



ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST

RICHMOND, VA.

Community Snapshot

Richmond, Virginia's capital, has been home to several prominent Americans and played a crucial role in our nation's history. In the mid-20th century, however, more than 50,000 residents left the city because of school desegregation. Virginia's independent city statute prevents cities from legally being part of their surrounding counties, so the problems of poverty, an insufficient tax base and educational stressors experienced by urban areas throughout the country are magnified in Richmond. Despite these challenges, Richmond is experiencing positive change. The 2010 census showed that the city's population is on the upswing and becoming more diverse. Richmond is regularly included in "best places" lists as being a great city to live, work and visit.

Community Solutions Action Plan

To help break the cycle of poverty and segregation that have divided and isolated city families for decades, Richmond Public Schools have come up with the following strategies to strengthen student achievement:

- Expand, strengthen and better coordinate strategies that support school readiness, including evidence-based home visitation and parenting education programs
- Strengthen existing practices and import and introduce best practices from elsewhere to help key organizations better understand and address the causative factors of chronic absenteeism
- Strengthen and expand evaluation and communication activities that publicize summer learning loss and introduce efforts to maximize program participation and effectiveness
- Deepen coordination among partners to institutionalize our city-wide commitment to grade-level reading and systematize methodology and outcomes

Partnerships

The ambitious plan to ensure that more Richmond children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade was submitted by a steering committee composed of representatives from United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg, Smart Beginnings, Greater Richmond Youth Development, Richmond Public Schools, the Richmond Public Library and the Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 204,214 residents
- 23,000 students
- 72 percent of children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals
- 39 percent of fourth-grade students are reading at grade level (National Assessment of Educational Progress)
- 70.5 percent graduation rate
- 81 percent of students ready for kindergarten
- 93 percent daily attendance
- Summer programming available

GOALS (BY 2020)

- Nurture a culture of attendance that is embraced by parents and students
- Have summer learning opportunities strategically placed throughout the city
- Increase school preparedness to 95 percent
- Increase grade-level reading in grades 1-3 to 95 percent

"We welcome the challenge of including educational achievement for our children in the list of Richmond's 21st century achievements."