

Roanoke City Public Schools

JULY 1, 2026

COMMUNITY BUILDERS PILOT PROGRAM FINAL REPORT



201 Campbell Ave. SW
Roanoke, VA 24011
www.rcps.info

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Community Builders Pilot Leadership Team

- **Coordinator for Site-Based Program Implementation:**
Mr. Joshua Johnson, Youth Development and Intervention Coordinator
- **Coordinator for Division-Level Administration of Funds and Technical Assistance:**
Mr. Corey Allder, Director of Community Engagement

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Overview and Authority

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 purpose of this program is to reduce youth involvement in behaviors that lead to gun violence and increase community engagement among public school students enrolled in Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) and Petersburg City Public Schools.

The legislation provides for the following:

This program will provide opportunities during the school year, after regular school hours, and during summer months for community engagement, workforce development (including career and technical education exploration and soft-skill development), postsecondary education exploration, and social-emotional education and development (including instruction on the role and importance of restorative justice in the community). The Community Builders Pilot Program shall be offered during the school year after regular school hours and for one summer session. Up to 100 students can be served during each session.

The Community Builders Program will be administered by Roanoke City and Petersburg City school boards, and the school boards may collaborate with other entities as appropriate. Program administration includes establishing referral and application processes; students who are entering 8th grade can apply or be referred for program participation. In addition, the school divisions must develop an application and hiring process for program staff, including a program coordinator. A program curriculum and itinerary for the after-school hours sessions and the summer session must be developed and implemented. Each school division was allocated funding based on student enrollment; funding for 2025-2026 will be based on this year's average daily membership.

Lastly, data must be collected and reported to the Governor, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, and the House Committee on Education by Nov. 1 of each year on the progress of the program, including the number of students participating in the program as a whole and by session (after-school and summer), and the number of students participating in the program who are enrolled in the aforementioned school divisions. The report should also include data relating to the progress of participating students, including a comparison of pre-participation and post-participation absenteeism rates, disciplinary incidents, and academic performance. The number and rate of reported incidents of gun violence involving program participants should be included in the report, in addition to the reported incidents of gun violence in the City of Roanoke as a whole and the City of Petersburg as a whole, in comparison to previous years.

Final Pilot Report: Executive Summary

As directed through the amended Code of Virginia section [22.1-211.1](#) in 2024, RCPS established and implemented the Community Builders Pilot Program in an effort to reduce youth involvement in behaviors that lead to gun violence and increase community engagement among public school students in our city.

RCPS received two funding allocations totaling \$604,469.60 to support programming, services, and resources during the two-year pilot program, beginning in the summer of 2024 and concluding in the summer of 2026. Funding supported staffing, supplemental pay, enrichment activities, instructional materials, community events, enabling mentorship, hands-on learning, and structured support. RCPS continued to implement targeted supports for rising 9th graders as they entered high school, including mentoring, counseling, peer support groups, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programming, and safe spaces.

The RCPS Community Builders Pilot Program was guided by a set of eight SMART goals that directed implementation and targeted key student outcomes, including reductions in chronic absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, failing grades, and the reduction of juvenile gun violence. This Final, July 1, 2026 report includes comprehensive data and information regarding the school division's experience with the pilot program, with the following serving as key takeaways for division leaders and policymakers at all levels:

- **Signs of Positive Impact:** Data available as of June 15, 2026 indicate improvements in the areas of chronic absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, and academic performance, as well as a significant decrease in juvenile-involved gun violence as compared to the 2023-24 school year. While it is difficult to confidently identify the Community Builders program as the cause of these improvements, RCPS is encouraged by this data as a sign of success.
- **VDOE Support for Implementation:** Participation as a member of the Community Schools cohort, guided by the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Office of Behavioral Health and Student Safety, has been valuable to the RCPS team by providing a collaborative learning community that allows a safe place feedback and support.
- **Commitment to the Process:** Moving forward, from the conclusion of the pilot through the transition to serving as a Community Builders demonstration site for school divisions across the commonwealth, RCPS will continue the process of planning, implementation, data collection, and reflection, and adjusting as appropriate in an effort to meet the established goals.

This final report includes detailed program information and recommendations for consideration by legislators, policymakers, and local school division personnel.

Financial Data Analysis

Year 1 Budget: 2024-2025 Community Builders Funds

Award amount (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025): **\$379,259.60**

- Total Year 1 funds expended as of July 1, 2026: **\$379,259.60**
- Note: This amount was expended across the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 fiscal years.

EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS	OBJECT CODE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND TOTAL AMOUNT
Personal Services	1000	\$186,292.00 <i>Supplemental pay for school-based program coordinators and staff</i>
Employee Benefits	2000	\$15,189.17 <i>Benefits for program staff</i>
Purchased Services	3000	\$149,074.34 <i>Purchased services including transportation for field trips related to college/career exploration, community engagement, and related activities.</i> <i>Purchased/contracted services with community partners related to student growth, mental/behavioral health, and engagement in positive self-development activities.</i>
Other Charges	5000	\$38.63 <i>Internal services such as printing of program materials and other materials needed for students.</i>
Materials/Supplies	6000	\$28,755.46 <i>Instructional materials and program supplies</i>
TOTAL		<u>\$379,259.60</u>

Year 2 Budget: 2025-2026 Community Builders Funds

Year 2 Award amount (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026): **\$225,210.00**

- Total Year 1 funds expended or encumbered as of July 1, 2026: **\$98,651.34**
- Remaining award amount: **\$126,558.66**
- **Note:** A no-cost extension was granted to RCPS to extend availability of funds until September 30, 2026. Funds will be expended through summer programming in July and 9th grade transition programming from August through September 30, 2026.

EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS	OBJECT CODE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND TOTAL AMOUNT
Personal Services	1000	\$76,775.00 <i>Supplemental pay for school-based program coordinators and staff</i>
Employee Benefits	2000	\$322.98 <i>Benefits for program staff</i>
Purchased Services	3000	\$18,348.14 <i>Purchased services including transportation for field trips related to college/career exploration, community engagement, and related activities.</i> <i>Purchased/contracted services with community partners related to student growth, mental/behavioral health, and engagement in positive self-development activities.</i>
Other Charges	5000	\$0 <i>Internal services such as printing of program materials and other materials needed for students.</i>
Materials/Supplies	6000	\$ 3,205.22 <i>Instructional materials and program supplies</i>
TOTAL		<u>\$98,651.34</u>

SMART Goals

SMART Goal #1

By July 1, 2026, Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) will design, implement, and evaluate a “Community Builders” pilot program that provides opportunities for students related to community engagement, workforce development, postsecondary education exploration, and social-emotional education and development. The pilot will consist of programming that occurs during the school year, after regular school hours, and during the summer months, beginning in the summer of 2024 and continuing through June of 2026:

This goal was met, as evidenced by:

- Program design completion in 2024
 - Successful implementation of summer 2024 programming
 - Successful continuation of programming during the 2024-25 school year
 - Successful implementation of summer 2025 programming
 - Successful Implementation of programming during 2025-26 school year
 - Engagement with critical partners throughout the duration of the pilot, including the Roanoke City School Board, Roanoke City Council, the Roanoke Gun Violence Prevention Commission, the VDOE, the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), elected officials, more than 25 local agencies, offices, organizations, businesses, colleges, and universities.
- Utilization of Community Schools Pilot Funding:

- **Supplemental pay** ensured that school-based program coordinators and staff were available to facilitate Community Builders activities during the school year and summer. This funding allowed for consistent student engagement, mentorship, and program oversight, ensuring a structured and supportive environment for participants.
- **Purchased services** funding supported key enrichment opportunities, including transportation for field trips focused on college and career exploration, community service, and leadership development. Additionally, partnerships with community organizations provide students with access to mental and behavioral health resources, personal development workshops, and skill-building activities.
- **Internal services**, such as the printing of program materials, supported outreach and engagement efforts by ensuring students, families, and staff had access to necessary information and resources related to the program.
- **Instructional materials** and program supplies were purchased to enhance student learning and engagement in Community Builders activities. These resources helped facilitate hands-on learning experiences, creative projects, and

discussion-based workshops.

Through this funding, the Community Builders pilot program was able to create meaningful opportunities for students, strengthening their academic, social-emotional, and career readiness skills while fostering connections between schools, families, and the broader community.

Final Pilot Report Student Participation Data:

- **Number of participants in Summer 2024 program (*Original Cohort*): 55**
- **Number of participants in SY24-25 Afterschool Programming:** 112 students (this includes 88 students with available data points for both the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school year)
- **Number of participants in Summer 2025 program: 99**
 - A total of 99 students participated in the Community Builders program during the reporting summer 2025 period.
 - Of these, 40 students (40%) were classified as Active Participants, meaning they attended 50% or more of sessions (defined as at least 8 out of 16 dates).
 - Emerging Participants made up 25 students (25%), reflecting those with 25-49% attendance.
 - An additional 34 students (34%) were categorized as Minimal Engagement, having attended less than 25% of the dates.
- **Number of participants in SY 25-26 Afterschool Programming: 154**
 - A total of 154 students participated in the Community Builders program during the 2025-2026 school year.
 - Of these, 104 students (68%) were classified as Active Participants, meaning they attended 50% or more of sessions provided by their respective schools.
 - Emerging Participants made up 39 students (25%), reflecting those with 10-50% attendance.
 - An additional 10 students (6%) were categorized as Minimal Engagement, having attended less than 10% of the dates.

SMART Goal #2

By July 1, 2024, principals of the division's five middle schools will identify students to be prioritized for participation in the Community Builders pilot program. This list of students will be submitted to the RCPS Community Builders program coordinator.

This goal was met, as evidenced by the list of students identified by principals as priority participants and by the launch of the summer 2024 Community Builders pilot program, which included 55 students representing all five of the division's middle schools. RCPS carried this goal forward with schools enrolling students in the program throughout the 2025-26 school year.

The original Community Builders cohort, which emerged from the priority participant list, included students with a range of backgrounds, school experiences, neighborhoods, strengths, and needs. Subsequent cohorts also relied on principals and their designees to identify students who could most benefit from Community Builders programming.

SMART Goal #3

RCPS will submit a Community Builders progress report to the Virginia Department of Education by each of the following dates:

- **November 1, 2024, March 1, 2025, July 1, 2025, November 1, 2025, March 1, 2026, July 1, 2026**

Each report will include data and follow-up actions resulting from the corresponding summer and regular school year pilot programs.

- **This goal was met** with this Final Pilot Report submission on July 1, 2026 and preceding reports submitted on Nov. 1, 2024, March 1, 2025, and July 1, 2025, November 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026.

SMART Goal #4

By July 1, 2026, RCPS will submit a Community Builders pilot comprehensive summary report to the Virginia Department of Education. This comprehensive summary report will include:

Data relating to:

- The progress of participating students, including a comparison of pre-participation and post-participation absenteeism rates, disciplinary incidents, and academic performance.
- The number and rate of reported incidents of gun violence involving program participants.
- The reported incidents of gun violence in the City of Roanoke as a whole in comparison to previous years.

An analysis of the pilot program to include:

- Student outcomes based on the collected data
- Feedback from students, staff, family members, and community partners
- Recommendations for continuation, expansion, or modification of the program for the Virginia Department of Education's consideration

This goal was met with the submission of this comprehensive summary report.

SMART Goal #5

By the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year, RCPS Community Builders participants will demonstrate a 10% reduction in chronic absenteeism as compared to the 2023-2024 school year.

This goal was met with the original cohort of Community Builders participants experiencing a reduction in chronic absenteeism from 13.2% to 11.5% in 2024-25 school year as compared to the previous school year. This represents a reduction of 12.9%.

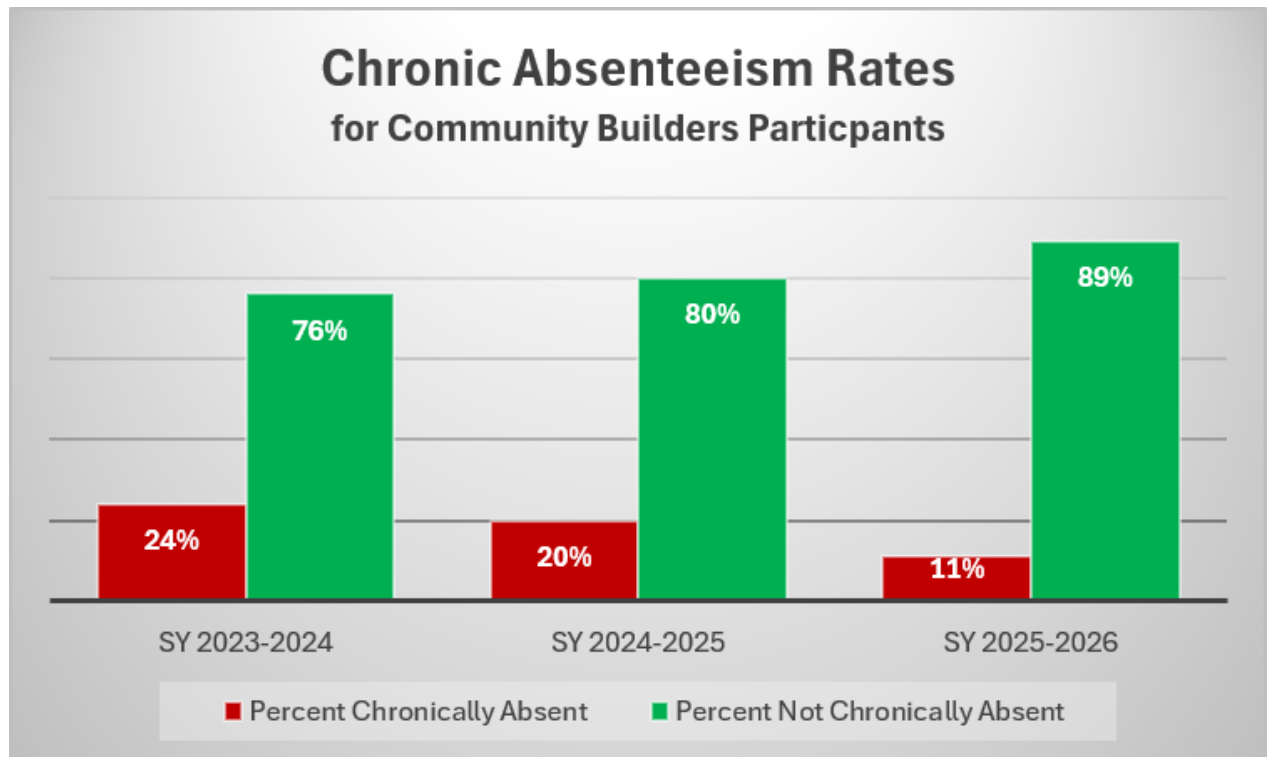
RCPS carried this goal into the 2025-26 school year, adding additional chronically absent students to the program and putting additional actions and incentives in place to improve school attendance. Community Builders participants from any cohort involved in at least 50% of programming experienced a reduction in chronic absenteeism from 24% in 2023-2024 to 11% in 2025-2026. This represents a 54% reduction over two years.

Funds were allocated toward staffing, materials and supplies, and community events to foster student engagement and reduce chronic absenteeism.

- **Expanding Student Participation:**
 - Additional students were identified and enrolled through **school counselors, administrative staff, and teachers who recognize** those needing academic and behavioral support.
- **Fostering Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs):**
 - The program intentionally built **protective factors** by engaging students in activities aligned with four key PCEs:
 - Participating in community traditions
 - Developing a sense of belonging in school
 - Building supportive peer relationships
 - Connecting with trusted, non-parental adults
- **Community Builders Clubs & Activities:**
 - Community Builders Clubs were established in all five middle schools for SY25-26, providing consistent support and engagement opportunities.
 - Participating Middle Schools: James Breckinridge Middle School, Lucy Addison Middle School, Woodrow Wilson Middle School, James Madison Middle School, and John P. Fishwick Middle School.
 - Programming was expanded to serve students at Patrick Henry High School and William Fleming High School.
 - Lunch and Learn sessions with school staff and community leaders fostered relationships with trusted adults, enhancing students' sense of belonging and support.
- **Participation in Community Events & Service Projects:**
 - Engagement in traditions & service projects strengthened student connections to their community, further supporting attendance and overall engagement:
 - School Site Leaders continued programming, field trips, and activities for SY25-26.
 - Community Builders students attended the ceremonial signing of the Community Builders Demonstration Site legislation into law by Governor Abigail Spanberger in Roanoke. During the event, students were invited on stage and had the opportunity to meet and engage in meaningful conversations with the Governor and local elected officials.
 - Students participated in field trips at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.
 - James Madison Middle School students made bird seed wreaths to support a Habitat for Humanity fundraiser.

- Community Builders students volunteered and provided support for a variety of RCPS family literacy events and activities in elementary and middle schools.
- Community Builders students participated in AVID at JMU Day at James Madison University, engaging in group rotation sessions designed to promote college readiness and student inquiry. Students also explored campus through dining hall visits, a self-guided tour, and attendance at a basketball game at the Atlantic Union Bank Center, reinforcing postsecondary exposure and engagement.
- Community Builders students wrote and delivered letters at the Salem Veteran Affairs Medical Center for Veterans Day.
- Community Builders students volunteered as greeters and tour guides for Burrell Day at the Blue Ridge Behavioral Health Services Burrell Center. This event was to highlight the history of Dr. Isaac D. Burrell and his efforts to reduce barriers for African Americans seeking medical treatment.
- Community Builders students volunteered and served food for the YMCA Gainsboro Father and Son Banquet.
- Community Builders students purchased, organized, and distributed snacks and cards for Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Community Builders students were featured and interviewed in the Roanoke Prevention Alliance “I Matter” Campaign, which focused on student voices and highlighted the importance of connection, belonging, and support. The campaign was used on billboards, radio segments, videos, posters, and social media posts.
 - Video Link (click on the link or paste the link below in a web browser to view) [I Matter – Roanoke Prevention Alliance](https://www.roanokepreventionalliance.org/i-matter/)
 - <https://www.roanokepreventionalliance.org/i-matter/>
- Community Builders students served as student ambassadors for “Take Your Legislator to School Day”.
- Community Builders students assisted school counselors in organizing and distributing gift baskets to teachers who participated in a holiday door decoration contest.
- Eight Community Builders students were chosen to represent RCPS at the Jr. MANRRS Leadership Institute, where they participated in hands-on activities, collaborative challenges, and career-focused learning experiences that strengthened their leadership skills and exposure to agriculture and emerging technologies.

Chronic Absenteeism Data for Regular Program Participants from All Cohorts (171 eligible participants involved in a minimum of 50% of program offerings)



- Pilot data indicates a positive trend in attendance data for the regular Community Builders participants, with a 45% reduction in the percentage of students identified as chronically absent in SY 2025-2026 vs. SY 2024-2025 and a 54% reduction in participants identified as chronically absent since SY 2023-2024.

SMART Goal #6

By the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year, RCPS Community Builders participants will demonstrate a 10% reduction in out-of-school suspension (OSS) days as compared to the 2023-2024 school year.

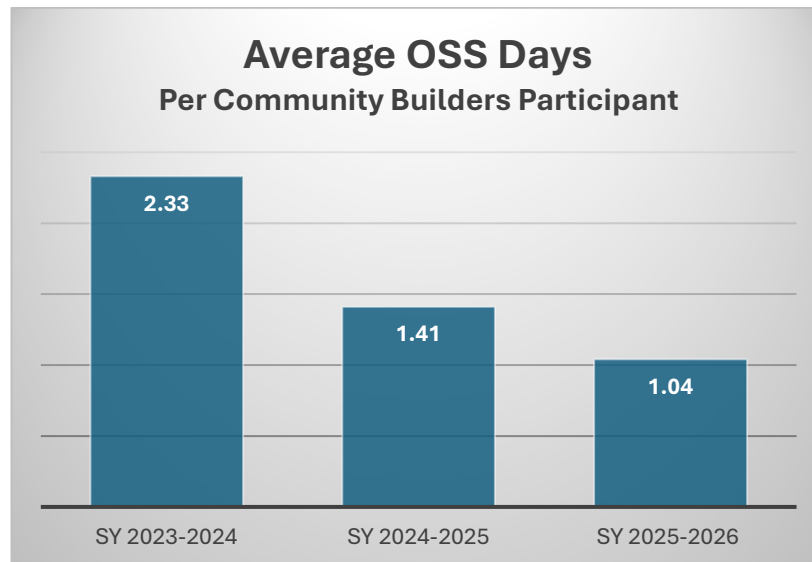
This goal was met as evidenced by a 36% reduction in the total number of out-of-school suspension days and a 67% reduction in out-of-school suspension days per original cohort participant in 2024-25 as compared to the previous year. RCPS carried this goal forward into the 2025-26 school year, adding students and working to reduce participants' out-of-school suspension days by another 10%.

For the group of all regular participants across all cohorts, the number of out-of-school suspension days improved from an average of 2.33 OSS days per participant in 2023-2024 to an average of 1.04 OSS days per participant in 2025-2026. This reflects a 55% reduction in out-of-school suspension days per participant on average over a two-year period.

Strategic uses of funds included:

- Staffing & Behavioral Support: Funds have been allocated to staffing, allowing dedicated personnel to provide behavioral interventions, mentoring, and SEL support.
- Community Builders Site Leaders receive monthly data reports on students to monitor student progress, intervene early, and provide suggestions for alternative disciplinary measures to suspension if the need arises.
- Funds have supported training and implementation of direct counseling services and conflict resolution workshops to address behavioral issues proactively.
- Community Builders clubs at all five middle schools provide a structured environment where students receive positive reinforcement and character development, reducing behavioral incidents.
- Through these initiatives, Community Builders is fostering a positive, structured, and supportive school environment, with the goal of improving student behavior and a reduction in out-of-school suspension days.

Out-of-School Suspension Data for Regular Program Participants from All Cohorts (171 eligible participants involved in a minimum of 50% of program offerings)



- Data indicates a positive trend in out-of-school suspension (OSS) data for the regular Community Builders participants, with a 55% reduction in total OSS days for eligible participants SY 2023-2024 through SY 2025-2026.

SMART Goal #7

By the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year, RCPS Community Builders participants will demonstrate a 10% reduction in report card failures as compared to the 2023-2024 school year.

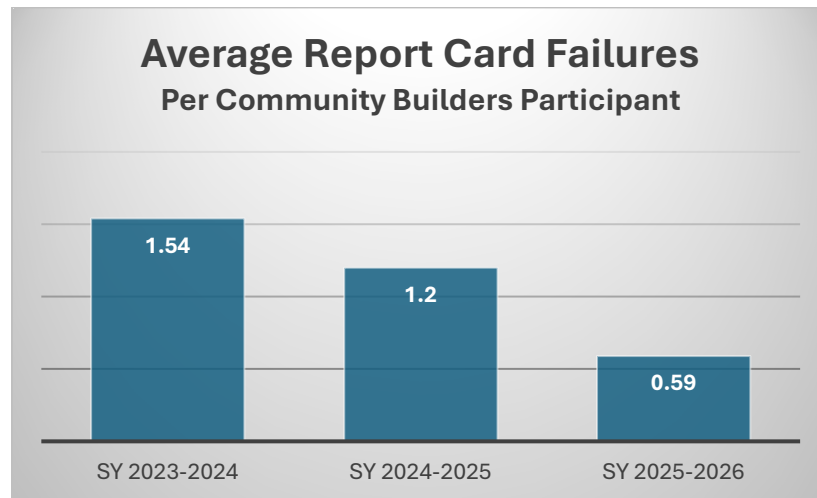
This goal was met as evidenced by a 26% reduction in the number of report card failures per original cohort participant in the 2024-25 school year as compared to the previous year. RCPS carried this goal forward into the 2025-26 school year, adding students to the program and working to reduce the number of participants' report card failures by another 10%.

Regular program participants from all cohorts demonstrated improved academic performance with reduction in the failing grades on report cards from an average of 1.54 report card failures per participant in SY 2023-2024 to an average of 0.59 report card failures per participant in 2025-2026, a 62% reduction over this two-year period.

Strategic uses of funds included:

- Consistent mentoring and relationships with trusted adults: Site leaders, staff, and community partners provided ongoing guidance, accountability, and academic encouragement, which directly supported student success.
- Structured academic support through regular programming: Community Builders Clubs and Lunch and Learn sessions created consistent opportunities for check-ins, goal setting, and academic support.
- College and career exposure to boost motivation: Experiences like AVID activities and college field trips helped students see the relevance of their education, increasing effort and reducing course failures.

Report Card Data for Regular Program Participants from All Cohorts (171 eligible participants involved in a minimum of 50% of program offerings)



- The average number of marking period failures for eligible participants in the Community Builders program for SY 2023-2024 was 1.54 failures per participant. The average number of marking period failures per participant in SY 2025-2026 was 0.59 failures per participant, reflecting a 62% reduction over the two-year period.

SMART Goal #8

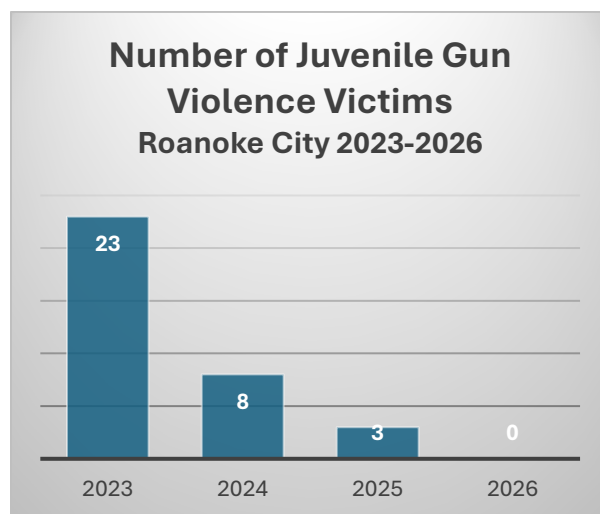
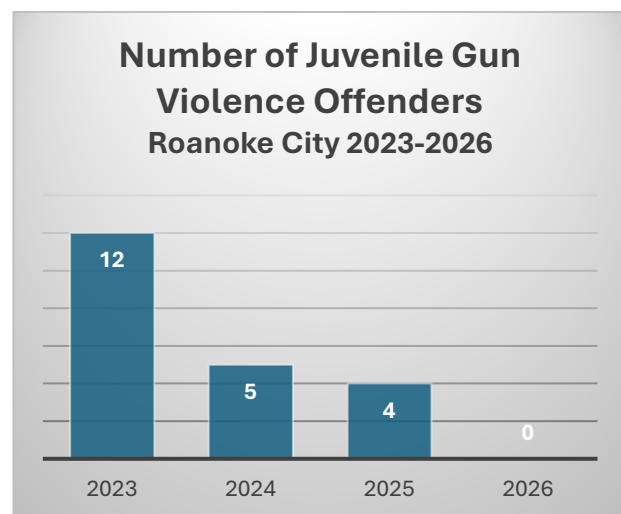
By the July 1, 2025, the City of Roanoke will reduce or maintain the number of incidents of juvenile gun violence involving program participants and in the city as a whole as compared to the previous year.

This goal was met as evidenced by a 100% reduction in the number of juvenile (offender) gun violence incidents in Roanoke City in the current year as compared to the previous year.

Strategic actions included:

- RCPS Community Builders Program Coordinator Joshua Johnson coordinated and facilitated the monthly Social Services Coordinator for the City of Roanoke's Gun Violence Intervention Program. Relationships with RPD, RCPS, and Social Service agencies have strengthened agencies from the Roanoke area. One of the main goals is to create multi-disciplinary teams comprised of different agencies to address target interventions for youth and adults who are susceptible to being a victim or offender of gun violence.
- This appointment has increased awareness of the Community Builders program and helped identify additional community partners who can provide mentorship, resources, and intervention strategies.
- The program continues to work closely with the Roanoke Police Department (RPD) Crime Analyst team to obtain updated data on juvenile involvement in gun violence.

Community Gun Violence Data



Summary of Reduction in Juvenile Gun Violence

The City of Roanoke continues to make considerable progress in reducing juvenile gun violence. Data through May 31, 2026 indicates sustained and measurable reductions in both juvenile offenders and victims compared to previous years.

From 2023 to 2026, the number of juvenile offenders involved in gun violence has decreased from 12 in 2023 to zero in 2026, representing a 100% reduction over the three-year period. This follows a steady decline from five offenders in 2024 to four in 2025, and zero offenders reported to date in 2026.

Similarly, the number of juvenile victims declined from 23 in 2023 to zero in 2026, a 100% reduction overall. This reflects continued decreases each year, with victim counts dropping from eight in 2024 to three in 2025 and 0 reported victims in 2026 to date.

These outcomes demonstrate continued success in prevention, intervention, and community collaboration efforts aimed at reducing youth involvement in gun-related incidents across Roanoke City.

Data from 2024 through May 31, 2026:

Juvenile Gun Violence Victims

- 2023: 23
- 2024: 8
- 2025: 3
- 2026 (YTD): 0

Juvenile Gun Violence Offenders

- 2023: 12
- 2024: 5
- 2025: 4
- 2026 (YTD): 0

- Available data provides no indication of Community Builders program participant involvement in gun violence, either as an offender or a victim.

As mentioned previously, limitations regarding relevant data prevent RCPS from definitively attributing reductions in violence to the Community Builders program. This decline, however, does suggest that collaborative efforts between RCPS, the RPD, and community partners are making a meaningful impact in reducing youth involvement in gun violence. Continued focus on mentorship, intervention programs, and information sharing will be essential in maintaining and furthering this progress.

Additional Program Data Summary

The following information includes an analysis of program participation, levels of student engagement, indications of individual growth, and identified supports to boost Community Builders participants' success as they transitioned into high school. In addition to informing our immediate division-level actions to support program participants in Roanoke City, this data stands to benefit VDOE staff, legislators, and policymakers when considering the extension of Community Builders programming beyond the pilot years.

Year 1 Supplemental Participant Data

At the end of the 2024-2025 school year, school-based teams collected data on 132 program participants with varying levels of engagement, growth, and needed support. Key highlights and takeaways from this data include:

- 70 students (53% of those in the available data set) were regularly engaged in school-based Community Builders programming. Examples of Community Builders activities during the school year included:
 - Afterschool programs
 - Lunch and learn sessions
 - Mentoring groups
 - Fitness training sessions
 - Weekend camping and outdoor activities
 - Community service projects
- 102 students (77%) were at least intermittently engaged, balancing Community Builders programming with other school and community engagement activities such as:
 - School sports (basketball, cheer, baseball, soccer, wrestling, softball, etc.)

- Travel sports
- Student government
- National Junior Honor Society
- Band
- School clubs
- Staff indicated that 53 participants (40%) demonstrated exceptional growth and another 56 participants (42%) demonstrated modest growth, with the following examples provided as evidence of the demonstrated growth:
 - Improved academic performance, particularly from the original cohort where:
 - 3 participants passed the Reading SOL test for the first time ever as 8th graders in 2025.
 - 18 participants scored their personal best on the Reading SOL test in 2025.
 - 65% improved their score on the Reading SOL test compared to the previous year.
 - 11 participants scored their personal best on the Mathematics SOL test in 2025.
 - 48% improved their score on the Mathematics SOL test compared to the previous year.
 - Reduction in disciplinary actions (classroom, bus, etc.)
 - Social emotional improvements and improved confidence
 - Growth in empathy, respect, and emotional regulation
 - Increased self-awareness, resilience, and perseverance
 - Noticeable positive shift in response to conflict
 - Setting and reflecting on personal goals
 - Improved expression of thoughts and feelings
 - Support and encouragement for peers
 - Reduced suspensions/eliminated suspensions
 - Growth in leadership, volunteering, and model behavior
- Staff recommend general or specific support for 37 participants (28%) as the transition to high school. Examples of these recommended supports include:
 - Mentoring
 - College-based counseling
 - Positive behavior interventions and supports
 - Access to safe spaces and wellness rooms
 - 1:1 counseling with community-based partners
 - Connections with trusted adults
 - Peer support groups

- Behavioral check-ins
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) groups or programs
- Needs-based therapy
- Cool-down space

Year 2 Supplemental Participant Data

At the end of the 2025-2026 school year, school-based teams collected data on 154 program participants with varying levels of engagement, growth, and needed support. Key highlights and takeaways from this data include:

- 104 students (68% of those in the available data set) were regularly engaged in school-based Community Builders programming. Examples of Community Builders activities during the school year included:
 - Afterschool programs
 - Lunch and learn sessions
 - Mentoring groups
 - Fitness training sessions
 - Weekend camping and outdoor activities
 - Community service projects
- 143 students (93%) were at least intermittently engaged, balancing Community Builders programming with other school and community engagement activities such as:
 - School sports (basketball, cheer, baseball, soccer, track, wrestling, softball, etc.)
 - Travel sports
 - Student government
 - National Junior Honor Society
 - Band/Choir/Theater
 - 21st Century Afterschool Program
 - Superintendent's Student Advisory Council
 - School clubs
- Staff indicated that 73 participants (47%) demonstrated exceptional growth and another 56 participants (35%) demonstrated modest growth, with the following examples provided as evidence of the demonstrated growth:
 - Demonstration of significant progress on WIDA English language proficiency assessments
 - Reduction in disciplinary actions (classroom, bus, etc.)
 - Expanded social circles and improved confidence
 - Growth in empathy, respect, and emotional regulation
 - Effort to try new experiences and engage socially

- Establish stable friendships
- Completion of apprenticeship program and attainment of employment
- Service as coach in Rising Up program
- Staff recommend general or specific support for 25 participants (16%) as the transition to high school. Examples of these recommended supports include:
 - Connection with trusted adults
 - Find a community for belonging
 - Mentoring
 - Access to clubs
 - Access to leadership opportunities
 - College-based counseling
 - Positive behavior interventions and supports
 - Positive peer influences/Peer support groups
 - Behavioral check-ins
- A total of 31 original 2024 Summer Cohort students participated in individual interviews and completed an end-of-year 9th grade survey administered by school counselors.
 - Survey data from 31 students shows strong overall belonging, optimism, and future planning:
 - Sense of belonging: 77% (24/31) feel they matter, 13% (4) sometimes, 10% (3) unsure.
 - Future outlook: 100% report a positive outlook—55% (17) very positive, 45% (14) somewhat positive.
 - College interest: 65% (20) plan to attend, 32% (10) maybe, 3% (1) not interested.
 - Career awareness: 61% (19) can identify a career, 23% (7) cannot, 16% (5) unsure.
 - Peer value (1–5 scale): 71% rate 4–5 (22 students), 23% rate 3 (7), 6% rate 1 (2), indicating generally strong peer belonging.
 - Program interest (Community Builders): 65% (20) would join, ~19% (6) might join, with a few already participating or unsure.
- Qualitative responses reinforce these findings: most students report feeling more connected due to relationships, activities, and increased confidence, while a small number report no change or less connection. Key support needs identified include hands-on learning, academic help, more clubs/career exposure, and a positive, encouraging school environment.

- Overall, the data reflects high student optimism and connection, with opportunities to strengthen career exploration and academic support systems.
- These findings suggest that Community Builders can play a critical role in supporting students during the 9th-grade transition by fostering strong relationships with peers and adults, increasing students' sense of belonging and value, providing structured opportunities for career exploration, and creating engaging, supportive environments that promote academic success and personal growth.

Addressing Needs, Challenges, and Barriers to Implementation

Additional Actions Taken Based on Identified Needs

Ongoing Student Identification & Support:

- Continuous work with school counselors, administrators, and teachers to identify and enroll students needing additional academic, behavioral, and truancy interventions.
- Expansion of programming to high schools, ensuring students receive necessary support for positive engagement and personal growth.
- Expansion of partnerships with community organizations and vendors to enhance programming, provide enrichment activities, and expand access to resources that support student success.
- Flexibility in Programming:
 - Adjusting Community Builders activities to accommodate student schedules and needs, ensuring a balance between school commitments and program participation.
 - Offering varied engagement opportunities, including school day check-ins and alternative meeting times, to support students unable to attend in-person events.

Challenges & Barriers

Fluctuating Data in Discipline, Attendance, and Grades: As more students with significant needs are added to the program, data in these areas may fluctuate before showing long-term improvement. Progress tracking requires continuous adjustments and monitoring.

Transportation Limitations: Limited transportation options sometimes prevent students from participating in off-campus activities, restricting access to experiential learning and community events.

Conflicting Student Commitments: Student participation fluctuates due to involvement in school sports, fine arts, and other extracurricular activities. Working on scheduling flexibility and communication strategies to increase engagement while respecting students' other commitments. Some of these changes have included hosting "Lunch and Learn" sessions during the school day or before-school activities. These adjustments allowed students to remain engaged with Community Builders programming despite their busy extracurricular schedules.

Despite these challenges, RCPS remains committed to expanding opportunities, refining support strategies, and building sustainable solutions to enhance student success and engagement.

Leadership Development

During RCPS' Needs Assessment phase, staff identified Community Builders as a valuable avenue for developing emerging leaders within Roanoke City Public Schools.

Building on that success, both Summer 2025 site leaders continued the established model for professional growth and leadership development. One is enrolled in Radford University's educational leadership cohort, while the other began a doctoral degree in education at Radford University. Both used their experiences with Community Builders to strengthen their leadership skills and knowledge, deepen community engagement, and positively impact student outcomes.

In the summer of 2026, two new site leaders were selected to lead summer programming as part of the Community Builders leadership development effort. One leader is a recent graduate of Radford University's Educational Leadership cohort and is pursuing a pathway toward school administration. The second leader, a Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher in Roanoke City Public Schools' Teachers for Tomorrow program, brings valuable instructional expertise and practical experience. Together, they provide strong support to site staff, equipping navigators with effective Tier 1 classroom strategies and strengthening overall program implementation.

Extending Available Funds: Summer 2026 Programming

As of this Final Report, implementation of Community Builders summer 2026 programming is in progress, led by a new team of emerging school leaders. With 135 student applicants and a first week daily attendance average of 82 students, 61%, the program continues to demonstrate positive momentum. Programming includes Career and Technical Education Mondays where students will cycle through CTE courses offered at both RCPS CTE sites with current RCPS CTE teachers to build excitement and interest in these courses in high school. College trips will include Radford University, Hollins University, Roanoke College, Virginia Tech, and Virginia Western Community College. The summer of 2026 will feature workshops and team activities lead by The Roanoke Gun Violence Prevention Commission on being a Gun Lock Ambassador along with ways to get involved in local gun violence prevention work. A Tree Planted Collective will provide counseling on building community. Lastly, Partnership for Community Wellness will provide education on addiction, mental health, and homelessness.

Summary of VCSI Stage 1–5 Self-Reflection

This summary provides an overview of Community Builders' progress across the Virginia Community Schools Initiative (VCSI) Stages 1–5. More detailed analysis, ratings, and evidence can be found in the full VCSI Stage 1–5 Self-Reflection Document.

Stage 1–2: Foundational Development and Initial Implementation

Overview: The Community Builders program has established a strong foundation through data-informed decision-making, growing community partnerships, and collaborative leadership structures. Site Leaders utilize Student Needs Assessments and Synergy Data Reports to monitor attendance, academics, and behavior, adjusting support as needed. Community Builders program to implement EZReports afterschool student management system. EZReports will strengthen our work in **VCSI Stage 1–2 (Foundational Development and Initial Implementation)** by providing automated, grant-aligned reporting that eliminates manual data cleaning and ensures audit-ready documentation. The platform supports real-time, positive attendance tracking and flexible site management for field trips, camps, and enrichment activities, allowing accurate and consistent implementation across sites. Additionally, EZReports integrates participation data with outcome tracking and built-in surveys, enabling RCPS to clearly measure program impact on attendance, behavior, academic progress, and social-emotional growth.

Highlights:

- Increased program visibility through presentations to VSBA, Roanoke City School Board, and City of Roanoke's Gun Violence Prevention Commission.
 - VSBA recognized Community Builders as the 2nd Place recipient for school divisions with an enrollment of over 10,000 students for its inaugural Showcasing Innovation Award in 2025.
 - <https://www.vsba.org/news/press-releases/news-release-first-annual-showcasing-innovation-award-winners/>
 - VSBA 2026 Showcases for Success: Community Builders
 - <https://www.vsba.org/resources/initiatives/showcases-for-success/>
- Shared leadership emerging through consistent communication, site-level autonomy, and data-informed planning.
- Partnerships formalized through MOUs ensure consistent support in areas such as mental health, crisis response, and physical needs.

Next Steps: Refine data reflection practices, formalize shared leadership structures, and enhance multilingual and equitable family engagement strategies.

Stage 3: Deepening Implementation

Overview: At this stage, RCPS has built strong partnerships to meet basic needs and support students' mental health and motivation. Schools provide access to food, clothing, and hygiene resources, as well as mentoring and trauma-informed support. However, outreach and systematic evaluation practices remain in areas for growth.

Highlights:

- Expanded partnerships with health and wellness providers.
- Implementation of SEL practices and counseling opportunities.
- Increased enrichment and engagement opportunities for students.

Next Steps: Increase student and family feedback loops, create student and staff advisory panels, and strengthen systems for measuring engagement and emotional well-being.

Stage 4: Sustaining the Work

Overview: HB1153 directly advances **VCSI Stage 4: Sustaining the Work** by making the existing Community Builders Pilot Program permanent and removing the July 1, 2027 sunset provision. By formally renaming it the *Community Builders Program*, the legislation shifts the initiative from a temporary pilot to a stable,

institutionalized framework—providing long-term structural legitimacy and positioning it for ongoing state investment through the general appropriation process.

Additionally, the bill designates Roanoke City Public Schools as the statewide demonstration model site (subject to appropriations), requiring the division to host and train other school divisions seeking replication.

Next Steps: Next steps include monitoring the implementation timeline of HB1153, preparing a formal demonstration and training framework for statewide replication, and aligning budget, staffing, and evaluation systems to support long-term sustainability.

Stage 5: Scaling and Continuous Improvement

Overview: Community Builders has expanded into all five middle schools with promising results and has broadened summer programming to deepen career exposure and engagement. RCPS has expanded programming into Patrick Henry High School and William Fleming High School. Currently at PHHS, 9th grader Community Builders have partnered with AVID classes for career and college exploration and have taken field trips.

In 2025 and 2026, the program supported the “Dream It, Build It Manufacturing Summer Camp” which offers a hands-on summer program designed to introduce rising 8th- and 9th-grade students to manufacturing, skilled trades, and STEM career pathways. Students will gain practical experience in welding, CNC machining, fabrication, and engineering design while developing problem-solving, collaboration, and technical skills.

Pedal Forward summer Bike Camp is a newly developed program designed to expand Community Builders' programming. As an optional extension of the Community Builders summer program, it provides participants with continued engagement through hands-on biking experiences. Many Community Builders students choose to stay and participate in after-camp sessions, demonstrating their enthusiasm and desire to remain engaged rather than leaving early. Through this initiative, students ride, learn, and build confidence while developing real-world skills, maintaining active lifestyles, and strengthening leadership abilities both on and off the bike.

While strong operational structures are in place, a formalized continuous improvement cycle, consistent high school programming, and a multi-year funding strategy remain priority areas for growth.

Next Steps:

- Formalize and implement a continuous improvement framework aligned with VCSI standards (data review cycles, outcome benchmarking, and stakeholder feedback loops).
- Develop a multi-year sustainability and funding diversification plan to support both academic year and summer expansion.
- Establish consistent high school programming to sustain middle school momentum and strengthen 9th-grade transition supports.
- Formalizing Demonstration Site policies and procedures, along with developing clear implementation deliverables to support expansion. These efforts will help increase statewide interest and guide the growth of Community Builders programming across Virginia.

Recommendations for Legislators, Policymakers, and Local School Divisions

The Community Builders Pilot Program provided Roanoke City Public Schools supplemental resources to intentionally build students' sense of belonging and likelihood of future success through community engagement, career and postsecondary education exploration, as well as social-emotional education. The following recommendations are intended to assist legislators, policymakers, and local school divisions considering ways to maximize the benefit of the invested pilot funds and continue to improve communities throughout the Commonwealth.

1. For Legislators:

- a. Designate RCPS as a "Community Builders Demonstration Site" to allow visits from other school divisions interested in implementing a similar program.
- b. Examine multiple additional data points, local initiatives, and community-based factors to determine further actions and investments that are most likely to result in sustained reductions in youth violence.

2. For Policymakers:

- a. Formally integrate Community Builders with the Virginia Community Schools Initiative for structure and support.
- b. Consider opportunities for partnerships with institutions of higher education to conduct small scale research projects, based on the Community Builders Pilot, which may serve to inform and improve practices across the Commonwealth.

3. For Local School Boards:

- a. Connect with RCPS Community Builders program staff to discuss scalable opportunities for implementation.
- b. Intentionally integrate opportunities for emerging school and division leaders to participate in professional learning related to purchasing, payroll, field trip guidelines, formalizing partnerships, transportation, and other essentials in areas of operations and finance which are critical to the successful implementation of Community Builders programming.

The above recommendations are intended to serve as a next step, facilitating further dialogue and continuing the work that originated with the Community Builders Pilot in Roanoke City Public Schools.

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Delegate Sam Rasoul	Ms. Claire Dobson, School- Based Leader	Hollins University
Senator David Sueterlein	Ms. Kiana Bell, School-Based Leader	Virginia State University
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Ms. Makayla McMullen, Site Leader	Humble Hustle	Office of Veteran Affairs
Ms. Brianna Gallatin, Site Leader	Motivate The Game	Splash Valley Waterpark
Ms. Morgan Hill, Site Leader	Let's Conquer Fitness	Press Press Merch
Ms. Rosemary Rincon, Site Leader	Empower Her	Total Action for Progress
Mr. Joshua Wilkinson, Site Leader	Zum Transportation	Roanoke Sheriff's Office
Ms. Edna Janney, Site Leader	Family Service of Roanoke Valley	Roanoke City Government
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