



Oak Grove Elementary School March 2010 Newsletter

A Message From the Mayor

Dear City Resident,

Since before taking office, education has been and still is a priority for me. I've worked tirelessly to make strides for the children of our City, and now that we are moving forward with the construction of new schools, I want to thank you for your involvement and your input that has helped us reach this stage. This newsletter is one tool that we will use to share information and to keep you informed. It is also important to me to continue to receive your input as we work to Build a Better Richmond.

We have an obligation to ensure that our schools provide children with world-class skills and knowledge. I'm looking forward to our schools being models of innovation and creativity in urban education and I look forward to our continued work together towards that end.

Thank you.

Dwight C. Jones

Mayor, City of Richmond



A Letter From the Superintendent

Dear Parent, Partner and Stakeholder:

A new era has begun in Richmond-- a time of cooperation, compromise and concern for doing what is best for Richmond City residents. Mayor Dwight C. Jones, along with members of the Richmond City Council and School Board, is leading our city's renaissance with his bold, visionary and ambitious Building a Better Richmond program.

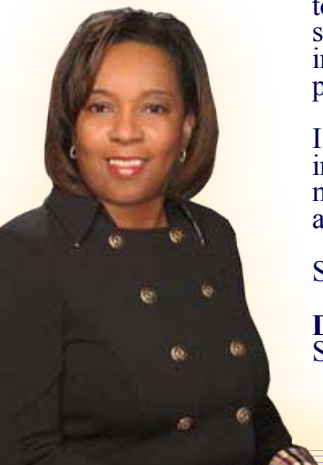
As Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools, I am particularly excited and pleased with the Mayor's commitment to include capital improvement and school construction projects as an integral part of his vision. The Building a Better Richmond schools program represents a unique opportunity for the district to continue its trajectory of success by ensuring our students attend technologically-advanced facilities that offer a 21st century learning environment so they may compete globally and then excel at 21st-century careers. Moreover, it represents enhanced neighborhood revitalization by providing new, state-of-the-art facilities that will serve as both model community centers and model centers of academic achievement, where learning extends beyond the school day.

Indeed, we are witnessing the dawn of a new era in Richmond, as together, we build a better city through bricks and mortar, through a shared sense of community spirit and pride, and through an unyielding desire and unbreakable determination to provide this city's young people with world-class educational facilities.

I hope you remain as excited as I, and continue to provide valuable input not only on how these new facilities can further student achievement, but on how they can contribute to creating better neighborhoods and more livable communities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yvonne W. Brandon
Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools



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RPS Kicks off Community Meetings to Gather Public Input

Richmond Public Schools held five meetings throughout the city in December to share information and obtain community input on plans to build new schools for Broad Rock Elementary, Oak Grove Elementary, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle and Huguenot High. Held in each of the city's four quadrants, meetings brought parents and residents face-to-face with school administrators and project managers to collaborate on developing the best educational programming, community use and facility design options for the new schools.

“Our goal is to build new schools that will meet the needs of 21st century learners, as well as serve as hubs for the community,” Dr. Yvonne Brandon, RPS Superintendent, told meeting attendees, “Your input is critical to the success of this project, so this is just the beginning of a comprehensive effort to keep you engaged in this process.”

Dr. Brandon, along with Mr. John Winter, Chief Capital Projects Manager for the city of Richmond, presented an overview of educational goals for facilities, outline of the projects and their schedule. Participants completed individual response forms, spent time in small groups to discuss and prioritize educational and community opportunities, and then presented recommendations to the entire audience. While each quadrant of the city shared concerns unique to their neighborhoods, there were also common themes discussed at all of the meetings. Examples include:

Educational Opportunities:

- Access to technology (integration into the curriculum, wireless technology, laptops)
- Athletics/fitness/wellness
- Before and after school (including night) opportunities
- Life-Skills/practical learning – business internships, apprenticeships, mentoring
- Science and technology emphasis/labs
- Extracurricular programs – arts, sciences, sports, etc.
- Early college credits and advanced curriculum



Community Opportunities:

- Technology
- Health and wellness clinics
- Fitness/recreation/athletic facilities
- After school youth programs
- Life skills (parenting, job transition/job skills)
- Adult education/literacy – GED, second language, workforce skills
- Part of the jobs created by the construction of the schools



Oak Grove Elementary School

Design & Construction Summary: The New School

The Oak Grove Elementary School (OGES) project includes the design and construction of a new 650 pupil facility on a completely new site. A review of the existing OGES site determined that it was not large enough to accommodate the existing facility and a newly constructed facility. A determination was made that it was not in the student's best interest to move them to temporary facilities while the existing structure was demolished and the new school built. Initially, the Ruffin Road Elementary School site was selected as the best alternative to the existing site. However, after further review it was determined that due to its location and being bordered on three sides by warehouses and industrial property, that site was not suitable. Therefore, a review of possible alternative sites is currently underway and is slated to be confirmed March 2010.

Phase 1 Design activities include programming, education specifications development, schematic design and review and updating the initial project budget. Currently, OGES is in the latter stages of Phase 1 Design. The programming and education specifications are scheduled to be completed on or about March 12, 2010 at which time a final report will be issued to Richmond Public Schools (RPS) for acceptance.

The architecture firm for OGES is VMDO Architects. VMDO held its initial project meeting with the reconstituted RPS elementary school team. VMDO has also held several meetings with the RPS design team and the OGES Principal to discuss Programming and corresponding Education Specifications. The goals of these reoccurring meetings are to put the architect together with the OGES students, parents, teachers, administrators and community in an attempt to more clearly define the curriculum delivery method and preferred space alignment.

Ground-breaking and site utilities work is presently scheduled to begin November 2010 with the remaining construction scheduled to start in May 2011. This schedule allows for the final completion of construction on or about May 2012 with students occupying the space on the first day of school in August 2012. Demolition of the existing building and final site activities will be complete around the end of that same year.

Meet the Architects

VMDO ARCHITECTS

VMDO Architects is a professional corporation headquartered in Charlottesville, Virginia. Since its founding in 1976, the firm has offered full architectural services including programming and planning, schematic design, construction documentation and specification writing, site planning and construction administration. The firm consists of a professional staff of 39 people, including 16 licensed architects, 23 LEED accredited professionals and 8 principals.

Message from the Principal

Dear Oak Grove Community,

The building of a new Oak Grove Elementary school is a significant investment in our children's futures. I am excited about the unique opportunity of contributing to the development of a community school that will set the standard for the 21st century.

The technologically advanced "green" school will stand as a beacon in our community, lighting the way for new hope and prosperity.

I envision the new school as a silent teacher; its beauty wrapped around educational programs that will teach the whole child and support the needs of the community. With help from all stakeholders, we will develop the school that the students, teachers, parents, and community partners have dreamed about. It makes us proud to be a part of Richmond Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Jannie Laursen
Principal, Oak Grove Elementary School

*"I envision the school
as a silent teacher..."*



Jannie Laursen,
Principal

Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly is the Building a Better Richmond Capital Improvement Program?

The Building a Better Richmond Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a fiscally-prudent and educationally-imperative plan to build new schools in the city of Richmond. With Mayor Dwight C. Jones at the helm, The Building a Better Richmond CIP has moved to implementation with the construction of four new schools as he strongly believes that the children of Richmond deserve the best possible place to live and learn. Mayor Jones named the program for the city's capital improvement projects, "Building a Better Richmond" as that is his objective for the city of Richmond. Education remains a priority for the Mayor and he is working with Richmond Public Schools to build a world class school system.

What is Richmond Public School's goal in building these new schools?

One-third of Richmond Public schools buildings is over 70 years old and another one-third is at least 50 years old. Only four schools have been built since 1998. The city of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools are committed to the education of the city's youth by building new facilities equipped with the technology and educational specifications needed for students to become globally competitive in the 21st century workforce, to streamline operational costs with more modern, energy-efficient buildings and to encourage enrollment by offering top-tier learning facilities.

What kind of information are you seeking to acquire from the community during the community meetings?

The goal is for the schools of RPS to serve as the hub for communities around the city —the place that brings neighborhoods together both during and after school hours. The city of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools are hosting a series of public forums to gather feedback on community use, as well as best methods of communicating processes and project updates, etc.

What percentage of monies is being spent on bricks and mortar in comparison to teachers, books, materials and other classroom supplies?

The funds for the Building a Better Richmond Schools CIP are a part of the city's Capital Improvement Plan budget. The funds used for instruction and instructional technology are part of Richmond Public School's general fund budget. The RPS FY09 general fund budget is \$259.9 million. Seventy-seven percent of that budget is spent on instruction and instructional technology.

What will be the transition process for students? Will they have to miss school?

Current schedules are in place to make the transition as seamless as possible for students. Instruction will not be interrupted as a

result of new construction and/or major renovations. We also anticipate "instructional" opportunities on the project sites for the students during construction.

How will Richmond Public Schools, City Council and the Mayor work together to move this project forward?

Collaboration has been a key success factor of the current administration throughout all of its initiatives and is reflected in the implementation of the school projects. RPS, City Council and the Mayor are all in agreement that education is a top priority for Richmond. In fact, eight City Council members are co-sponsors of the Richmond Public Schools Design & Construction Program Phase I plan resolution that prioritizes the building of four new schools. Our teams are and will continue to work together to keep the project moving forward, ensuring that the community is engaged and proper resources are allocated.

How can I get more information about the Mayor's Building a Better Richmond plan?

For more information on the city of Richmond, Mayor Dwight Jones, and the Building a Better Richmond Program, visit www.richmondgov.com or sign-up to receive the Mayor's "Building a Better Richmond" newsletter by e-mailing PressOffice@richmondgov.com.

For more information on the
Building a Better Richmond
Schools Capital Improvement Program
visit, www.buildingabetterrichmond.com

Upcoming Meetings:

Coffee & Tea with the Superintendent

March 29
Greene: 8:00am
George Mason: 12:00pm
Ginter Park: 2:15pm
Thomas Jefferson: 5:00pm



PTA Meetings:

Huguenot, March 9 @6:30pm
Summer Hill/Ruffin Road, March 18 @6:00pm
Oak Grove, March 25 @ 5:00pm
Broad Rock, March 25, @6:00pm
MLK, March 31, @ 5:30pm