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Subject: RPS Direct – Monday, September 2, 2019  
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To: rcatrow@gmail.com



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**Monday, September 2, 2019**

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Dear RPS Family,

Happy Labor Day! I'm SO excited for tomorrow. It's going to be a fabulous year for Richmond Public Schools and I can't wait to get started!

To kick things off, we've refreshed the look of RPS Direct. Help us spread the word about RPS by forwarding this email to five friends right now and ask them to subscribe [here](#). Thank you!

You may have noticed that we've also refreshed our [website](#). One of our goals this year is to enhance our communications, particularly at the school level. Towards that end, over the next several weeks, you'll start to see more school-specific information on your local school's homepage.

Before I dive in, I just want to share how appreciative I'm feeling today. RPS is such a special school division, and I feel enormous gratitude for the opportunity to serve here. I'm

also incredibly humbled by our principals, teachers, and support staff, as well as by the larger Richmond community, which has wrapped its hands around us with donations, volunteering, and more. On behalf of RPS, thank you, thank you, thank you!

## RPS Inspiration

I have some absolutely fabulous academic news to share regarding our students' Advanced Placement (AP) scores from last year. First, some context. One of the equity commitments I made in my 100-day entry plan was to launch AP for All, an initiative to broaden access to Advanced Placement offerings at our comprehensive high schools. As I've often said, we can't expect greatness of our students if we don't ask greatness of them. As a result of this effort – which is still growing – we saw big gains on a variety of key metrics:

- Number of students taking AP courses: up 25%!
- Number of AP exams taken: up 37%!
- Number of AP exams with qualifying scores (3, 4, or 5): up 42%!
- Number of AP exams with top two scores (4 or 5): up 63%!

The largest increases in qualifying scores were for Calculus AB, English Literature, Human Geography, Spanish Language, Statistics, US Government, and US History. In addition to the myriad academic benefits associated with taking an AP course, students who earn qualifying scores are eligible to receive college credit.

I cannot overstate how exciting this is, as AP is a nationally recognized standard of excellence. Of course, we need to keep pushing to make sure ALL of our students participate in this type of rigorous coursework. But it's undeniable that we're making progress!

## A Head Start in High School

Research consistently shows that AP students are better prepared for college than students who don't take AP. They're more likely to enroll and stay in college, do well in their classes, and graduate in four years. Taking AP can help you:



### Get a Taste of College

Get familiar with college-level work—and boost your confidence by tackling it.



### Develop College Skills

Time management, critical thinking, scholarly writing—AP courses help you hone the skills you'll need in college and career.



### Discover Your Passion

Studying a subject in depth could give you new insights and even put you on the path to a career.

## Today's Topics

**RPS Shines 2019** – Thank you, Richmond! Over 50 organizations and more than 1,300 volunteers helped beautify our schools this summer by painting, planting, organizing, cleaning, and more. We couldn't be more grateful to everyone who pitched in!



**RPS** Shines

See below for a list of our 2019 partners. If I missed anyone, please let me know and I'll

include you in next week's RPS Direct.

- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Altria
- Atlantic Union Bank
- Blue Sky Fund
- Bon Secours
- Building a Better RPS
- Capital One
- CarMax
- Cary Elementary PTA
- Chapel RVA
- Children's Museum of Richmond
- Christ Church Episcopal
- Chuck Scott's Foundation
- Church Hill Rotary Club
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Community Foundation for a greater Richmond
- Dominion
- DSV Solutions
- East End Rotary Club
- Embrace Carver Foundation
- ExCELL
- Fairfield Middle School (Henrico County Public Schools)
- Genworth
- Greater Richmond Fit4Kids
- Hamilton Glass
- Hands On Greater Richmond
- Hunton Baptist Church
- Junior League of Richmond
- Kiwanis Club of Richmond
- Life Church
- Literacy Lab
- Mary Munford PTA B&G Committee
- Nordstrom
- Richmond Bar Association

- Richmond Community ToolBank
- River City Rotary Club
- Robins Foundation
- RPS Talent Office
- Sanctuary RIC
- Special Olympics Virginia
- Sports Backers
- STAY RVA
- SunTrust
- United Church
- United Way of Greater Richmond
- VCU College of Engineering
- VCU Ram Camp
- Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
- WAVE Church
- Yard Works
- YMCA of Greater Richmond

One of the highlights of this year's RPS Shines was the extraordinary mural work done by local artist [Hamilton Glass](#), in collaboration with community volunteers. Here are a couple of examples from Obama ES and Miles Jones ES.

# Home of the Stars





**Staffing** – As of today, we have 14 teacher vacancies remaining (of roughly 2,000 total teacher positions). For reference, two years ago, RPS opened with 54 vacancies, and last year, we opened with 18. Of course, we're continuing to work towards zero vacancies – and we'll have substitutes to make sure every classroom is staffed. But I'd like to shout out the Talent Office, as well as our principals and principal directors, for continuing to make progress in this critical area!

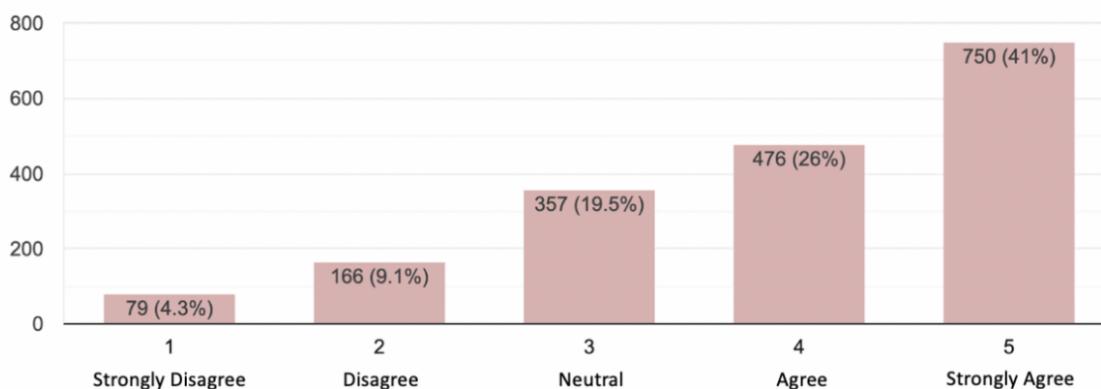
Level	Total Teacher Vacancies for SY19-20	# Filled	% Filled
Elementary	224	219	98%
Middle	123	116	94%
High	81	79	98%
All Schools	428	414	97%

**Summer Teacher Training ("Pre-Service")** – We had a busy week of professional learning for our teachers and other educators last week, with a focus on enhancing reading instruction and expanding the pilot of a new math curriculum (last year's pilot schools saw DOUBLE the gains of non-pilot schools). I'll be the first to admit that we still have work to do to iron out some of the logistics of these trainings. We owe that to our teachers. Still, initial data from our educators was encouraging – especially after we worked through some of the logistical challenges from Day 1.

### Day 1

**Overall, today was an effective use of time in building my capacity as a teacher.**

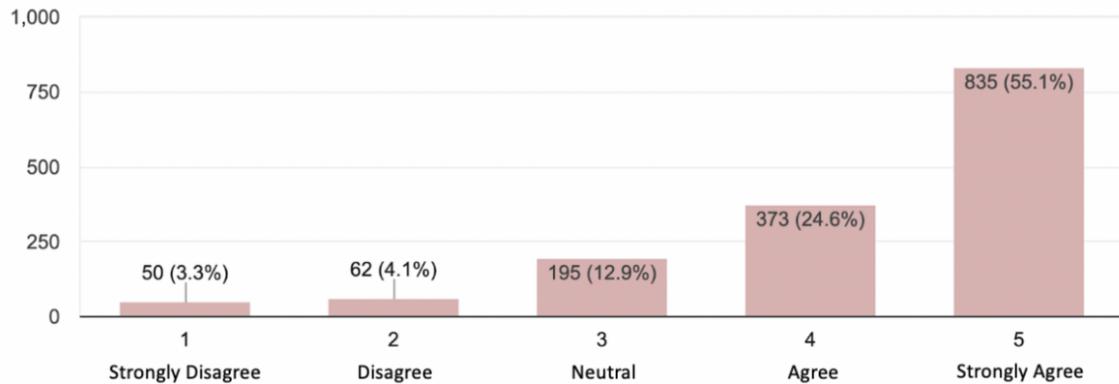
1,828 responses



### Day 2

Overall, today was an effective use of time in building my capacity as a teacher.

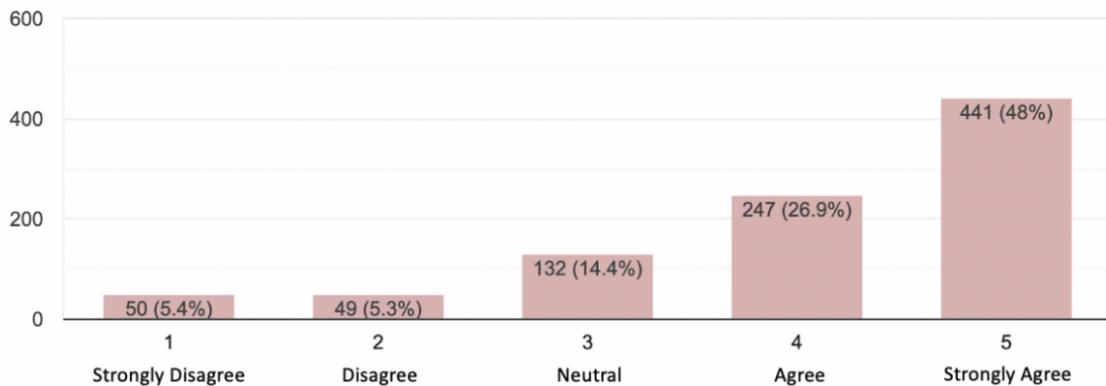
1,515 responses



### Day 3

Overall, today was an effective use of time in building my capacity as a teacher.

919 responses



**Summer Facilities Projects** – Over the summer, our facilities team has been hard at work on major projects all across the division to make sure our students have a healthier and more comfortable learning environment when they return tomorrow. We still have lots more to do over the next several years, but we're beginning to make significant progress. Here are a few examples: new HVAC system at Henderson MS (left), new boiler and roof

at Summer Hill PS (middle), and HVAC improvements at RTC (right) that will save us \$210K per year in equipment rental costs. I've also included the full list of projects below the pictures. Of note, as of now, we're under budget!



October 2018 Approved CIP Projects (Funded with FY19 Dollars)						
Location	Project	October 2018 Projected Cost	Updated Cost	Variance	Status	Target Completion Date
Binford	Windows	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$ -	Not Started	12/31/19
Blackwell Annex	Chiller	\$220,000	\$220,000	\$ -	Completed	8/30/19
Blackwell Elementary	Boiler	\$160,000	\$101,656	\$58,344	Completed	8/28/19
Boushall	HVAC	\$80,000	\$28,005	\$51,995	Completed	12/31/18
Brown	HVAC	\$80,000	\$10,757	\$69,243	Completed	12/31/18
Carver	Roof	\$400,000	\$235,000	\$165,000	Completed	7/10/19
Carver	Boiler	\$265,000	\$174,430	\$90,570	In Progress	10/15/19
Cary	Water Pumps	\$60,000	\$41,200	\$18,800	Completed	8/15/19
Cary	Roof		\$785,040	(\$785,040)	Completed	8/30/19
Chimborazo	Boiler	\$200,000	\$184,690	\$15,310	In Progress	9/30/19
Chimborazo	Roof	\$250,000	\$255,000	(\$5,000)	Completed	8/30/19
Community	Chiller	\$650,000	\$794,520	(\$144,520)	Completed	8/30/19
Fairfield Court	Roof	\$280,000	\$277,000	\$3,000	Completed	4/8/19
Fisher	Chiller	\$170,000	\$164,615	\$5,385	Completed	12/31/18
Fox	Roof	\$350,000	\$290,000	\$60,000	Completed	8/30/19
Francis	Boiler	\$150,000	\$63,688	\$86,312	In Progress	9/6/19
Franklin Military	Water Pumps	\$115,000	\$95,905	\$19,095	Completed	8/30/19
Franklin Military	Boiler	\$180,000	\$169,259	\$10,741	In Progress	10/15/19
Ginter Park	Chiller	\$190,000	\$155,115	\$34,885	Completed	4/5/19
Ginter Park	Water Pipes	\$180,000	\$48,687	\$131,313	Completed	8/16/19

Henderson	Heating Pumps	\$135,000	\$74,245	\$60,755	Completed	8/15/19
Henderson	Chiller	\$800,000			Completed	8/15/19
Henderson	HVAC	\$800,000	\$1,168,910	\$611,090	Completed	8/15/19
Henderson	Heating Pumps	\$180,000			Completed	8/15/19
JB Fisher	Roof	\$300,000	\$455,000	(\$155,000)	Completed	8/30/19
John Marshall	Structure	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$ -	Not Started	TBD
Open	Boiler	\$100,000			In Progress	8/30/19
Open	Air Conditioning	\$20,000	\$83,519	\$36,481	Completed	8/30/19
Reid	Chiller	\$170,000	\$164,615	\$5,385	Completed	9/30/18
RAS	Boiler	\$220,000			Completed	8/30/19
RAS	HVAC	\$100,000	\$90,690	\$229,310	Completed	8/30/19
RTC	HVAC	\$850,000	\$647,300	\$202,700	Completed	8/15/19
Summer Hill	Roof	\$200,000	\$199,753	\$247	Completed	8/15/19
Summer Hill	HVAC	\$625,000	\$411,606	\$213,394	Completed	8/30/19
Swansboro	Boiler	\$220,000			In Progress	9/30/19
Swansboro	HVAC	\$180,000	\$153,633	\$246,367	In Progress	9/30/19
Westover	Air Conditioning	\$70,000	\$164,980	(\$94,980)	In Progress	9/15/19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$10,150,000</b>	<b>\$8,908,818</b>	<b>\$1,241,182</b>		

**School Lunch Pilot** – Over the summer, we also launched a pilot in partnership with an organization called [Brigaid](#) to begin "scratch cooking" in three schools: Armstrong, Blackwell, and Boushall. Our nutrition staff at these schools are receiving training and new equipment, as necessary, to begin preparing more nutritious and more flavorful meals from scratch. If all goes well, we hope to expand the pilot to the entire division. This year, we're also eliminating styrofoam lunch trays and replacing them with recyclable paper ones!



**Warehouse Clean-up** – Am I really talking about the warehouse? Yup! See below for the before and after pictures to understand why. As a result of the clean-up, we were able to sell old textbooks back to publishers to raise funds, get critical instructional supplies and furniture out to schools, and actually catalogue what we have. If we're going to reach our

ambitious goals, we have to get the basics right – and that means having a functioning warehouse that works for our schools.



Before I sign off, I want to wish every RPS student, family member, staff member, and community partner a wonderful 2019-20 school year, filled with learning and love!

[#LeadWithLove](#)

[#TeachWithLove](#)

[#ServeWithLove](#)

With the deepest appreciation,  
Jason

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**RPS** RICHMOND  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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