



Roanoke City Public Schools

Community Builders Pilot Report

November 1, 2024

The enclosed report contains Roanoke City Public Schools' (RCPS) Community Builders Pilot Program Report for November 1, 2024. This report outlines the school division's progress in implementing the pilot, beginning in the summer of 2024, and contains data and information relating to the progress of participating students, including a comparison of pre-participation and post-participation absenteeism rates, discipline, and academic performance. Information pertaining to youth gun violence in the City of Roanoke is also included, to the extent possible using available data.

Accompanying this submission is the approved RCPS Community Builders Program Proposal submitted to the Virginia Department of Education. The proposal contains detailed information about the RCPS pilot including goals, action steps, and approved activities and a budget plan for leveraging the allocated funding to meet the pilot programs goals.

SECTION 1: COMMUNITY BUILDERS PILOT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A. Overview of the 2024 Summer Pilot Program:

(This section includes a description of the activities, lessons, and experiences provided for program participants. It also includes information about the number of staff members, their regular roles within the school division, and their responsibilities in the Community Builders pilot program. Lastly, this section includes a list of community partners involved in the program and a description of how each partner was involved in the program.)

The 2024 Virginia Assembly amended a section in the Code of Virginia numbered [22.1-211.1](#) to establish the Community Builders Pilot Program, supporting [HB626](#) and [SB484](#). The Community Builders Program was established for the purpose of reducing youth involvement in behaviors that lead to gun violence and increasing community engagement among public school students by providing students enrolled in Roanoke City Public Schools and Petersburg City Public Schools opportunities during the school year after regular school hours and during the summer months for community engagement, workforce development, postsecondary education exploration, and social-emotional education and development

In the Spring of 2024, Roanoke City Public Schools hosted several virtual community partners open houses to provide an overview of the program and to identify partnerships for the Community Builders pilot program. We received 11 responses from those organizations interested in working with RCPS within the Community Builders framework. Community Partnerships in the pilot program include West End Center, Roanoke Prevention Alliance, Roanoke Parks and Recreation, Carilion Children’s Health, YMCA of Virginia’s Blue Ridge, Family Service of Roanoke Valley, Roanoke Fire-EMS, Roanoke Police Department, Roanoke Sheriff’s Office, City of Roanoke’s City Manager’s Office, City of Roanoke’s Community Engagement Team, Junior Achievement, Humble Hustle, and Roanoke Court Services.

During the summer of 2024, Roanoke City Public Schools hosted the first summer Community Builders Pilot Program. Principals, counselors, and professional staff of the division’s five middle schools identified and recruited rising 8th grade students for participation in the Community Builders pilot program.

Participants experienced a wide range of learning opportunities, including college and career readiness, goal setting, and academic support. They attended fourteen field trips, explored college campuses, engaged in community volunteer work, and visited local workforce and government agencies.

College and university field trips included: Roanoke College, Virginia Western Community College, Radford University, and Hollins University. Community Builders also hosted a College and University workshop where students rotated through several presentations given by current students, Alumni, and University representatives from George Mason, University of



Alabama, Norfolk State University, Virginia Military Institute, and University of North Carolina-Charlotte.



Other field trips included: Roanoke Valley Regional Fire-EMS Training Center, Charels W. Day Technical Education Center (DAYTEC), Rescue Mission, Roanoke Technical Education Center (ROTEC), Noel C. Taylor City Municipal Building, Oliver Hill Justic Center (Courts), Roanoke Police Academy, Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport, and Integer.

The summer program hosted “Change Makers” speakers covering a variety of topics including but not limited to youth entrepreneurship, social determinants of health, resiliency and protective factors, financial literacy, gun violence and youth involvement in addressing community issues.

The Community Builders summer pilot had 17 dedicated staff members. During the school year our staff fills the roles of instructional assistants, student support specialist, classroom teachers, restorative justice counselor, and school counselors. During the program we had 10 navigators (teachers), two instructional assistants, two school counselors, one college and career coach, one outcomes and success data coordinator and two site leaders.

Our navigators were responsible for day-to-day instruction in the classroom, supervision on trips, relationship building, and reflections on daily activities. Our instructional assistants were also responsible for some day-to-day tasks and provided students with individual breaks and support as needed. Our school counselors provided students with support on an individual and group basis.

Students and families were invited to a “graduation” ceremony where they were celebrated for their participation and completion of the summer pilot program on July 18, 2024. Students were given certificates of completion and awarded nicknames that captured their character, individual attributes, and unique skills and talents. Staff, students, and families stayed for refreshments and were able to engage in and reflect on the summer activities.

Curriculum: Recognizing that a "one size fits all" approach does not work for every student, we employed a range of learning strategies and curricula to ensure our students were engaged and supported.

AVID Curriculum: We integrated Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) principles to focus on college exploration and personal agency. The AVID academic elective course is designed to prepare students for college readiness and long-term success. Throughout the summer, students engaged in rigorous college-preparatory content, tutor-facilitated study groups, and motivational activities. The curriculum promotes writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading skills, helping students grow academically. Additionally, AVID encouraged students to explore college and career opportunities, fostering a sense of individual empowerment and responsibility.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): We placed a strong emphasis on Social Emotional Learning by incorporating CASEL's SEL 3 Signature Practices into our program. Staff underwent professional development training prior to the program to ensure they could effectively support students in this area. We also utilized Panorama

Education resources to address SEL needs. Panorama Student Success meets the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) standards for Levels 2 and 4, and both Panorama for SEL and Panorama for Positive Behavior meet ESSA Level 4 standards. These tools provided a strong foundation for helping students build emotional intelligence and resilience.

Gun Violence Prevention and SEL Integration: As part of Roanoke’s Gun Violence Prevention Commission efforts, we partnered with Family Services of the Roanoke Valley to implement their SEL-based "Connecting in the Star City" curriculum. This curriculum directly addresses gun violence and prevention, helping students understand the social dynamics around violence and offering tools to promote positive behavioral change. The program aligns with our goal of equipping students with the skills to make informed, positive decisions within their community.

Each of these components was carefully selected to align with both academic and social-emotional goals, ensuring that our students received a holistic and enriching summer experience. The program was designed with the understanding that students come from diverse backgrounds and require varied forms of support to thrive.

B. Review of Pilot Program Data for Summer 2024:

Summer Pilot Student Demographics:

Females: 17

Males: 38

Race: Black or American African: 48; White or Caucasian: 7



Family Feedback: Participating student’s families and guardians were sent a feedback survey in which we collected five responses. Questions included ratings (1-5), fill in the blank, multiple choice. Questions included by not limited to; how satisfied they were with the program, how likely they would recommend the program, most beneficial experiences, and activities.

Family Satisfaction rating: 4.80 average rating

Likely to Recommend Community Builders to other families: 5.00 average rating

Experiences/activates most beneficial to your student: College visits, Personal Goal Setting, Academic/Literacy support

Effective communication: 4.60 rating

Community Builders benefitted my student by: Connecting with peers and adults, feeling positive about educational opportunities after high school, feeling positive about career opportunities

One collected suggestion for Community Builders: “Keep the program going full ahead, it is better than grape soda. The students had a chance to be themselves, the program speaks volumes.”

C. Reflections on Program Strengths and Areas for Growth:

This section includes reflections from the program site leaders intended to inform the next phase of the pilot program.

Reflection 1: The pilot program revealed notable differences in student interest and participation across schools, with some schools seeing higher engagement than others. This variation indicates potential disparities in program visibility, alignment with student interests, or availability of resources across different sites. Increasing interest and participation, particularly at schools with lower enrollment in the program, will be essential to ensure equal access to the benefits of the Community Builders program.

➤ **Recommendation:**

- To address these disparities, we recommend implementing targeted outreach efforts, such as hosting introductory sessions and informational events, at schools with lower participation. Additionally, collaborating with school administrators, teachers, and counselors to understand specific barriers and interests unique to each school site will help tailor the program to better meet students' needs and encourage broader involvement.

Reflection 2: Over the summer, we focused on fostering relationships with students and creating a safe environment for them. We have spoken about continuing this through the school year through peer mentorships, and a dedicated team of adults at each school building.

➤ **Recommendations:**

- Allocate additional time for professional development, ensuring that program staff fully understand expectations and can enhance the quality of programming offered to students.
- Refine discipline procedures, emphasizing restorative practices to address behavioral issues while fostering personal growth.
- Ensure the Program Coordinator hires the appropriate number of staff with specialized skill sets to address student behaviors constructively, fostering skill development and maintaining a respectful learning environment.

Reflection 3: Moving forward to the school year and next summer's group, we recommend more time be taken beforehand to gage the participants' individual interests so the trips and projects can cater to their specific needs and opportunities to help them in building their futures.

➤ **Recommendation:**

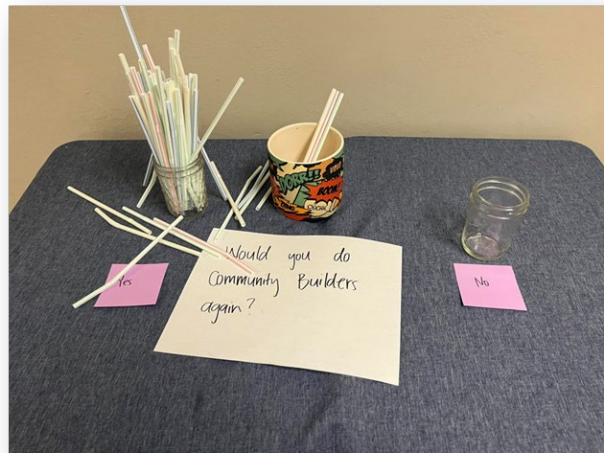
- Survey participants with a specific focus on career interest and skill inventories.

Reflection 4:

One of the challenges we encountered was fluctuating student attendance, which was often influenced by the busy schedules of both students and their families. Many families had prior commitments such as vacations, camps, and other engagements that conflicted with program participation, leading to varying attendance rates.

➤ **Recommendation:**

- To address this issue and ensure more consistent attendance, we recommend releasing the program schedule and applications earlier in the 2025 school year. By providing families with the necessary information ahead of time, they will be able to plan their summer activities, accordingly, allowing more students to fully engage in the program. Considerations will also account for students who do not attend Community Builders activities but are attending other positive and engaging programming.

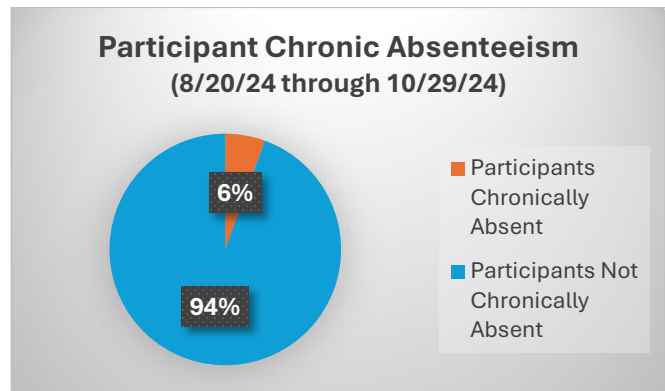
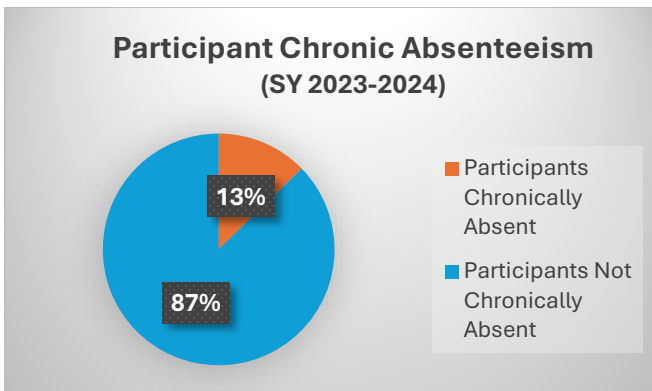


SECTION 2: COMMUNITY BUILDERS PILOT PROGRAM DATA

Community Builders Pilot Program Data Snapshot for November 1, 2024

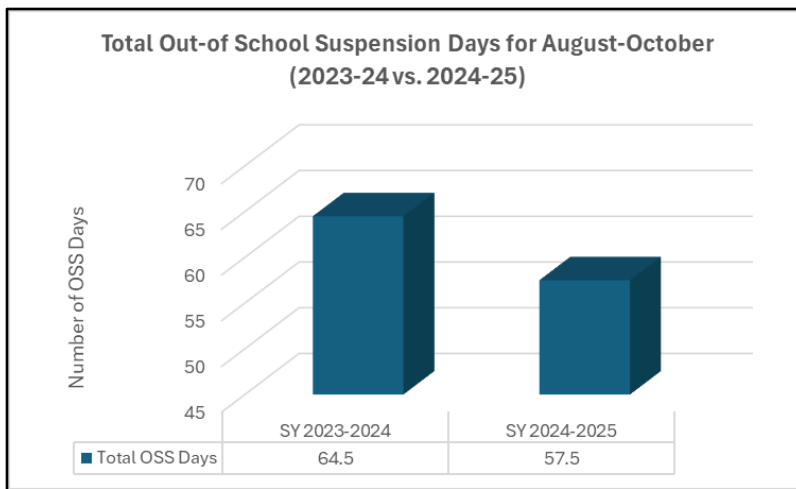
RCPS Community Builders Participant Data	
Number of participants in summer 2024 program <i>(Original Cohort)</i>	55
Number of <i>Original Cohort</i> currently enrolled in RCPS (as of October 15, 2024)	53
Number of participants enrolled in after-school programs prior to the summer 2024 pilot (as of June 17, 2024)	20
Number of participants currently enrolled in after-school programs (as of October 29, 2024)	<i>Students are currently enrolling in after school programming, including Community Builders</i>

RCPS Community Builders Participant Attendance Data	
Original Cohort pre-participation chronic absenteeism (Original Cohort % chronically absent during 2023-2024 school year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13% (7 total students)
Original Cohort current chronic absenteeism (Original Cohort % chronically absent from August 20 through October 29, 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6% (3 total students)



- Current data indicates a positive trend in student attendance data for Community Builders participants.

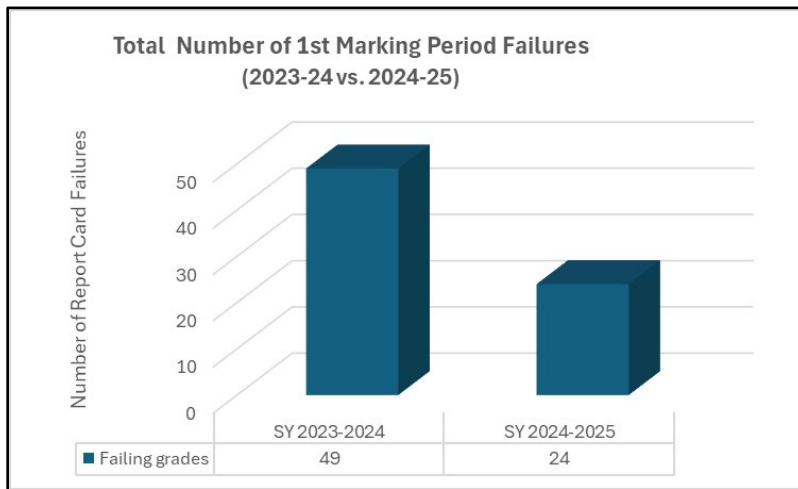
RCPS Community Builders Participant Discipline Data	
<p>Original Cohort pre-participation out-of-school suspension days (Original Cohort average monthly OSS days during the period of August – October of 2023-2024 school year)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.39 average monthly OSS days per participant • (64.5 total OSS days) August – October 2023
<p>Original Cohort post-participation out-of-school suspension days (Original Cohort total day of OSS days during 2024-2025 school year as of October 29th, 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.35 average monthly OSS days per participant • (57.5 total OSS days) August – October 2024



- Current data indicates a positive trend in student discipline data for Community Builders participants.

RCPS Community Builders Participant Academic Data

<p>Original Cohort pre-participation report card failures (Original Cohort average number of failing grades on report cards during first marking period 2023-2024 school year)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49 total 1st marking period failures • 0.89 1st marking period failures per participant
<p>Original Cohort post-participation report card failures (Original Cohort average number of failing grades on report cards during first marking period 2024-2025 school year)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 1st marking period failures • 0.45 1st marking period failures per participant



- Current data indicates a positive trend in student academic data for Community Builders participants.

RCPS Community Builders Participant Gun Violence Data

<p>Number of incidents of juvenile gun violence in Roanoke City from January 1, 2023-December 31, 2023, as reported by RPD (Juvenile offender; age 11-15)</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Number of incidents of juvenile gun violence in Roanoke City from January 1, 2024-September 15, 2024, as reported by RPD (Juvenile offender, age 10-19)</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Number of juveniles hit by gunfire in Roanoke City from January 1, 2024 – September 15, 2024, as reported by RPD</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Number of reported incidents of gun violence involving program participants from June 1, 2024-October 15, 2024</p>	<p>None*</p>

*RCPS relies on Roanoke Police Department (RPD) for all data related to gun violence in the city, which is subject to changes in reporting methods. Additionally, RCPS is unable to provide more specific student data due to FERPA and other policies governing student privacy.



SECTION 3: COMMUNITY BUILDERS UTILIZATION OF ALLOCATED FUNDS

Community Builders Pilot Program Spending Report for November 1, 2024

Award Amount:	\$379,259.00
Total grant funds spent:	\$22,011.91
Total unspent:	\$357,247.09

EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS	OBJECT CODE	DESCRIPTION AND TOTAL AMOUNT
Personal Services	1000	\$16,190.00
Employee Benefits	2000	\$1,231.01
Purchased Services	3000	\$1,251.08
Other Charges	5000	NA
Materials/Supplies	6000	\$3,339.82
TOTAL	\$	\$22,011.01

Detailed description of how the funds have been used to support the planning and implementation of the Community Builders Pilot Program:

The initial funding for the Community Builders Pilot Program has primarily supported personnel and preparatory materials essential for launching the program.

Personal Services funds (\$16,190.00) have been directed toward compensating staff for their involvement in the pilot program’s planning and implementation, which includes their work in preparing curriculum materials, coordinating with community partners, and organizing activities.

Employee Benefits (\$1,231.01) FICA, and social security, etc.

Purchased Services (\$1,251.08) covered the costs of external services required for program development, such as securing transportation and services through partner organizations.

Additionally, **Materials and Supplies** (\$3,339.82) were used to acquire educational materials, journals, writing materials and resources that facilitate the program’s daily activities, helping deliver consistent, high-quality instruction and support for students.



Detailed description of how these funds have supported the program’s goals:

The allocated funds have laid a foundation for achieving the primary goals of the Community Builders Pilot Program, including community engagement, academic support, and career and college readiness for participating students. By compensating staff and covering benefits, we have ensured a committed team of educators and support staff who are essential to building rapport and fostering a safe environment for students. The purchase of external services allowed us secure consistent transportation to different workplaces and colleges. Materials and supplies have also directly supported the academic and social-emotional development aspects of the program, as they allowed us to provide students with engaging resources tailored to diverse learning styles and needs.

Additional actions taken and challenges/barriers in implementing plans:

In addition to previously outlined plans, the program team has engaged in relationship-building efforts with community organizations to strengthen partnerships and extend the range of student opportunities. We also organized introductory sessions to increase awareness about the program and enhance student recruitment efforts.



SECTION 4: CONTACTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Roanoke City Public Schools' Community Builders Pilot Program Contacts:

Mr. Josh Johnson

Youth Development and Intervention Coordinator
Student Services
Joshuaajohnson@rcps.info
40 Douglass Ave. NW | Roanoke, VA 24012
(540) 853.1197

Mr. Corey Alder

Director of Community Engagement
Community Engagement Department
Callder@rcps.info
40 Douglass Ave. NW | Roanoke, VA 24012
O: (540) 853-1359

For a closer look at the impact of the Community Builders Program, watch our [short promotional video](#).