A coalition of coalitions designed to identify and align efforts in support of children from cradle to career.

Successful Students • Productive Citizens • Thriving Region
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Bridging Richmond is a collaborative partnership for the Greater Richmond region designed to ensure that all the young people in our locality have the support necessary to succeed academically and to enter meaningful careers. The quality of education in our region is directly related to our economic vitality and, ultimately, to our quality of life both individually and collectively.

We are not alone in this important work. As part of the Education Partnership Implementation Network (EPIN), Bridging Richmond has the ongoing support of a number of national nonprofit organizations including Living Cities, a philanthropic collaborative of 22 of the world’s largest foundations and financial institutions, and the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, a network of public research universities dedicated to improving urban life and America’s competitiveness in a global society. We are also supported by another long-standing collaborative partnership in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, known as Strive.

Equally important is the local commitment to creating a seamless education system from cradle to career. All the sectors of our community have participated in framing the foundation of Bridging Richmond, including early childhood, K-12, business, philanthropic, nonprofit and civic leaders.

This annual report provides a snapshot of Bridging Richmond efforts during the first year. As you will see, the goals have been crafted to reflect our commitment to every youth and to inspire us in sustaining action and to data-driven continuous improvement. The outcome indicators will help us identify and implement evidence-based practices to better align and leverage resources.

The data presented here tell the story of how we currently measure up on each indicator, and point the way for our future efforts. We appreciate your interest and gratefully welcome your involvement in our critical work — supporting the children in our community to ensure that they are ready to become contributing members of a thriving region.

Best wishes,

Michael Rao, Ph.D.
Chairman, Bridging Richmond Executive Council
President, VCU and the VCU Health System
The Bridging Richmond story

A journey from cradle to career.

A baby’s first word. A toddler’s first step. A child enters kindergarten. Book reports. Algebra. Afterschool activities. Graduation. Job opportunities. College. Careers. These snapshots capture just a few of the many moments in the educational journey, from cradle to career. For some, the road is smooth. For others, it’s filled with twists and turns.

Bridging Richmond, part of the Education Partnership Implementation Network, promotes academic success and “bridges” resources across all segments of the educational pipeline — early childhood, K-12, college/technical training, careers — within the city of Richmond and the surrounding counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico. Its value lies in communication, coordination and accountability at all levels.
The national network

In 2009, a new cradle-to-career partnership for the greater Richmond region was created as part of a national network supported in part through funding from the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities and the Living Cities Foundation. As a member of USU, Virginia Commonwealth University was selected through a competitive process as one of four anchor institutions in the U.S. to model the very successful Strive partnership in Cincinnati and to lead effective and innovative P-20 partnerships in each community. This network, known as the Education Partnership Implementation Network, includes VCU, California State University-East Bay, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, University of Houston and Strive of Cincinnati. VCU is well-positioned to serve as the primary convener of this important regional partnership, which focuses on defining and implementing evidence-based practices to improve and enhance the cradle-to-career educational pipeline.

Committed to a promise

From its start, Bridging Richmond adopted Strive’s promise that every student in the region will be prepared for school, be supported in and out of school, succeed academically, enroll in college or career training, and graduate and enter a meaningful career. In its first year of work, Bridging Richmond engaged top leadership from all segments of the region to discuss how the community can better support learning for all of our children. Together, the group identified six goals, representing benchmarks on the Bridge to Success continuum, and six transition points between them to guide the work of Bridging Richmond.
Imagine that all of our youth are prepared and supported, are academically successful, enroll and graduate, and enter careers.

Bridging Richmond identified six goals that reflect the commitment of the partnership to give every child in the region the support and educational experiences necessary to be successful from cradle to career. As students move through the education pipeline, they develop the academic skills to proceed to the next level in the pre-K through grade 12 continuum and are prepared to enter and complete some form of postsecondary education, including community college, university/college or technical certification. We must acknowledge that our young people may find themselves in challenging circumstances and may make decisions that are counterproductive to their success. This reality neither dampens our enthusiasm nor diminishes our commitment to every young person. We are inspired and aspire to achieve these goals.

**Collecting baseline data**

Bridging Richmond is committed to using data-informed decision-making to accomplish the goals of the partnership. The individual networks and partners must commit to advancing the goals of Bridging Richmond and to assessing students on the key indicators. Bridging Richmond will provide technical support to the partners in collecting and analyzing data, evaluating the success of strategies currently in use, and reviewing best practices in the field to identify other documented strategies that might be implemented.

Research has begun to map assets, determine what works and identify where improvements are needed for each goal area. The first step in this process is to determine baseline measures for all of our key indicators. Where possible, data on each indicator has been collected for a three-year period and averaged across the three years to provide a single baseline point against which progress can be measured. Where data are collected across units of differing size (e.g., school divisions, universities), the averages were weighted to take into account the varying sizes of the units.
We used the following criteria to establish indicators for each goal.

- The indicator must be a valid measure of the concepts of the six Bridging Richmond goals measuring student success from birth through postsecondary education and into a career.
- The indicator must be easily understandable to local stakeholders.
- The indicator must be reasonably similar across states and school divisions.
- The data must be produced by a trusted source before they are used.
- Priority is given to including indicators that are equivalent across school divisions and that have the ability to be compared.
- All or most of the indicators must be affordable to gather and report.
- The data should be available consistently over time.
- Each indicator should be changeable to a significant degree by local action and be useful in the day-to-day work of future networks dedicated to positive impact on key strategic indicators.
**Aspirational Goal 1:**

**Every child will be prepared for school through early childhood education.**

Early childhood education — preschool through third grade — is a critical component of the early educational experiences that provide the foundation for future learning. One of its major learning outcomes is the acquisition of literacy fundamentals, which are predictive of future reading success.

The Early Intervention Reading Initiative was established in Virginia to help participating school divisions identify children in need of additional reading instruction and to provide early intervention services. Additionally, children who do not meet the appropriate literacy benchmarks must receive interventions based on statewide literacy screening called Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, or PALS.

Since every child’s ability to read is the gateway for learning all other content, reading progress is monitored in the early elementary years. Typically, third-grade reading achievement is used to measure how well a student is prepared for school. Reading on grade level is an indicator of early success and provides the foundation for subsequent learning. The primary system for monitoring and accountability in Virginia is the Standards of Learning, or SOL.
Outcome Indicator No. 1: Kindergarteners needing early intervention based on PALS-K (fall and spring)

- The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening is a measure of a child's knowledge of several important literacy fundamentals: phonological awareness, alphabet recognition, concept of word, knowledge of letter sounds and spelling. PALS-K provides a direct means of matching literacy instruction to specific literacy needs and provides a means of identifying each child’s level in acquisition of these fundamental literacy skills.

Outcome Indicator No. 2: Third-grade Standards of Learning in Reading

- These rigorous academic standards, collectively known as the Standards of Learning, measure achievement through annual tests and alternative and alternate assessments. The system provides individual schools, school divisions and the Virginia Department of Education with critical data to inform the development and implementation of effective instructional strategies and best practices.

This indicator is the percent of students who pass the third-grade SOL in Reading test with at least basic skills (Total Pass Rate) and those who demonstrate high levels of reading skill (Advanced Pass Rate). Advanced reading skills are a predictor of readiness for postsecondary education.
What the data tell us: This data represent dropout rates for the 2008 and 2009 school years. In the region, the dropout rates averaged about 9.55 percent.

Source: Virginia Department of Education website
Aspirational Goal 2:
Every child will be supported inside and outside of school.

The quality level and amount of support students receive inside and outside of school heavily influences their ability to succeed. Support often crosses a variety of areas including academic, social and emotional aspects, and may involve school, home and other organizations. Children who receive the full spectrum of support are less likely to drop out of school and will have hope, engagement in their own learning and a sense of well-being.

One measure of students’ beliefs and dispositions is the Gallup Student Poll, sponsored by Gallup, America’s Promise Alliance and the American Association of School Administrators. It is a multiyear effort used to assess the hope, engagement and well-being of students in grades five through 12 in America’s public schools. It consists of 20 core items measuring three variables: hope, engagement and well-being. These variables affect educational outcomes and can be improved with deliberate action. Unlike other measures that capture student behaviors (e.g., test scores, dropout rates, graduation rates), this survey assesses students’ views of school and the future and provides teachers, administrators and community leaders with a picture of students’ feelings and desires.

Outcome indicator No. 3: Dropout rates (eighth grade, high school)

- To comply with federal requirements, schools annually report on the number of students in grades seven through 12 who drop out during the school year. These estimated dropout percentages represent the number of dropouts for a given school year divided by the membership on Sept. 30 of that school year.

Longitudinal student data allows the Virginia Department of Education to calculate accurate cohort dropout rates for students entering the ninth grade for the first time and their results four years later. This cohort dropout rate was first reported for the class of 2008.

Outcome indicator No. 4: Student engagement (Gallup)

- This indicator includes the Hope Index: the percentage of students who report being hopeful, stuck or discouraged; the Engagement Index: the percentage of students who report they are engaged, not engaged or actively disengaged; and the Well-being Index: the percentage of students who report that they are thriving, struggling or suffering.

Data: The Gallup Poll will be piloted in the region in October 2010. Baseline data for the region will be available for the 2011-12 report.
Aspirational Goal 3:
Every child will succeed academically.

Student academic success is the core objective of all of the efforts of Bridging Richmond.

As the final year of elementary school, fifth grade represents a key transition point in education. Achievement scores from this year provide an index of the skills students have acquired prior to entry into middle school and are used to determine instructional needs. Scores can also be used to assess how school systems are doing, to determine how resources are allocated and to track individual school improvement over time.

The SOL provide criterion-referenced tests designed to measure mastery of content at the time of administration. The SOL measure achievement through annual tests and alternative and alternate assessments. The system provides individual schools, school divisions and the Virginia Department of Education with critical data to inform the development and implementation of effective instructional strategies and best practices. Although the primary system of accountability in Virginia, it is only one of many indicators used to inform instructional decisions made by and on behalf of students.

Eighth grade represents another key educational transition as the final year of middle school. The SOL test scores for this grade provide an index of the skills that students have acquired prior to entering high school. This transition year also serves as a key point in students’ commitment to education. Academic difficulty at this point is a clear risk factor for dropping out of school.

The availability of advanced programs, such as Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate programs, functions as one index of the quality of educational opportunity provided to students.

Students who earn a Virginia high school diploma are more likely to possess the skills and knowledge required for success in the workplace than their peers who drop out of school. The diploma signifies that students have met the requirements and are eligible for study beyond high school.
Outcome indicator No. 5: Fifth-grade SOL in Reading and Math pass rates

- This indicator is the percent of students who pass the fifth-grade reading and math SOL tests at a level demonstrating basic skills (basic pass rate) and the percent of students demonstrating advanced skills (advanced pass level).

What the data tell us: Pass rates for the fifth-grade SOL in Reading test indicate that 92 percent of students are demonstrating at least a basic level of skill across the region, while 43 percent are performing at advanced levels. These rates are slightly higher than the statewide basic (89 percent) and advanced (39 percent) rates. Pass rates for the fifth-grade SOL in Math test indicate that almost 91 percent of students demonstrate at least basic levels of performance in fifth-grade mathematics, while 55 percent perform at the advanced level. Again, these levels are slightly higher than the overall statewide basic (88 percent) and advanced (53 percent) rates. However each year 8 percent of fifth graders (about 890 each year) fail to meet even basic levels in reading, and 9.4 percent (about 1,045 students each year) fail to meet even basic levels in mathematics.

Source: Virginia Department of Education

Outcome indicator No. 6: Eighth-grade SOL in Reading and Math pass rates

- This indicator is the percent of students who pass the eighth-grade reading and math SOL tests at a level demonstrating basic skills (basic pass rate) and the percent of students demonstrating advanced skills (advanced pass level).

What the data tell us: Eighth-grade SOL in Reading test pass rates indicate that almost 85 percent of students in the region demonstrate at least a basic level of eighth-grade reading skills, while 39 percent demonstrate advanced skills. These are slightly higher than the overall statewide basic (83 percent) and advanced (36 percent) pass rates. For the eighth-grade SOL in Math test, 82 percent of students demonstrated at least basic eighth-grade mathematics skills, while 46 percent demonstrated skills at the advanced level. These values match the statewide pass rates. Over the baseline period, 15.4 percent of students (an average of 1,778 annually) fail to meet the basic level in reading, and 17.8 percent of students (an average of 2,055 annually) fail to meet the basic level in mathematics. For both reading and mathematics, the percent of students passing at the basic and advanced level declined from fifth grade to eighth grade across the region.

Source: Virginia Department of Education
Outcome indicator No. 7: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual and technical certificate enrollments pass rates

- Students who successfully complete AP courses by passing AP examinations or successfully complete IB programs and earn the IB diploma may receive college credit prior to enrollment. Participation in AP courses or the IB program helps students develop writing and problem-solving skills and they may develop better study habits. Participation is also associated with higher grades and higher on-time graduation rates from college.

Dual enrollment courses allow high school students to be enrolled in courses that satisfy requirements for high school graduation while receiving college credit. Technical certificate programs provide opportunities for students to receive training and certification in specific trades that provide entry into professions.

This indicator is the percent of students in the region who enroll in AP, IB, or dual and technical certificate enrollment experiences.

What the data tell us: Across the region, 13.4 percent of all high school students enroll for at least one AP course, while 11.1 percent of enrolled students take the accompanying exam. A total of 7.87 percent are involved in dual enrollment courses that allow the student to earn both high school and postsecondary credit. Only a small percentage of students are enrolled in the IB programs or the Governor’s School program.

Source: Virginia Department of Education
Outcome indicator No. 8: High school graduation rates

Completion of high school or its equivalent is the minimum level of education sought by most employers. Unemployment rates are lower and lifetime earnings are substantially higher for high school graduates than high school dropouts.

This indicator is a measure of the percentage of students in the region who graduate from high school with their ninth-grade cohort. It does not include students who drop out of school and return at a later date or students who receive a GED. This language is the accepted definition of “graduation rate.”
Aspirational Goal 4:
Every high school graduate will enroll in some form of postsecondary education.

Ensuring that more students enroll in educational experiences beyond high school is critical to our region’s economic vitality. Such experiences are typically referred to as postsecondary education and include programs of study in community colleges, colleges and universities; and training in technical certificate programs. For success beyond high school, students need rigorous and deliberate preparation.

Outcome indicator No. 9: Enrollment in postsecondary education

StudentTracker is a program developed by the National Student Clearinghouse that provides continuing collegiate enrollment and degree information on high school alumni.

This indicator is the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in some type of college, including less than two-year, two- and four-year public and private, part-time and full-time, as well as in-state and out-of-state.

Complete data were not available at the time of this report and will be available starting with the 2011 report.

Outcome indicator No. 10: First-to-second year college retention rates

The overall graduation rate is also known as the “Student Right to Know” or Integrated and Postsecondary Education Data System graduation rate. It tracks the progress of students who begin their studies as full-time, first-time degree- or certificate-seeking students and identifies those who complete a degree or other award, such as a certificate, within 150 percent of “normal time” for completing the program in which they are enrolled.

This indicator is the first-to-second year retention rate for first-time, full-time college students.
Aspirational Goal 5:

Every young person will complete some form of postsecondary education.

Successful completion of educational experiences beyond high school is becoming increasingly important to America’s economic future. According to a June 2010 report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, for the past 35 years, the percentage of jobs requiring some form of educational experience beyond high school grew from 28 percent to 59 percent, and it is expected to grow to 63 percent over the next decade. In addition, the U.S. will need 22 million new workers with college degrees by 2018, and another 4.7 million workers with postsecondary certificates. In order to meet these projections, America’s colleges and universities will have to increase the number of degrees or postsecondary certificates awarded by 10 percent annually. In Virginia, it is projected that 64 percent of all existing jobs (2.8 million) will require some training beyond high school by 2018, and that between 2008 and 2018, 72 percent of all new jobs will require some training beyond high school.
Outcome Indicator No. 11: Six-year graduation rates
(first-time, full-time enrolled students)

- The baccalaureate degree is one of the important credentials for entry into a career. Nationally, in 2007 almost one-third of all jobs required at least a baccalaureate degree, almost double the percentage from 1973. This trend is likely to continue, making earning a baccalaureate degree even more important for career entry. Most colleges and universities use the baccalaureate degree as the preferred graduation rate measure.

This indicator is the percent of first-time, full-time enrolled students who graduate with a baccalaureate degree within six years of initial enrollment. It does not include part-time students, transfer or re-enrolling students, or students pursuing advanced degrees.

Outcome indicator No. 12: Associate degrees/professional certificates awarded

- Community colleges play an increasingly important role in providing students with postsecondary-education opportunities. Students enroll in community colleges to pursue technical training in a trade, to earn an associate degree, to take foundational courses before transferring to a four-year institution or simply to take courses for educational enhancement or enjoyment. Those who earn technical certificates, associate degrees or who enhance their skills with specific courses are expected to make up 29 percent of the workforce by 2018, up from 12 percent in 1973. Community colleges also serve as a gateway to the baccalaureate degree, as students transfer into four-year institutions.

This indicator is the number of technical certificates and associate degrees awarded and the number of students transferring into four-year institutions.

What the data tell us: These data indicate the number of students completing formal programs leading to an associate degree or certificate, or completion of an approved transfer program. However many students complete courses at community colleges and transfer to four-year institutions without completing a formal program. Data on the total number of community college students in the region transferring to four-year institutions will be included starting with the 2011 Report.

Source: Virginia Community College System database
What the data tell us: The percentage of adults (age 25 and older) with a bachelor’s degree or higher has held steady between 31.43 percent and 34.65 percent.

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and the 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS)
Aspirational Goal 6:

Every young person will enter a career and contribute to the civic infrastructure of the region.

The quality of life in any region is directly related to the quality of its educational programs. The continuum for these programs constitutes the educational pipeline that begins in the preschool experience and ends with entry into a productive career. With a strategic focus on transition points, the continuous education pipeline ensures positive learning outcomes for every young person.

Indicators of success for contributing members of a thriving region as they complete postsecondary education are difficult to describe, and perhaps can best be measured using longitudinal data describing “quality of life” indicators in a thriving region. Additional indicators will be included in future reports as they become apparent.

Outcome indicator No. 14: Adults with high school diploma or higher

- Adults with at least a high school diploma are more likely to have acquired the basic skills for earning a living and maintaining self-sufficiency for themselves and their families.

This indicator is the percent of adults (18 years and older) with a high school diploma or higher.

Outcome indicator No. 15: Adults with college degree or higher

- A college education, especially completion of a bachelor’s degree or more advanced degree, generally enhances a person’s employment prospects and increases his/her earning potential.

This indicator is the percent of adults (25 years and older) with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

What the data tell us: More than 87 percent of adults within the region have a high school diploma or higher.

Source: U.S. Census 2008-08 American Community Survey (ACS) One Year Estimates. (The ACS universe is limited to the household population and excludes the population living in institutions, college dorms and other group quarters. The 2006, 2007 and 2008 ACS One Year Estimates are only available for populations of more than 65,000.)
Looking ahead

An educated, engaged and productive citizenry fuels the economy and promotes vibrancy for the entire metro-Richmond region. This notion is the basis for the Bridging Richmond vision, “Successful Students – Productive Citizens – Thriving Region.”

We focus all of our efforts on improving the education pipeline so that all students are prepared with the necessary skills to enter a career and become contributing members of a thriving region.

As the work of our first year progresses into the second, Bridging Richmond will convene coalitions of educators, community leaders and service organizations to examine the data and provide insight on areas of focus in order to make improvements. The broader community will be engaged in the discussion to allocate resources and drive action toward best practice and effective initiatives.
Executive Council members

Edward L. Ayers, President, University of Richmond
Sherrie L. Brach, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg
Yvonne W. Brandon, Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools
Katherine Busser, Executive Vice President, Capital One
Thomas F. Farrell II, Chairman, President and CEO, Dominion Resources
Michael D. Fraizer, President and CEO, Genworth Financial
Kathy Glazer, Director of State Services, The Build Initiative
Marcus J. Newsome, Superintendent, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Darcy S. Oman, President and CEO, The Community Foundation
Claude G. Perkins, President, Virginia Union University
Michael Rao, President, Virginia Commonwealth University
Gary Rhodes, President, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
Stewart D. Roberson, Superintendent, Hanover County Public Schools
Patrick Russo, Superintendent, Henrico County Public Schools
Kim Scheeler, President and CEO, Greater Richmond Chamber
Marshall W. Smith, President, John Tyler Community College
Michael E. Szymanczyk, Chairman and CEO, Altria Group
James Ukrop, Union First Market Bank
Greg H. Wingfield, President, Greater Richmond Partnership