ways they are contributing to that success.

6. Community organizations include support of RCPS in their strategic plans.

7. Something new emerges that benefits the community and would not have happened without collaborations.

8. Develop liaisons with particular emphasis on Carilion Clinic and the health department to improve health care access, focusing on the Southeast Roanoke area.

CRITICAL MILESTONES

Achieving these critical milestones will involve many employees across the Division; will involve dozens of tasks and activities; will require adequate resources; and will require months, even years, to complete.

Internally these milestones will be used by management to monitor our success in completing strategic priorities and achieving our success indicators. In addition, the milestones allow our external stakeholders to monitor our progress.

1. Design a survey for community partners.

2. Use survey results as a means to identify areas to strengthen and grow partnerships with businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations.

3. Partner with Virginia Western Community College to increase the success of students in the Community College Access Program and dual enrollment courses.

4. Enhance mentorship opportunities for RCPS students through partnerships with businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and faith-based organizations.
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

RCPS is committed to becoming a model for urban public education. Given that, the Division Superintendent believed it was critical to implement a professional strategic planning process grounded in “best practices”.

This meant the first step of the strategic planning process centered on listening. Listening to students. Listening to parents. Listening to teachers. Listening to administrators. Listening to education professionals. Listening to Roanoke businesses. Listening to faith-based organizations. Listening to the Roanoke community.

By definition, public education serves a wide array of stakeholders. The perceptions and opinions of these stakeholders are important, and RCPS wanted to begin the strategic planning process by listening to these individuals, asking for their input in key areas, but also asking them what they believe is most important as the Division proceeds with identifying and tackling its key priorities for the next five years.

The following is a brief overview of the process used to develop the Division’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

1. A review of the Division’s most recent Strategic Plan was conducted so the new Plan would ensure the appropriate consistency. Additionally the five key priorities of the School Board as listed here were reviewed, discussed and incorporated.
   - Achieve full state accreditation and meet federal government standards
   - Ensure the safest schools for our students and staff
   - Attract, train, and train best staff for our urban Division
   - Ensure efficient use, maintenance, and improvement of the Division’s facilities and infrastructure
   - Enhance arts, athletics, and other activities

2. Three focus groups were conducted, with great attention paid to casting a wide net in capturing varied perspectives. Attendees of these groups included: parents; students; teachers; various community, church, and business leaders; principals; Division support staff; those who design curriculum; and Division Executive Staff. School Board members were also individually interviewed. The focus groups were very insightful and their input was the cornerstone of the process as they set the stage for the strategic planning discussions that followed.

3. A series of strategic planning conversations were conducted with the Executive Staff. The outcomes of these discussions were then taken by a smaller writing team and developed into the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan includes:
   - A reaffirmation of the Division’s mission statement
   - A reaffirmation of the Division’s vision
   - A reaffirmation of the core beliefs
   - A continuing focus on four overarching strategic areas on which the Division is going to focus over the next five years, called Strategic Focus Areas
   - Key Strategic Priorities for each of those strategic focus areas, along with Success Indicators to serve as performance measurements.
   - Critical Milestones that function to manage the process and ensure it is kept on track
4. The draft Strategic Plan was shared with numerous stakeholders to solicit their final comments.

5. The draft Strategic Plan was presented and discussed with the School Board at their January 12, 2016 work session.

The School Board and Superintendent are committed to resourcing this Strategic Plan, and leading and managing by it. Every employee of the Division will receive a copy of it. Additionally, Division staff will routinely meet to discuss progress in accomplishing the Strategic Priorities and achieving the Indicators of Success. It is the Division’s belief that the strength of its educational system is critical to the future of our community and can in fact propel the community forward in a positive, sustainable way.

The Division is also committed to sharing this plan, engaging with students, parents, and its many stakeholders. An easy to read summary version of the Strategic Plan will be widely distributed, and the Division will be providing periodic updates via regular newsletters, PTA meetings, School Board meetings, and a variety of other methods.

Becoming a model for urban public education will only happen if there is a true appreciation of the Division and its challenges, and strong collaboration throughout the community. This Strategic Plan is an important step towards developing that understanding and deepening those collaborations, and RCPS is committed to following the pathway set forth here.
STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

Staff
Eric Anderson, Principal, Forest Park Academy
Carolyn Day, Teacher, Virginia Heights Elementary School
Tom Fitzpatrick, Science Supervisor
Archie Freeman, Principal, William Fleming High School
Cari Gates, Fine Arts Supervisor
Stephanie Hudgins, Teacher, Round Hill Elementary School
Joe Jablonski, Principal, Patrick Henry High School
Robert Johnson, Principal, Lucy Addison Middle School
Whitney Johnson, Principal, James Madison Middle School
Susan Jordan, Teacher, Crystal Spring Elementary School
Megan Potter, Teacher, James Madison Middle School
Penny Stevens, Teacher, William Fleming High School
Teresa Sutherland, Teacher, Fairview Elementary School
Debbie Wickham, Mathematics Supervisor
Dana Witt, Teacher, Fishburn Park Elementary School

Parent and Student
April Alexander, Parent, Garden City Elementary School
Pamela Blankenship, Parent, Monterey Elementary School
Ronnie Blankenship, Parent, Monterey Elementary School
Meggan Derey, Parent, Fishburn Park Elementary School
Mia Gibson, Student, James Madison Middle School
Michelle Gibson, Parent, James Madison Middle School
Carmen Gonzalez, Parent, Fallon Park Elementary School
Jackie Grant, Parent, Virginia Heights Elementary School
Heather Gunn, Parent, Lincoln Terrace Elementary School
Jennifer Jamison, Parent, Crystal Spring Elementary School
Mary Beth Nash, Parent, Grandin Court Elementary School
Angela Penn, Parent, Lucy Addison Middle School
Courtney Penn, Parent, Lucy Addison Middle School
Grace Penn, Student Lucy Addison Middle School
Dave Perry, Parent, Highland Park Elementary School
Emma Pillis, Student, Patrick Henry High School
Karen Pillis, Parent, Patrick Henry High School
Jasmin Venable, Parent, Preston Park Elementary School
Tiffany Wade, Parent, Round Hill Elementary School
Joyce Watkins, Parent, William Fleming High School
Amy Jo Wheeler, Parent, Woodrow Wilson Middle School
Kendryek Wheeler, Student Woodrow Wilson Middle School
Community and Business Leaders
John (Jack) Avis, Avis Construction Company
David Crane, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra
Abby Verdillo, Community Impact at United Way of Roanoke Valley
Aaron Dykstra, Six-Eleven Bicycle Co.
Brooke Ferguson, Virginia Western Community College
Peter Lewis, Apple Ridge Farm
Chris Morrill, City of Roanoke
Cyrus Pace, The Jefferson Center
Charles Price, Harrison Museum of African American Culture
Sam Rasoul, 11th District, Virginia House of Delegates
Joyce Waugh, Roanoke Regional Chamber
Lee Wilhelm, McNeil Roofing, Inc.
Sarah Jones, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra
Michelle Dykstra, City Market Building
Glossary

**ESSA:**
Adequate yearly progress defined by the federal government standards outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**Balanced Scorecard:**
The Balanced Scorecard strategic measurement system was introduced in a 1992 *Harvard Business Review* article written by Robert S. Kaplan (a Harvard Business School Professor) and David P. Norton (a Principal with Nolan, Norton & Company, a consulting firm). The idea was to give senior managers a “balanced” look at their organization from multiple perspectives. Said Kaplan and Norton:

> Traditional performance measurement systems specify the particular actions they want employees to take and then measure to see whether the employees have in fact taken those actions. In that way, the systems try to control behavior.

> The Balanced Scorecard puts strategy and vision, not control, at the center. The measures are designed to pull people toward the overall vision. The Balanced Scorecard helps managers understand, at least implicitly, many inter-relationships … and ultimately leads to improved decision making and problem solving.

After many years of successful implementation in the private sector, there is growing interest in adapting and applying the Balanced Scorecard methodology in public education. Pursuant to the request of the School Board, the Administration is developing a Balanced Scorecard for RCPS, closely linked with this Strategic Plan and built around four content areas:

- Student Success
- Stakeholder Involvement
- Learning Organization
- Operations Excellence

These four “perspectives” are supplemented by a demographic overview of our student population. Central to the success of any Balanced Scorecard is the avoidance of “information overload.” Only a few critical and “timeless” measures can be used.

**Community College Access Program (CCAP):**
A new program beginning in Fall 2009 that enables RCPS students to attend Virginia Western Community College free of charge for two years if they meet income and high school grade point average (2.0) guidelines.
**Milestone:**
From a project management perspective, a milestone represents a significant point in a project or endeavor, usually completion of a major initiative, undertaking or deliverable.

In the case of our Strategic Plan, milestones are used as checkpoints to validate how progress is proceeding in executing our strategic priorities, which are critical to meeting our success indicators.

Milestones provide high-level snapshots for management to determine progress made on critical initiatives.

**New Teacher Center, University of California at Santa Cruz:**
A nationally recognized, research-based program designed to mentor, train, and retain new teachers.

**Overage Academy:**
Located at Forest Park School, this program is designed to meet the needs of overage and under-credited middle and high school students. The key thrust of this program is to improve the graduation rate.

**RCPS:**
Roanoke City Public Schools

**SOL:**
Commonwealth of Virginia’s Standards of Learning

**Strategic Focus Area:**
A Strategic Focus Area (SFA) is an over-arching area on which RCPS plans to focus. It could be accomplished within the Strategic Plan’s 5-year timeframe or it may require more time to fully complete.

**Strategic Priority:**
A strategic priority further defines and fine-tunes exactly what issue, area or initiative will be addressed as part of the Strategic Focus Area. There are usually several strategic priorities for each Strategic Focus Area.

The strategic priorities clarify what RCPS is focusing on; what its priorities are; identify problems that need solved; determine resource allocation; and connote an outcome.

All strategic priorities must be accomplished within the Plan’s five-year timeframe.
**Success Indicator:**
Success Indicators are the Strategic Plan’s performance measurement. These are what ensure accountability for execution of the Strategic Plan.

- They should be as specific as possible.
- They determine how high the bar is raised.
- They can be either quantitative or qualitative.
- They indicate the context and intention of the strategic focus areas and related strategic priorities.
- They focus on the achievement of results versus the completion of activities; or outcomes vs. outputs.

**Title I School:**
Title I, Part A provides financial assistance through state educational agencies to school divisions and public schools with high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and achievement standards.