

Reducing High School Dropouts at RPS



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Disclaimer

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency.

Honor

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.



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Glossary & Acronyms

RPS: Richmond Public Schools

Dreams4RPS: RPS 5-year Strategic Plan

Newcomer: Recently arrived student in the United States

EL: English Learner

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

ESSA: Every Students Succeeds Act

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning

OST: Out-of-school-time

PLC: Professional Learning Community

Local Composite Index: Determines a school division's ability to pay education costs

Dropout Rate: The number of dropouts divided by the number of students who were enrolled the year before

Graduation Rate: The number of students graduating divided by the number of students enrolled in that cohort

Executive Summary

The number of high school dropouts is too high among students in Richmond Public Schools (RPS). Almost 25% of the 497 current RPS dropouts are from 9th and 10th grade. The first two years of high school are challenging for students as they learn to handle the increased academic demands and new social pressures. The transition from middle school to high school is a pivotal intervention point for RPS to help students avoid the decision to drop out. The following analysis assesses four policy options for RPS to consider for easing the transition into high school:

1. Maintain Current Programming with the Newcomer Academy
2. Improve Counselor Effectiveness Through Professional Development
3. Improve Teacher Effectiveness Through SEL and ESL Professional Development
4. Create a School-Based Transition Program

These options were assessed on the criteria of cost effectiveness, political feasibility, equity, sustainability, and transparency. Using these criteria, **this analysis recommends option 2 to improve counselor effectiveness through professional development**. This alternative is the most cost-effective and requires the lowest amount of staff involvement which helps ensure a sustainable and politically feasible policy. This analysis estimates that over the course of 11 years, this program would prevent 164 students from dropping out at a cost of around \$750 per student.

The implementation of counselor professional development will follow five main steps. These steps are: build support, propose a new budget, approve the budget, train coaches, and market and monitor. The growing national conversation around increasing mental health resources for students should help build support to push this option through each of these steps. Superintendent Kamras will be a critical stakeholder to help champion this option and has shown previous support for similar proposals. This option also fits within the graduation improvement goals outlined in the five-year plan, Dreams4RPS.



Problem Statement

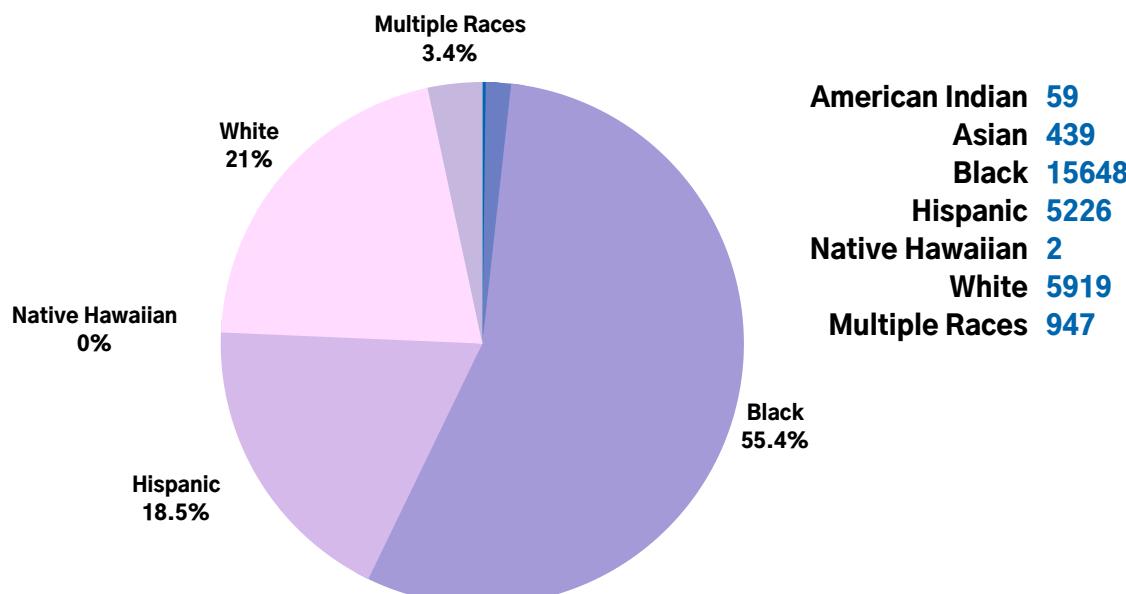
The number of high school dropouts is too high among students in RPS. The RPS high school class of 2024 and 2025 have 128 students classified as dropouts out of the 497 total dropouts. This means almost 25% of the current dropouts within RPS occur in their first two years of high school. Virginia dropout data is calculated by following each cohort which can hide the importance of helping these students early in their high school journey. The first two years are formative for high school students to handle increased academic demands and new social pressures that can ultimately lead to a decision to drop out from school at any point in their academic career.

RPS School District Profile

RPS is an urban school district that serves over 22,000 students from preschool to 12th grade (*About RPS - Richmond Public Schools, n.d.*). The student population is 55% Black, 18% Hispanic, 21% white, 1% Asian, and 2% two or more races (See Figure 1). 78% of RPS students were considered economically disadvantaged in 2016. This is more than twice the district neighbor average of 32%. RPS also has higher shares of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

The school district is composed of 5 preschool centers, 25 elementary schools, 7 middle schools, 5 high schools, and 3 specialty schools. The middle schools in RPS encompass grades 6-8. The specialty schools require students to apply to high school programs that offer a variety of career and college preparation opportunities in a smaller school setting. In 2018-2019, there were 1,541 teachers for a student to teacher ratio of around 16:1 (*Richmond City School District, 2021*). These teachers receive an average salary of \$60,355 which is a little less than the national teacher salary average of \$64,524 (*Public School Teacher Salary in Richmond, VA, 2021*).

Figure 1: RPS School District Demographics (2020-21)

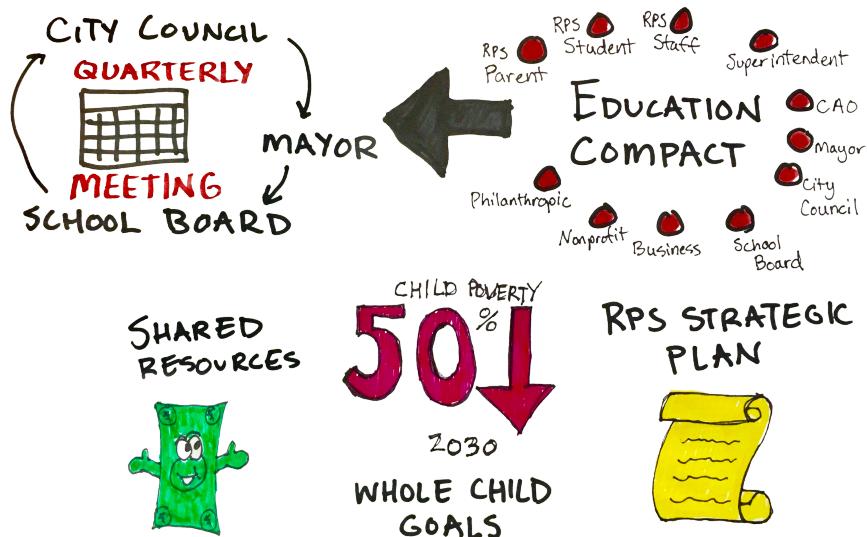


Introduction to Richmond

Richmond is the only city in Virginia to have a council-mayor form of government. This system establishes the Richmond City Council as the main governing body. The Richmond City Council is composed of nine members who are on several relevant education committees, including the Education and Human Services Standing Committee. The Council works with a mayor who is elected by the public to oversee a Chief Administrative Officer for day-to-day operations. Richmond's current mayor, Levar Stoney, was first elected in 2016. Mayor Stoney created the Education Compact (See Figure 2) in 2017 which brings together the Mayor's Office, School Board, and City Council to make education the city's number one priority (Mayor Stoney's Record, 2020).

Figure 2: Richmond Education Compact Interactions

(The Compact: Climbing the Ladder, 2017)



Article VIII, § 7 of the Constitution of Virginia makes the General Assembly of Virginia responsible for providing free public schools and requires the creation of local school boards to operate, maintain, and supervise these schools (Bridges et al., n.d.). The Richmond City School Board is composed of one member from each of the City's nine districts who are elected to four-year terms by the community. The school board meets twice a month to oversee operations as the local educational governing body in Richmond.

Along with the school board, § 22.1-60 of the Code of Virginia establishes the appointment process for the division superintendent of schools (§ 22.1-60. Appointment and Term of Superintendent; Certain Contractual Matters, n.d.). Each superintendent is chosen by the school board from a list of eligible applicants certified by the State Board and serves an initial term no less than two years. Jason Kamras was unanimously appointed to serve as the superintendent of RPS in 2017. The superintendent is Chief Executive Officer of the school board and enforces school laws and regulations. This role also involves personnel management and curriculum development.

Background

Why Do Students Dropout?

Struggling students may face the decision to leave school before graduation, but this difficult choice does not typically happen overnight (Balfanz, 2009). The three main categories that contribute to a student eventually dropping out are push, pull, and falling out factors (Doll et al., 2013). Push factors encompass school-consequences on attendance or discipline. Pull factors compile out-of-school enticements like jobs and family. Falling out factors refer to students who become disillusioned with the educational process and disengage entirely.



The school is responsible for push factors as they are the ones that can expel or suspend students. Across multiple national longitudinal studies, males predominantly reported push factors as the reason for their decision to drop out (Doll et al., 2013). The perceptions of poor academic performance and disciplinary problems are cited as some of the main push factors. Perception of poor academic performance means that once a student falls behind, their perceptions of their own abilities decrease. This phenomenon is powerful as one study finds that grades dating back as far as first grade can be strong predictors of whether a student will drop out from high school (Entwistle et al., 2005).



Students are the agent with pull factors as they are drawn out of school due to outside influences. Females reported the highest rates of pull factors in the majority of national surveys (Doll et al., 2013). Financial concerns, out-of-school employment, family needs, marriage, or childbirth are all associated with pull factors. Pull factors are reported as one of the main reasons that students drop out because they all cause students to place significantly more value on things outside of school.



Falling out factors involve a student becoming disengaged with their education. This is not an active decision, but it tends to arise from a lack of personal and educational support. Not liking the school and not feeling a sense of belonging are just a couple examples of falling out factors. Students influenced by falling out factors simply vanish from the school system. Falling out factors were cited as the main reason for dropping out in a couple of national surveys (Doll et al., 2013).

Dropouts at Richmond Public Schools

RPS experienced the worst dropout rates in all of Virginia from 2017-2020. Different subgroups have disproportionately higher numbers of dropouts within RPS. RPS had nearly 65% of Latino students and more than 61% of English Learners drop out in the 2019-2020 school year (Epp, 2020, p. 2). Students with disabilities are the other main subgroup that has a significant dropout rate of almost 25% (Epp, 2020). In 2020, the statewide dropout rate for Latino students was 15.8% and 7.6% for students with disabilities (Curtis, 2020).

Richmond City's Latin American population grew by 10,944 people from 2010 to 2020 (*Virginia: 2020 Census*, 2021). This was an 85.5% percent increase in the Latin American population and was one of the highest for a county in the entire state (*Virginia: 2020 Census*, 2021). RPS specifically experienced a large increase in English learners over the past five years from 3,074 to 5,223 students (*Educators Resources | Virginia Hispanic Foundation*, n.d.). There was a lack of staff and programs to support this influx of students.

“There were a lot of students who fell through the cracks so we are definitely still feeling the effects of all of that”

– Jennifer Blackwell, EL Specialist (Hankerson, 2019, para. 24)

There have been massive improvements on this issue over the past year. RPS boasted a 14 percentage point increase in their on-time graduation rates for the 2020-2021 school year (Hunter, 2021). Latin American students and economically disadvantaged students saw the greatest gains in dropout rates over the course of this school year. COVID-19 threatens this progress by tightening budgets and challenging students in several unprecedented ways, but these developments show the potential for RPS to provide strong support for struggling students.



Pictured are some of the graduates of Con Ganas. This program is part of the larger effort to support the growing Latin American population in RPS.

Government Involvement in Dropout Prevention

Federal Funding

The Dropout Prevention Act of 1991 is the largest piece of federal legislation to address the problem of students dropping out of high school. This act is included under Title 1, Part H, of No Child Left Behind to help support schools in their efforts to retain students (Glavin, 2016). The Dropout Prevention Act is a grant program that provides funds for up to 60 months directly to local school districts or the state education agencies to conduct a variety of dropout prevention strategies. This act received the largest amounts of appropriations from 2004-2006 of around \$15 million, but then received no money until 2010 when there was an increase of \$50 million targeted towards use for school appropriations for this portion of NCLB (Glavin, 2016).

The federal government only provides 7.8% of funding for public K-12 education (Hanson, 2021). The federal government spent \$81.2 billion in 2019 to help fund primary and secondary education (U.S. Education Spending Trends Over 10 Years, 2012). The Department of Education oversees administering most of this education funding that is sent directly to local school districts. These funds are largely discretionary which means that spending levels are typically set each year through the appropriations process.

Congress has never fully appropriated the maximum authorized education funding level under No Child Left Behind (Federal Funding, 2016). Under the reauthorization titled the Every Student Succeeds Act, the authorized funding level for the first year was specified, but the years following are set at "such sums as may be necessary" (Federal Funding, 2016). Without accounting for 2020, the level of appropriated federal education funding has remained relatively flat over the past two decades.

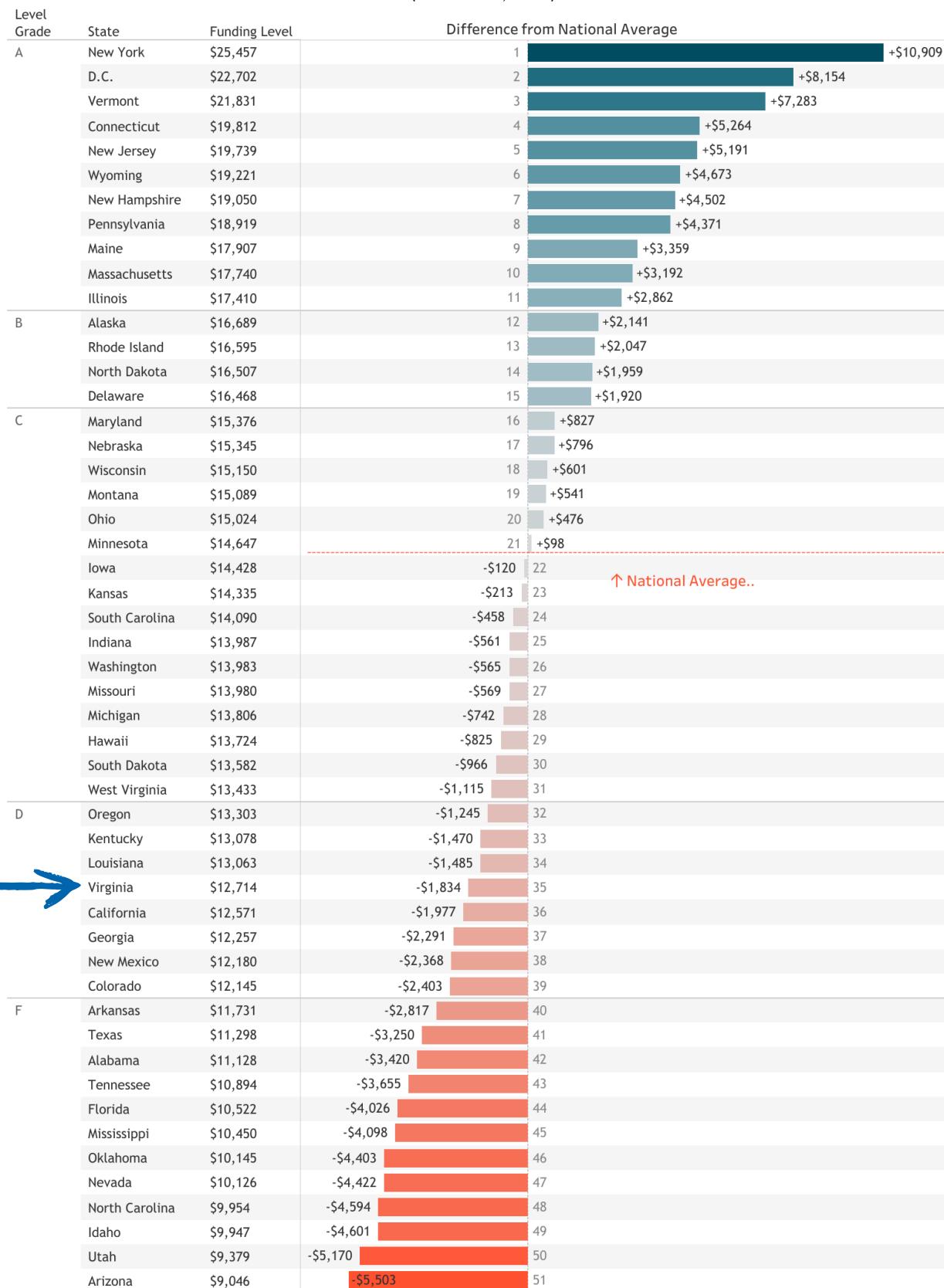
State Funding

Virginia has a median income of \$76,456 which is one of the highest nationwide (FY2019 Annual Survey of School System Finances, 2021). Despite this high level of income, Virginia ranks 41st in per-pupil student spending with \$5,488 spent in 2019 (Jones & Stewart, 2021). Virginia's funding model creates large disparities in educational outcomes based on where a student lives.

Virginia's per-pupil spending is determined by the Local Composite Index. This formula places a large burden on localities to pay for K-12 education rather than the state (Jones & Stewart, 2021). Localities fund the majority of the costs of education through property taxes. This leads to an education funding system that mirrors the inequities that exist in the Virginia housing market. School divisions in rural areas or high-poverty areas receive less resources to invest in schools because their property tax revenue is lower. Students of color are negatively impacted by this funding model. Education Trust found that school divisions in Virginia serving the highest share of students of color had 8% less total state and local funding per pupil than divisions with the lowest share of students of color (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015).

Figure 3: Funding Level Cost-Adjusted Per Pupil Funding Level by State Relative to National Average (2018)

(Farrie et al., 2019)



Source: ELC analysis of U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances, 2018.

There have been some efforts to increase per-pupil spending for less wealthy districts. At-risk add-on funding is additional funding that is given to localities with a high percentage of households that qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. These efforts still leave Virginia with a relatively flat funding model (See Figure 3) which does not ease the financial burden of high poverty school districts. The Education Law Center gave Virginia a “D” for funding level and effort and a “C” for distribution (Farrie et al., 2019). A more progressive funding model would help districts like RPS help address the challenges they face.

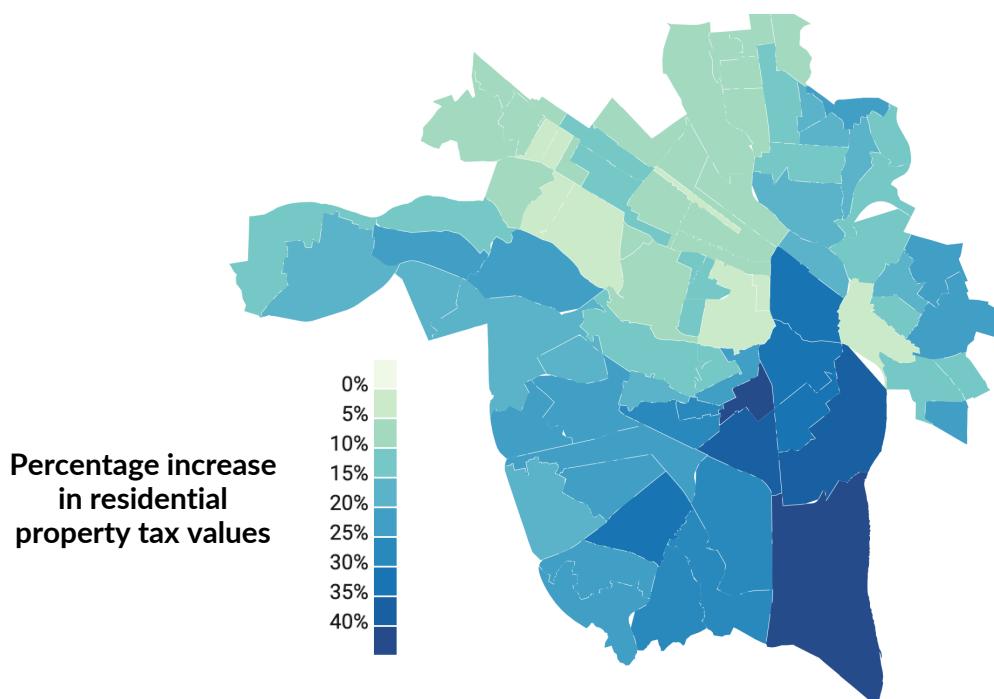
Local Funding

RPS has a challenging funding situation compared to peer districts. Richmond City serves a higher concentration of high-needs students, but also has a significantly higher responsibility to fund their education. Property values are continuing to skyrocket (See Figure 4) which increases the local burden to pay for education. The local responsibility for Richmond City to fund public education is 75% higher than the peer district average (RPS Budget Analysis, 2016). Classroom instruction, instructional support, and school leadership compose the most of expenses for RPS.

RPS spends an average of \$14,023 per student each year which is higher than the state median of \$12,340 (Richmond City School District, 2021). The total revenue of Richmond City is \$382 million and spending is around \$372 million (Richmond City School District, 2021). Spending levels have stayed relatively flat over time, but the challenges of COVID-19 have caused shifts and uncertainty in funding levels across the state.

Figure 4: Rising Home Values in Richmond

(Santarelli, 2022)



Current Policy Environment

Congress passed the COVID-Relief and FY 2021 Funding Package at the end of 2020. This measure includes \$82 billion in much-needed relief aid for education and \$73.5 billion in annual funding for the Department of Education. This package also increased Pell Grant eligibility and simplified the FAFSA process. Despite these efforts, school budgets have tightened across the country and have forced districts to make tough decisions. RPS faced a \$24 million budget shortfall in 2020 largely due to the pandemic (Pauly, 2020). RPS was still able to preserve the planned 2% teacher and staff salary raise. \$600,000 of their budget was also still allocated for professional development.

RPS has recently been facing the problem of chronic absenteeism, which is a strong predictor of a student dropping out. Over one-third of all students missed more than 10% of school days at the conclusion of the fall semester (Cordes, 2022). This number is declining as RPS is using less punitive policy measures for these students by connecting them to resources and building in-depth data profiles. It is possible that the transition back to in-person could be the main reason for the spike in absenteeism, but it will be important for RPS to continue to monitor. This phenomenon is crucial because chronic absenteeism is closely tied to the level of federal and state funding that school districts receive.

Barriers to Dropout Prevention

The emphasis on academic tracking nationwide has consistently been shown to disadvantage students placed on the lower performing track (Werblow et al., 2013). There is limited evidence to suggest that students perform better when placed on higher tracks compared to no tracking alternatives (Ansalone, 2001; Rubin, 2006). Tracking also significantly hinders positive school climate by lowering students' perceptions of their capabilities and limiting the quality of instruction. One study finds that students placed on lower tracks are 60% more likely to drop out of high school (Werblow et al., 2013). Academic tracking also appears to disproportionately impact Latino students, students with IEPs, or students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Werblow et al., 2013). RPS does not engage in this type of academic tracking, but it remains a significant barrier to dropout prevention as many school districts still believe it positively influences academic achievement.

Another one of the other main barriers to dropout prevention is effectively targeting programs. Every school district is different and a program that works well in one context may not be successful in another. To target dropout prevention programs, the population of focus must be identified along with potential supporters and sources of funding (Shannon, 2005). Focusing on a small enough student population helps foster a sense of community among individuals, but this does conflict with the interest of school districts to have a large impact on preventing dropouts (Shannon, 2005). Balancing and monitoring all the interested groups is a significant challenge for districts, but the case studies included in this analysis can help identify some best practices.

Costs to Society

Why Focus on Dropouts?

There are many negative health, economic, and criminal consequences for a person that drops out from high school. Society ends up bearing a significant amount of the costs for these consequences. The two main types of costs with dropouts are direct costs and economic costs. Direct costs are the out-of-pocket funds required to do something and economic costs are the value of the next best alternative that is sacrificed. Externalities related to dropouts are minimal and therefore they are not estimated in this section. This analysis estimates for a total of 350 RPS dropouts the total costs to society would be in the range of \$52 million to \$75 million.



Direct Costs

High school dropouts incur direct costs to society from law enforcement, dropout prevention programs, unemployment insurance, and other safety net programs. Around 14% of high school dropouts were unemployed in 2019 (U.S. High School Graduates and Dropouts, n.d.). This puts dropouts at higher risk of being arrested and/or utilizing safety net programs compared to high school graduates. Using an estimate of 350 RPS dropouts, all of these direct costs would fall in a range of \$9 million to \$11 million.

Economic Costs

Dropouts have an average income of \$20,241 which is \$10,000 less than a high school graduate and \$36,000 less than someone with a bachelor's degree (Education Pays, 2021). This amounts to around \$260,000 less in lifetime earnings than someone who earns their high school diploma (Education Pays, 2021). The 350 students who drop out from RPS would amount to an average total loss of \$91 million in lifetime earnings. On average, a high school dropout also lives six to nine years less than a high school graduate (DeBaun & Roc, 2013). This shorter life expectancy brings a severe opportunity cost in terms of the loss in wages. For all 350 students, living shorter lives would lead to a range of opportunity costs of \$43 million to \$64 million.

Case Studies Examination

This section examines the current literature surrounding dropout prevention strategies. These case studies inform the development of the alternatives used in this analysis. The cases encompass a broad range of interventions that school districts can consider when looking to decrease the number of dropouts in their community. The goal of this examination is to provide a brief background on the effectiveness and potential for each strategy.

School-based Transition Program: New Jersey

A school-based transition program in New Jersey was studied with 157 9th grade students from a low-income urban high school (Johnson et al., 2008). Students were separated into two groups within the same physical education class. The treated students were pulled from class every Thursday for a group meeting with a peer leader to focus on multiple aspects of transitioning into high school. These meetings were then used to provide recommendations for at-risk students to participate in a 5-month mentoring program that started in the spring. The linkage of the peer-led meetings and mentoring program led to multiple positive outcomes. High-risk students in the program were less likely to be tolerant of their friend's substance use and participate in school-related misconduct than high-risk students in the control group (Johnson et al., 2008). The mean change for the misconduct control group was 2.55, while high-risk students in the program increased their misconduct by less than a third with a mean change of .80 (Johnson et al., 2008). This study does not directly measure the impact on dropout rates which makes it difficult to assess the long-term student achievement impacts of this type of program.

Counselor Effectiveness: Massachusetts

The highest quality evaluation of counselor impact on graduation rates was conducted in Massachusetts among 131 schools with over 150,000 students and over 700 counselors (Mulhern, 2020). Mulhern utilized how counselors are assigned caseloads based on student last names to generate a quasi-random experiment to evaluate the impact of counselors on student outcomes. The effectiveness of a counselor was determined by the average cognitive and noncognitive skills of students. Mulhern finds that effective counselors improve outcomes for all students and are particularly useful in improving student outcomes for low-performing students. A one standard deviation increase from the average counselor effectiveness is associated with a 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood for a low-performing student to graduate (Mulhern, 2020). This study also finds when non-white students were paired with non-white counselors they were 4.2 percentage points more likely to graduate (Mulhern, 2020).

Out-of-school-time Programs: Chicago

OST programs can play an important role as high school students begin to feel the pressure mounting and feel less confident in academic subjects. After School Matters (ASM) is a program

with an apprentice focused approach for developing high school students (Goerge et al., 2007). ASM provides paid apprentice experiences in technology, arts, sports, and more. These programs have the benefit of providing part-time work experience while also promoting positive youth development.

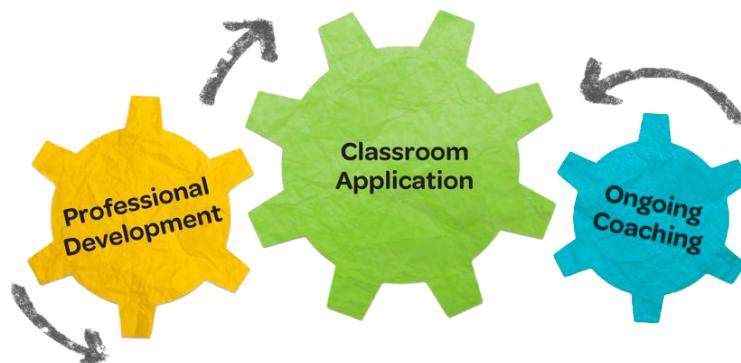
A three-year randomized-control trial in Chicago examined 13 apprenticeships with 535 youth participants. This high-quality study found the most significant effect was that students in an after-school program saw the extrinsic value of school more so than nonparticipants (Hirsch et al., 2011). Another study on this program found that students with very high levels of participation in the after-school program were 2.7 times more likely to graduate than students who did not participate (Goerge et al., 2007).

Improving Teacher Quality: Central Middle School

There is a lack of a consensus on what is the most effective strategy to improve teacher effectiveness. Multiple studies have focused on increases in salary, education level, and certification requirements (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Wenglinsky, 2000). These interventions have no consistent link demonstrating impact on student achievement (Wenglinsky, 2000). There is mounting evidence that teacher inputs do not impact student achievement as much as day-to-day classroom interactions (Joyce & Showers, 2003; Wenglinsky, 2000). Therefore, professional development and professional learning communities (PLCs) are policy options that should be considered to improve the quality of these classroom interactions.

PLCs take professional development one step further by developing stronger relationships, administrative consistency, instruction, and cooperation (DuFour, 2004). PLCs build off the teaching team model that already exists in most middle schools by expanding the collaboration to teachers in other subjects and administration (DuFour, 2004). One case study on the efficacy of professional learning communities was in Central Middle School which was in a semi-urban southeastern district. The authors found a strong positive relationship between PLCs and teacher improvement, but this relationship was dependent on a lot of factors (Graham, 2007). The ability for the PLC to foster a strong sense of community was crucial to improve teacher quality (Graham, 2007). Organizational structures, meeting details, and process of conversation are some of the other factors that must be considered when creating PLCs (Graham, 2007).

Figure 5: Professional Learning Community Model

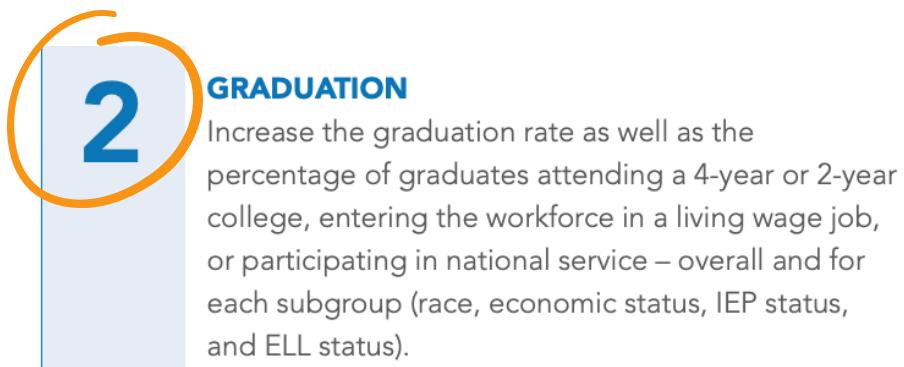


Criteria

These case studies are used to develop four alternatives for RPS to consider. These alternatives are analyzed based on a set of criteria that aligns with RPS strategic goals. Dreams4RPS is a five-year strategic plan which places graduation as number two on its top ten goals for the span of 2018-2023 (Page & Kamras, 2018). Along with this strategy, Superintendent Jason Kamras improved the transparency surrounding RPS graduation statistics when he took charge in 2018 (Bacon, 2021).

This set of criteria aims to continue those efforts by examining the efficacy and feasibility of each alternative while supporting the subgroups who are disproportionately dropping out of high school. Criteria will be ranked on a 1-5 scale with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Each criterion will be weighted on the level of importance for achieving RPS goals. Criteria related to other process values and community values were also considered for this list, but they were not as directly related to RPS goals.

Figure 6: Dreams4RPS Strategic Goal #2



Cost-effectiveness - 40%

This criterion will measure the total cost of each alternative and divide it by the number of students who will be prevented from dropping out. The baseline that will be used in this analysis is that RPS spends an average of \$14,023 per student annually (*Richmond City School District, 2021*). The unit of effectiveness of the number of dropouts would be determined from the literature on the effectiveness of each alternative. The standard discount rate of 3% will be used to project cost outcomes for the next 11 years. Cost-effectiveness will be measured on a scale of low, medium, and high. A score of low references a cost above \$2,500 per student prevented from dropping out; medium is a cost between \$1,000 and \$2,500; high refers to a cost below \$1,000 per student.

Political Feasibility - 20%

This piece of criteria will consider the level of political support for each alternative. The Richmond City school board is composed of 9 members who all play an important role in approving budgets and policy proposals. The school board's previous or anticipated support of an alternative will be used to determine the level of feasibility. If an alternative does not require school board approval, the level of political feasibility will be high. Options that limit the number of agents involved will also increase the level of political feasibility. The mayor, teachers, parents, and students will be considered for this criterion as they can all support or oppose these policy options. Previous votes and op-ed pieces will be used to get a better picture about the potential political support for each option.

Equity - 20%

This piece of criteria will examine the level that the alternative addresses the number of dropouts among particularly vulnerable subgroups within RPS. Different subgroups have disproportionately higher numbers of dropouts within RPS. Latino students, English learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged are the main subgroups that this analysis will focus on. Widespread reductions in dropouts for these groups of students will lead to a higher equity ranking. Options that are limited to reductions in one particular subgroup will receive a lower equity ranking.

Sustainability - 10%

This criterion will consider the ability for RPS to maintain the alternative for several years in the future. Options that only require one-time funding will receive a higher ranking than those that require constant renewal. The level of public support is included here too as options that are less popular over time will receive a low ranking. The detail and level of intervention is the final part of this evaluation because constant changes in the school district infrastructure will hurt the level of sustainability for an option. The design of the alternative will help provide the necessary data to rank options.

Transparency - 10%

This criterion would ensure any efforts to lower the number of dropouts would not come at the expense of obscuring or misreporting data. There has been some history within RPS of a lack of transparency which makes this important to include (*Richmond Public Schools Says 800 English Learners Weren't Counted*, n.d.). Options that allow for the public and officials to easily see the impact and process will score higher than those that are unclear. The level of disclosures and where the option takes place will also be considered here. Once again, the design of the alternative will be the main source of data to determine the rankings.

Policy Alternatives

Alternative 1: Continue the Status Quo

This alternative would involve maintaining the current network and levels of transition programming within RPS. RPS established the Newcomer Academy in 2020 to help newly arrived, immigrant English Learner students, ages 14-17, who have been in the country for up to one year (Epp, 2020). The academies are currently located at River City Middle School and George Wythe High School.

180 students in 9th and 10th grade were enrolled in the Newcomer Academy in 2020. These students receive bilingual education with a focus on projects, cultural, social-emotional, and linguistic needs. RPS has 28 ESL teachers, 9 bilingual support staff, and 3 bilingual counselors to help support this program. The Newcomer Academy also has an academic coordinator and bilingual parent liaisons. After 12 months with the Newcomer Academy, students can continue with the Transitional Bilingual Program or transition to their Zone School.

Jennifer Blackwell is the RPS ELL Instructional Specialist who helped create this program to provide students with more options. This program aims to address the nearly 61% of English learners that dropped out during the 2019-2020 school year (Manzanares, 2021). The efficacy of this program is potentially very high as the graduation rate increased by 24.8 percentage points for Latino students in the 2020-2021. This 24.8 percentage point figure will not be used because it is the culmination of multiple targeted programs and overestimates the impact of newcomer academies on dropouts.

Cost-Effectiveness - Low (1)

Newcomer academies are relatively new programs being utilized to tackle the problem of high dropout rates among English learners. The tracking of English learners is also a recent development for school districts. Both make it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these types of programs. The most comprehensive study on this topic implements a difference-in-difference approach in a large-urban district in California. The author imprecisely measures that a summer credit-recovery program for English learners increased 5-year graduation rates by 2.7 percentage points (Johnson, 2020). This is the closest estimate in the current literature of the impact of newcomer programming on dropout rates and is multiplied by the 180 students currently enrolled to determine the effectiveness.

The cost estimates for this policy option references the per-pupil spending of a Newcomer Academy in Buffalo City, New York. This Newcomer Academy has similar enrollment numbers and offers a clear breakdown of the costs. The RPS budget documents do not provide a clear total cost for their two Newcomer Academies which is why this analysis uses the Buffalo City program. The per-pupil spending at the local and state level for students enrolled in this program is \$14,214

(NEWCOMER ACADEMY AT LAFAYETTE - Financial Transparency Report, 2020). This is a \$191 increase from the average RPS per-pupil spending of \$14,023 (Richmond City School District, 2021).

Discounted at a rate of 3 percent over the course of 11 years, this program would cost around \$330,000 and would prevent 43 students from dropping out. This amounts to a cost of around \$7,500 per student prevented from dropping out which is the highest cost among all the options.

Political Feasibility - High (5)

The political feasibility of this option is the highest rank because it has already been approved and running for two years. Superintendent Kamras has also proposed the addition of three new EL teachers for the program in his FY22 budget proposal (Kamras, 2021). This shows his desire to grow the program and ensure that it has adequate resources to be successful. The large increase in English learner population from 3,074 to 5,223 in the course of five years suggests that these types of programs are needed and would be supported by the changing demographics in the school district (*Educators Resources | Virginia Hispanic Foundation*, n.d.).

Equity - Medium (3)

This alternative does target one subgroup that is particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school. Almost two out of three English learner students dropped out in RPS during the 2019-2020 school year and this option would help this population specifically. This program does not help all subgroups that are disproportionately dropping out of high school which makes this rank as medium in equity.

Sustainability - Medium (3)

This policy option requires annual spending and acquisition of more staff as the program evolves and grows. This will hurt the sustainability of this option because any changes or loss in funding could impact the longevity of the Newcomer Academy. The RPS budget is very tight with the school district facing an \$19.5 million deficit with the General Assembly budget proposals (Graff, 2022). Public support is likely to be mixed for this alternative as it serves a growing population in Richmond, but the limited scope of the program may raise concerns about the associated costs. The level of detail and multiple actors involved also make this policy rank medium in sustainability.

Transparency - High (5)

The enrollment and types of programming offered by the Newcomer Academy are very transparent. The data profiles for these students has improved and concerns about the reporting of this population are minimal. There has also been a lot of media coverage surrounding this program and another English learner focused program called Con Ganas (Hunter, 2020). This helps increase awareness and the transparency of this policy option.

Alternative 2: Improve Counselor Quality

One potential alternative to help students who are struggling in their first years of high school is to provide enhanced counseling services. This alternative would look to improve the effectiveness of counselors through required professional development. RPS currently has 42 full-time counselors on staff that would participate in an annual traditional professional development workshop focused on dropout prevention.

The specific professional development course will be from a National Dropout Center free webcast called Connected Counseling: Connecting Students to Success. This resource includes an hour-long presentation and slides that can be used for counselors to learn about the role they can play in preventing dropouts. The particular focus is on 6-year plans and how much a role counselors can play in helping students look ahead. Training would be required for one coach to run the professional development session and other materials would also need to be distributed to the 42 counselors. This development course would be adjusted following the initial year to build on the learning and skills that counselors need.

This training would occur over the summer and would take place in Thomas Jefferson High School for all the counselors to attend together. Conducting one large session will create more connections between RPS counselors that will hopefully continue during the school year. This professional development would become an annual session to generate continuous learning on this topic and help onboard any new counselors that are hired.

Cost-Effectiveness - High (5)

School counselors are an important resource for students to help build social skills and resolve problems during their academic career. Mulhern finds a one standard deviation increase from the average counselor effectiveness is associated with a 3 percentage-point increase in the likelihood for a low-performing student to graduate (Mulhern, 2020). This analysis assumes that continuous professional development would lead to this one standard deviation increase in counselor effectiveness. One study finds that school-based learning and continuous professional development are crucial features to creating effective professional development (Pharis et al., 2019). This option utilizes these effective components and will use the 3 percentage-point increase in graduation rates to calculate the number of current dropouts that would benefit from this alternative.

The cost estimations for this policy option relies heavily on Barrett & Pas' cost analysis of professional development and coaching structures in schools. The personnel costs are \$5,400 and were adjusted for inflation from 2018 to 2022. The average travel distance and average total travel time to Thomas Jefferson High School would cost \$6,300. Barrett and Pas give an estimate of \$5 per participant for materials which is also included in the training costs. Lunch would be provided to help incentivize participation which would amount to \$15 per participant. Finally, the opportunity cost of renting the building is set at \$200 which is consistent with RPS rental fees.

The total cost of implementing this alternative for 11 years is estimated to be \$123,000. Discounted at a rate of 3 percent over the course of 11 years, this program would prevent 164 students from dropping out. This amounts to a cost of around \$750 per student prevented from dropping out which is the lowest per student cost of all the options.

Political Feasibility - High (4)

The school board approved Superintendent Kamras' suggested professional development plans in 2018 (*Virginia Excels*, 2018). This suggests the school board would be open to new plans for counselor professional development. Superintendent Kamras would have to propose this policy option, but the small number of 42 counselors involved would make this more attractive to the school board members. There has been previous pushback from RPS teachers related to professional development which may also occur with school counselors (McClellan, 2017). This pushback can be limited because the counselor salary will not be tied to professional development.

Equity - Medium (3)

Counselors are mapped to students based on last names, but this professional development should help with the identification and assistance with vulnerable subgroups. This alternative ranks medium because of the limitations of counselors in solely focusing on these subgroups due to their large caseloads. Legislation is taking effect for the 2021-2022 school year that requires a full-time counselor for every 325 K-12 students (DeFusco, 2021). This counselor-to-student ratio is still very high and does not meet the American School Counseling Association recommendation of one counselor for every 250 students (School Counselor Staffing Ratio Reduction Bills, 2019).

Sustainability - High (4)

This funding alternative is sustainable despite requiring annual funds. This alternative is simple to implement because it will only take place during one day of the school year and does not involve a lot of staff. New counselors would undergo this professional development as part of their onboarding process. Public support will likely be high as the General Assembly recently put millions towards increasing the number of counselors and mental health services for students returning to the classroom (DeFusco, 2021). There is potential for counselors to not want to participate in this training after the first couple years which makes this option not receive the highest ranking.

Transparency - Medium (3)

The level of transparency of this policy option is limited due to the confidential nature of counselor relationships. The professional development program is very transparent and anyone can access the free modules online. This will alleviate concerns about the type of professional development. 6-year plans are also a straightforward intervention and make this alternative score a medium ranking.

Alternative 3: Improve Teacher Quality

This alternative would be to provide professional development programs that focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) and English as a second language (ESL) instructional support for teachers. RPS has around 400 high school teachers that would be required to participate in at least one of these forms of professional development. All RPS high school teachers would attend a session in the high school that they work in. These sessions would occur during the teacher workdays that lead up to the start of the school year.

Transforming Education is an organization that has collaborated with the Philadelphia school district and the Delaware Department of Education to improve student outcomes ("SEL for Educators Toolkit," n.d.). They have curated 6 free SEL focused modules that total around an hour and a half. These modules provide an overview, examine identity, explore emotions, cultivate compassionate curiosity, orient towards optimism, and establish balance & boundaries (See Figure 7). SEL instruction emphasizes recognizing and managing emotions, solving problems, appreciating others' perspectives, and developing interpersonal skills (Zins et al., 2007). SEL programs have been developed to help students deal with the pressures and changes they face during their first years of high school (Greenberg et al., 2003).

The other option for professional development would be adapted from a 60-minute video program curated by the University of Memphis (ESL-Related Professional Development Resources, n.d.). RPS can utilize their ESL teachers on staff and provide them with time and a half pay to lead these training sessions. Training would be necessary for those that opt to lead these sessions and this training could occur over the summer to allow plenty of time to become familiar with the material.

Cost-Effectiveness - Low (2)

Both subjects of teacher professional development were chosen because they have the greatest potential impact on student dropout rates. A meta-analysis of follow-up effects in a mindfulness professional development program finds that students that receive SEL training score 13 points higher 3.5 years later, had 6 percent better high school graduation rates, and had lifelong economic benefits (Taylor et al., 2017). One study of teacher perceptions on English learner education finds that two of the biggest obstacles are the understaffing of ESL and bilingual educators along with a lack of modern ESL professional development (Batt, 2008). This analysis uses the 6 percent figure to calculate the cost-effectiveness of this policy option.

The cost estimations for this option continue to pull from Barrett & Pas' cost analysis of professional development and coaching structures in schools. Total personnel costs when adjusted for 2022 inflation are \$82,000. There is potential that educators do not attend both which would make this overall cost lower, but this analysis assumes that all teachers would receive 2.5 hours of professional development. Savings from teachers not attending both could be used to support incentive programs at each high school.

Travel time estimates were cut in half from the counselor alternative estimates because the training would occur in the high school where the educator was located. The total lost wages and mileage costs amounts to \$49,000. The cost of materials for all 410 participants is set at \$2,050. Lunch would be provided for all participants to motivate educators to attend which would total \$6,150. The building rental costs would be set at \$288 due to the RPS 2-hour rental minimum and \$88 fee for every additional hour.

Like the counselor alternative, this option would become a part of the annual training of educators at RPS. The total cost of implementing this alternative over 11 years is around \$1.3 million. Discounted at a rate of 3 percent over the course of 11 years, this program would prevent 328 students from dropping out. This amounts to a cost of around \$4,000 per student prevented from dropping out which makes this option rank fairly low in cost-effectiveness.

Political Feasibility - High (4)

Teachers report greater satisfaction when they are given more choice on their professional development (Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development, 2014). The choice of professional development that is built into this option should help increase buy-in from educators and the political feasibility. RPS appropriated \$787,850 for staff development for the FY22 budget which means that this alternative would fit within the annual budget of the school district (Kamras, 2021). Professional development does not disrupt student instruction because it occurs during teacher workdays and parents will not have to worry about any changes in curriculum from this option.

Equity - Medium (3)

The equity of this alternative relies on the attendance of teachers to the two sessions. If teachers attend both, they will help provide extra support to a much wider student population and the equity will be much higher. Most students in the classroom would benefit from the improved classroom interactions following SEL professional development, but not all would benefit from ESL professional development. Due to the potential of educators choosing just one or not fully implementing the material covered in the work session, this option ranks medium on equity.

Sustainability - Medium (3)

This option ranks medium in sustainability because there are a lot of staff members involved and professional development is not always popular among educators. The annual costs of this alternative are also high which lowers the sustainability as well. The New Teacher Academy would help absorb the costs for new teacher hires who would need to undergo one of these forms of professional development. Public support for teachers seems to be wavering amidst COVID-19 policies, but an Education Next survey at the end of 2020 finds that 46% of parents thought that teachers' unions have a positive effect on schools (Henderson, 2021). This was a 6 percentage

point improvement from the spring, which suggests that public support for improving the training of teachers will receive little opposition from parents.

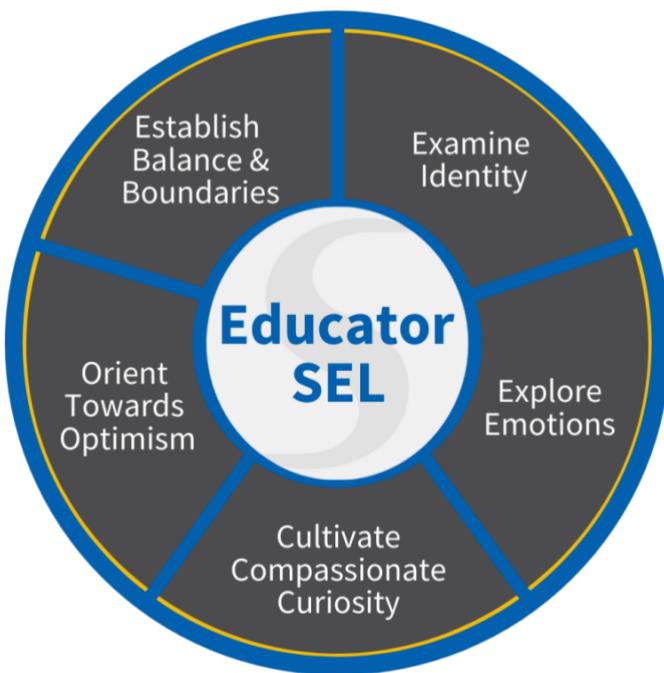
Transparency - High (4)

The instruction materials that will be used at both sessions are publicly available. This will alleviate any concerns about where the professional development funds are being spent. Parents and faculty will not be able to oversee exactly how these forms of development are being used in the classroom which does lower some of the transparency of this option.

Figure 7: Transforming Education's SEL Toolkit

(“SEL for Educators Toolkit,” n.d.)

Five High-Leverage Practices



EXAMINE IDENTITY

- Define Values & Pursue Purpose
- Investigate Privilege & Power
- Uncover Bias
- Reflect on Work Style

EXPLORE EMOTIONS

- Label Emotions
- Recognize Physical Reactions
- Respond Rather Than React

CULTIVATE COMPASSIONATE CURIOSITY

- Apply an Asset-Based Lens
- View Behavior as Communication
- Listen with Empathy

ORIENT TOWARDS OPTIMISM

- Recognize Negativity Bias
- Reframe & Retrain the Brain
- Practice Gratitude

ESTABLISH BALANCE & BOUNDARIES

- Understand the “Cost of Caring”
- Form Healthy Habits
- Ask for Help & Learn to Say No

Alternative 4: School-Based Transition Program

This alternative would implement a model similar to a New Jersey school-based transition program to help with early identification and enrollment in existing mentorship programs within RPS. 9th grade students would be required to be pulled from PE class once a week for a group meeting with a peer leader to discuss the transition to high school. The peer leaders would be 11th and 12th graders who would be taking an elective course focusing on their leadership development and mentoring of these incoming students. These peer meetings would be used to provide recommendations for at-risk students to enroll in RPS mentorship programs. Brothers United is one of the current programs focused on pairing young men of color with mentors of color to build relationships and leverage partnerships in Richmond (*Brothers United Mentoring Program*, n.d.). EmpowHER is another similar program focused on serving young women of color.

The New Jersey program had three teacher-advisors in one school to help guide the peer leaders. This would be scaled up at RPS to have 15 total teachers spread evenly at each high school. RPS has around 1,800 freshman students enrolled for the 2021-2022 school which means that 120 peer leaders would be needed to maintain the 15:1 ratio that was used in the model program. This would be around 24 peer leaders in each high school which would be a good amount to fill a single classroom for the class meetings.

Cost-Effectiveness - Medium (3)

There is a differential impact of mentorship programs due to the variety in the quality of the relationship formed between mentors and mentees (Cavell & Hughes, 2000; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Slicker & Palmer, 1993). When a quality relationship is established, there are many psychological and academic benefits for students (DuBois et al., 2002). This cost analysis pulls from a two-year study on formal mentoring effects for low-performing first year students (Salinitri, 2005). This study finds that formal mentoring can help decrease dropouts by 4.3 percentage points. This estimate is used to complete the rest of the cost-effectiveness analysis.

The New Jersey program had the teacher-advisors receive three days of initial residential training, two advisor training sessions during the school year, and an overnight retreat for the advisors and peer leaders. These advisors were given a stipend and had extra responsibilities for planning and checking in on peer leaders once a week. 15 total teachers would need to be trained to fill the role of advisor for this program at RPS. Looking at another residential training program is helpful to determine that this training would cost a total of around \$27,000 in wages (Becoming a Teacher, n.d.). The stipends per teacher are set at \$2,000 which brings the total stipend cost to \$30,000.

The travel costs for the overnight and residential training totals to \$3,000 for the 15 teachers. Materials costs were calculated for all 1,810 freshman students at \$5 per student. The material costs came to a total of \$9,000. Finally, the facilities costs would be two lunches that would be provided for a cost of \$450. The residential training would not be implemented after the first year because all the teachers would not need as intensive training to continue the program.

The total cost for implementing this at the start of next year is almost \$69,000. Discounted at a rate of 3 percent over the course of 11 years, this program would cost around \$540,000 and would prevent 235 students from dropping out. This amounts to an estimated cost of \$2,300 per student prevented from dropping out which is a medium ranking for cost-effectiveness.

Political Feasibility - Low (2)

There are a lot of moving parts to this alternative which makes the political feasibility the lowest of all the options. The curriculum would need to be developed to run a class for the peer leaders which would require large amounts of public support. RPS does have some experience creating new courses with their REAL Richmond class that aims to provide a more transparent history of Richmond (*REAL Richmond History*, n.d.). There may also be concerns about the physical health of 9th grade students who are being pulled from P.E. class once a week. Richmond Mayor Stoney has previously helped fund the RPS Brothers United mentoring program in 2019 which suggests that he may be open to expanding the mentorship network through this transition program (Whitney, 2019).

Equity - High (4)

This school-based transition is designed to identify all the 9th grade students that are most at-risk of dropping out. This leads to a high ranking for equity because all the vulnerable subgroups are considered and evaluated throughout these weekly peer meetings, but it does not score the highest possible score because it only focuses on one cohort level. For those that are currently above 10th grade, this option will not help them in the short term.

Sustainability - (2)

One potential issue with this option is that it relies on students enrolling in the peer leadership course. This hurts the sustainability of this option because students may want to take other electives or may be limited in their course options. New teachers would also need to be trained if there is greater interest or if teachers leave the school district. The annual material and training costs would be a lot for RPS to maintain with a lot of the other issues they are facing. Fox Elementary School recently burned down and there are efforts to modernize the current schools which could pull funds away from a program like this (Dennis, 2022).

Transparency - Medium (3)

The weekly peer meetings would be where a lot of the identification of at-risk students would take place. These meetings would not be open to the public and would hurt some of the transparency of this option. The course curriculum would be available to everyone to read over and verify. This helps this option rank medium on transparency because the course content and purpose of this program are clear to the public.

Outcomes Matrix

Figure 4: Outcomes Matrix

	Cost-Effectiveness 40%	Political Feasibility 20%	Equity 20%	Sustainability 10%	Transparency 10%	Total Score
Alternative 1: Status Quo	1 (43 prevented at \$7,500 per student)	5	3	3	5	2.8
Alternative 2: Improve Counselor Quality	5 (164 prevented at \$750 per student)	4	3	4	3	4.1
Alternative 3: Improve Teacher Quality	2 (382 prevented at \$4,000 per student)	4	3	3	4	2.9
Alternative 4: School-Based Transition	3 (235 prevented at \$2,300 per student)	2	4	2	3	2.9

Recommendation

I recommend RPS implement a professional development program for all 42 full-time counselors. This alternative would prevent 164 students from dropping out over the course of 11 years and would only cost \$750 per student prevented from dropping out. This is the lowest cost per student of all the policy options. Improving teacher quality would prevent 382 students from dropping out which is a 133 percent increase in the number of dropouts prevented from the counselor development. Despite this increase in the number of students prevented, improving teacher quality would be greater than five times the cost of improving counselor quality. The large number of teachers that would need to undergo professional development also hurts the political feasibility of this option.

The school-based transition is not viable in the current RPS environment. This would require a lot of different actors and offices working together to develop a strong peer leadership curriculum. There is potential that this would boost the effectiveness of RPS mentoring programs through the weekly meetings identification process. It is difficult to determine how much this boost would be in the current literature, but this is an option that RPS should keep on the radar when funds and political will are more readily available.

The status quo option evaluated here is only one part of the current RPS programming for transitioning students into high school. The literature surrounding Newcomer Academies is still being developed which makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of this program. RPS did experience success in increasing the graduation rate by 24.8 percentage points for Latino students in the 2020-2021 school year, but it is likely the Newcomer Academy had minimal impact because it just began in 2020. The Newcomer Academy may improve in effectiveness as it develops along with the staff. The political feasibility of this option is the highest because it is already being expanded and as more data is collected this option may become a strong policy option for RPS to continue to develop. There is a lot of value in monitoring this program closely because if the Newcomer Academy does not have a large impact on reducing dropouts, new funds could be directed towards more promising programs.

Tradeoffs

The counselor professional development has tradeoffs primarily with equity and transparency. RPS counselors already have a lot of students to handle and this professional development would add more to their workload. Counselor relationships are also less transparent which could hurt the ability of the Superintendent to advocate for this policy option. These are important considerations, but the low cost and ability to impact many students make this the best possible option.

Implementation

The implementation of counselor professional development will follow five main steps. These steps are: build support, propose a new budget, approve the budget, train coaches, and market and monitor. There are multiple stakeholders to consider at each of these steps and mitigating their potential resistance will be pivotal to moving this policy option along.



Step 1: Build Support

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a mental health crisis among children in schools. The stressors of online learning, unpredictable routines, or loss of a family member are all potential challenges that children are facing (Abramson, 2022). A national survey in 2020 found that almost a third of high schoolers felt much more depressed and unhappy than usual (Abramson, 2022). Amidst this mental health crisis, there is also a shortage of mental health providers. 22.6% of the population in Virginia live in an area with a shortage of mental health professionals (Hubbard, 2021). Both trends provide a strong rationale for improving the effectiveness of mental health professionals that already work in school systems.

Superintendent Kamras allocated \$3 million of federal relief funding to increase mental health supports for students (Doss, 2021). Kamras also closed all schools the first week of November to provide 2 extra days “in the interest” of workers’ mental health (*Richmond Schools Closing 2 Extra Days for Mental Health*, 2021). Kamras will be critical to moving this policy option forward because he proposes the annual budget and these examples demonstrate his desire to improve the mental health services within RPS.

Other key stakeholders include the School Health Advisory Board (SHAB). This board is composed of parents, teachers, students, and health content experts. Their role is to advise the school board on issues related to student health. Working with the SHAB will be a good way to generate support for this alternative. The SHAB has monthly meetings and this option could be discussed there to ensure that everyone is on the same page surrounding the details of counselor professional development.

Step 2: Budget Proposal

Superintendent Kamras will need to propose an increase of \$12,922 in professional development for counselors in the FY24 budget proposal. This is the cost of the professional development in the first year and Kamras will need to ensure that this funding continues in the following years. The SHAB can help justify the costs of professional development and can alleviate concerns about where the money is going.

Step 3: Budget Approval

The next step will be the school board approving the proposed Kamras budget. The school board has supported his mental health initiatives in the past and adding in the component that this professional development would focus on dropouts could make this option more attractive. The School Board has cut \$6 million out of the superintendent's FY23 proposed budget which highlights a potential worst-case scenario (Graff, 2022). Funds could continue to be cut and this would make expansion in professional development difficult to propose. Applying for outside grants would be the best way around this problem. The Jenkins Foundation is one Richmond-based foundation that provides yearly grants to promote a healthier Richmond.

Step 4: Coach Training

After the funds are secured for this policy, the next step will be training the coach that will lead the professional development session. One coach will be needed to lead the 42 counselors. This coach can be one of the counselors who has experience with 6-year plans and helping students who consider dropping out. RPS can recruit this coach within, but if no one takes up the offer, they can look to outside organizations. The National Dropout Center provides virtual and in-person professional development. They can be a valuable resource for training and hiring a coach if one is not available.

Step 5: Market & Monitor

The final step is ensuring that information is sent out prior to the session and making it clear that this is mandatory for all counselors. RPS can market this as part of an effort to improve the mental health services in schools. Different counselors could also take over the RPS social media accounts for a day to tell their stories and explain how they help students. RPS has already been doing this with different art teachers and it has been a great way to bring a variety of people into the classrooms. This marketing effort will help maintain support among parents and students by allowing them to understand the value that counselors provide in schools. Once underway, RPS should continue to monitor the impact of this professional development. Staff surveys will be a helpful indication of counselor buy-in. RPS should continue to examine dropout data at each high school to see if some counselors are performing higher than others. Counselors who are performing at a high level can help share their strategies at the annual development meetings.

Conclusion

Students transitioning back into in-person classes are facing a multitude of challenges. School counselors are a crucial resource for students to utilize to help the transition back to in-person instruction, but also to help acclimate students heading into high school. The ability for counselors to tackle both of these problems makes them an important area for RPS to focus on developing their professional skills. This is not a high cost alternative for RPS and has strong research to support the increased investment in counselor development. The long-term promise of this alternative is that it creates a strong network for students to connect with when they face increased academic and social pressures. Seeing more students walk across the stage at graduation will be possible through this intervention as counselors will be able to effectively identify and engage with students who may be struggling. Graduating from high school opens several doors for students and this alternative will help create more of those opportunities and build a stronger RPS community in the process.



Graduates of Huguenot High School beginning to walk towards the stage at the Diamond for the first in-person graduation since the start of the pandemic.

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Appendix: Cost-Analysis

Alternative 1: Continue the Status Quo

ASSUMPTIONS

WHERE FROM?

General

Timeframe =10 years

Decrease in dropout rates (%)	2.70%	Taylor et al., 2017
Number of Current EL Dropouts	269	RPS Data
269 dropouts * .027	7.26	RPS Data
9th and 10th graders currently enrolled	180.00	RPS Data
Social Discount Rate	3.00%	Social program

Per-Pupil Expenditures

Classroom Salaries	\$6,984.92	Buffalo City
Other Instructional Salaries	\$827.53	Buffalo City
Instructional Benefits	\$4,206.22	Buffalo City
Professional Development	\$21.70	Buffalo City
School Administrative Salaries	\$782.06	Buffalo City
School Administrative Benefits	\$421.06	Buffalo City
All Other Salaries	\$443.33	Buffalo City
All Other Benefits	\$238.69	Buffalo City
All Other Non-personnel Expenditures	\$288.52	Buffalo City
180 students * Regular RPS per pupil spending (\$14,023)	\$2,524,140.00	USANews
180 students * Program per pupil spending (\$14,214.04)	\$2,558,527.20	Buffalo City
Difference between average and new program	\$34,387.20	

Costs

Newcomer Academy

Year 0

Number of Dropouts

Total Costs

Total Costs

\$34,387

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0

\$34,387.20

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS over 10 years

\$327,716.99

Outcome

Number of students prevented from dropping out

43.58

Cost per student dropout prevented

\$7,520.24

Newcomer Academy Discounted at 3%

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
	0	1	2	3	4	
Number of Dropouts	7	7	7	7	7	
Total Costs						
Total Costs	\$34,387	\$33,386	\$32,413	\$31,469	\$30,553	
2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	NPV (2022 USD)
5	6	7	8	9	10	44
7	7	7	7	7	7	
\$29,663	\$28,799	\$27,960	\$27,146	\$26,355	\$25,587	\$327,717

Alternative 2: Improve Counselor Quality

ASSUMPTIONS

WHERE FROM?

General

Timeframe =10 years

Decrease in dropout rates (%)

3.00%

Mulhern

Number of Current Dropouts

497

RPS Data

497 dropouts * .03

14.91

RPS Data

Social Discount Rate

3.00%

Social program

Personnel

Counselors (42 × \$110.06/h × 1hr)

\$4,622.52

Barrett & Pas

Coach (1 coach × \$119.54/h × 1 hr)

\$119.54

Barrett & Pas

Administrators (5 admin × \$135.11/h × 1 hr)

\$675.55

Barrett & Pas

Training

Mileage (33 miles roundtrip × \$0.585/mile × 48 participants)

\$926.64

Barrett & Pas

Travel time (1 hour × Total lost wages from personnel costs)

\$5,417.61

Barrett & Pas

Materials costs (48 participants × \$5/participant)

\$240.00

Barrett & Pas

Facilities

Lunch (48 Participants x \$15)

\$720.00

Barrett & Pas

Building Use costs (\$200 2 hour minimum)

\$200.00

RPS Budget

Costs

Counselor Professional Development

Year 0

Number of Dropouts

Personnel

Personnel Costs

\$5,418

Training

Training Costs

\$6,584

Facilities

Facilities Costs

\$920.00

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0

\$12,921.86

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS over 10 years

\$123,147.95

Outcome

Number of students prevented from dropping out

164.01

Cost per student dropout prevented

\$750.86

Counselor Professional Development Discounted at 3%

	2022 0	2023 1	2024 2	2025 3	2026 4	2027 5
Number of Dropouts	15	15	15	15	15	15
Personnel Costs	\$5,418	\$5,260	\$5,107	\$4,958	\$4,813	\$4,673
Training						
Training Costs	\$6,584	\$6,392	\$6,206	\$6,026	\$5,850	\$5,680
Facilities						
Facilities Costs	\$920	\$893	\$867	\$842	\$817	\$794

	2028 6	2029 7	2030 8	2031 9	2032 10	NPV (2022 USD)
Number of Dropouts	15	15	15	15	15	164
Personnel Costs	\$4,537	\$4,405	\$4,277	\$4,152	\$4,031	\$51,631
Training						
Training Costs	\$5,514	\$5,354	\$5,198	\$5,046	\$4,899	\$62,749
Facilities						
Facilities Costs	\$770	\$748	\$726	\$705	\$685	\$8,768

Alternative 3: Improve Teacher Quality

ASSUMPTIONS	WHERE FROM?
General	
Timeframe =10 years	
Decrease in dropout rates (%)	6.00%
Number of Current Dropouts	497
497 dropouts * .06	29.82
Social Discount Rate	3.00%
Personnel	
Teachers ($400 \times \$79/h \times 2.5\text{hrs}$)	\$79,000.00
ESL Coaches (5 coaches $\times 118.50 \times 1 \text{ hour}$)	\$590.00
SEL Coach (5 coaches $\times \$119.54/h \times 1.5\text{hrs}$)	\$896.55
Administrators (5 admin $\times \$135.11/h \times 2.5\text{hrs}$)	\$1,688.88
Training	
Mileage (16.5 miles roundtrip $\times \$0.585/\text{mile} \times 410 \text{ participants}$)	\$7,915.05
Travel time (30 minutes \times Total lost wages from personnel costs)	\$40,792.71
Materials costs (410 participants $\times \$5/\text{participant}$)	\$2,050.00
Facilities	
Lunch (410 Participants $\times \$15$)	\$6,150.00
Building Use costs	\$288.00

Costs	
Teacher Professional Development	
Year 0	
Number of Dropouts	
Personnel	
Personnel Costs	\$82,175
Training	
Training Costs	\$50,758
Facilities	
Facilities Costs	\$6,438.00
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0	\$139,371.19
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS over 10 years	\$1,328,235.69

Outcome	
Number of students prevented from dropping out	328.02
Cost per student dropout prevented	\$4,049.25

Teacher Professional Development Discounted at 3%

	2022 0	2023 1	2024 2	2025 3	2026 4	2027 5
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Number of Dropouts	30	30	30	30	30	30
Personnel Costs	\$82,175	\$79,782	\$77,458	\$75,202	\$73,012	\$70,885
Training						
Training Costs	\$50,758	\$49,279	\$47,844	\$46,451	\$45,098	\$43,784
Facilities						
Facilities Costs	\$6,438	\$6,250	\$6,068	\$5,892	\$5,720	\$5,553

	2028 6	2029 7	2030 8	2031 9	2032 10	NPV (2022)
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Number of Dropouts	30	30	30	30	30	328
Personnel Costs	\$68,821	\$66,816	\$64,870	\$62,981	\$61,146	\$783,148
Training						
Training Costs	\$42,509	\$41,271	\$40,069	\$38,902	\$37,769	\$483,732
Facilities						
Facilities Costs	\$5,392	\$5,235	\$5,082	\$4,934	\$4,790	\$61,355

Alternative 4: School-Based Transition Program

ASSUMPTIONS

WHERE FROM?

General

Timeframe =10 years

Decrease in dropout rates (%)	4.30%	Salinitri
Number of Current Dropouts	497	RPS Data
Number of Freshman students	1810	RPS Data
Number of Peer Leaders Needed (15:1 ratio)	120	Johnson et al
Cohort '25 dropouts	63	RPS Data
497 dropouts * .043	21.37	RPS Data
Social Discount Rate	3.00%	Social program

Personnel

Teacher/Advisor Stipends (\$2,000 x 15 teachers)	\$30,000.00
Teachers (15 x \$79/h x 1hrs) Hour wage	

Training

Residential Training Mileage (33 miles roundtrip x \$0.585/mile x 15 participants)	\$289.58	Barrett & Pas
Overnight Training Mileage (33 miles roundtrip x \$0.585/mile x 15 participants)	\$289.58	Barrett & Pas
Residential Training Travel time (1 hour x hour of lost wages)	\$1,185.00	Barrett & Pas
Overnight Travel Time (1 hour x hour of lost wages)	\$1,185.00	Barrett & Pas
3 Residential Training Days (\$850 x 15 teachers)	\$12,750.00	Becoming a Teacher
2 Advisor Training days during the school year (15 x \$79/h x 8hrs)	\$9,480.00	Barrett & Pas
Overnight retreat (\$285 x 15 teachers)	\$4,275.00	Becoming a Teacher
Materials costs (1810 students x \$5/participant)	\$9,050.00	Barrett & Pas

Facilities

Lunch (15 Participants x \$15 x two advisor training days)	\$450.00	Barrett & Pas
Building Use costs	\$400.00	RPS Data

Costs

School Based Transition

Year 0

Number of Dropouts

21

Personnel

Personnel Costs \$30,000

Training

Training Costs \$38,504

Facilities

Facilities Costs \$850.00

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0 \$69,354.15

Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS over 10 years \$539,620.61

Outcome

Number of students prevented from dropping out

235.08

Cost per student dropout prevented

\$2,295.47

School-Based Transition Discounted at 3%

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Dropouts	21	21	21	21	21	21
Personnel Costs	\$30,000	\$29,126	\$28,278	\$27,454	\$26,655	\$25,878
Training						
Training Costs	\$38,504	\$23,572	\$22,886	\$22,219	\$21,572	\$20,944
Facilities						
Facilities Costs	\$850	\$825	\$801	\$778	\$755	\$733
	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	NPV (2022 USD)
	6	7	8	9	10	235
	21	21	21	21	21	235
	\$25,125	\$24,393	\$23,682	\$22,993	\$22,323	\$285,906
	\$20,334	\$19,742	\$19,167	\$18,608	\$18,066	\$245,614
	\$712	\$691	\$671	\$651	\$632	\$8,101