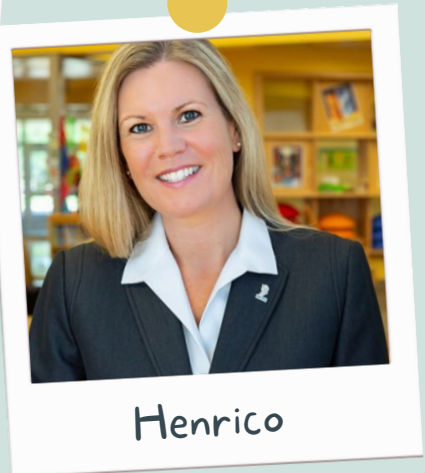


AUGUST 20-23, 2023

BACK TO SCHOOL



PRAYER GUIDE

www.forrichmond.org/resources





BACK TO SCHOOL PRAYER GUIDE



Introduction

On Monday, August 21st, over 153,000 precious young people will walk through the doors of public schools in Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico and Richmond to begin the new school year. If you've ever spent time in a school, you know that some students will enter the year with joy and hopeful anticipation, and that others will enter carrying heavy burdens that no child should have to bear.

Through the For Richmond network's partnerships with schools across Metro Richmond, we know that students walking through those doors are dealing with food and housing insecurity, mental health challenges, neglect and abuse, violence in their communities, and more. We also know that schools need the broader community to come around them and help.

This year, we've asked our superintendents to share specific ways that we can be praying for the children, teachers, and administrators in their respective district. They've also provided some next steps for getting involved.

Our hope is that you will pray each day from August 20th-23rd, providing our schools with unified and effectual prayer and that you will also grow in compassion for the students in your own locality and those around Metro Richmond. Today, we'll start with a devotional that was created by our volunteer, Lauren Northcutt, who has served as a teacher in both Richmond Public Schools and at Imago Dei School:

Why God Cares

God created each and every one of us in the imago dei – in His image (Genesis 1:27). Through this pronouncement, He has bestowed magnificence and dignity upon each member of society even down to the little children, so all children, whether in Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, or Richmond, are close to God's heart. He has charged us with a special responsibility to welcome children (Matthew 18:5) and "train them up" (Proverbs 22:6) in the way they should go.

Why We Do This Together

We all want to live in a place where we and our neighbors are flourishing – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. God wants these things as well, but no one person can accomplish this on their own. The good news is that together, we can! Together, we can unite in prayer for the flourishing of our communities. Together, we can be faithful stewards of the gifts that God has given us to serve those around us, helping children realize their God-given potential.

Scriptures to Consider

- Matthew 18:4-5 "Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me"
- Mark 10:14 "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
- Deuteronomy 11:19 "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."
- Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it."
- 1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."



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Jason Kamras, Ed.M.
Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools

Mr. Kamras views public education as a means of promoting equity and justice for all children in the United States. He holds a bachelor's degree in public policy from Princeton University and a master's degree in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

What are you excited & hopeful about for the 2023-24 school year?

I'm excited about RPS 200, a new pilot program at Cardinal Elementary School and Fairfield Court Elementary School that adds 20 additional instructional days to the school year to help students catch up from the impacts of the pandemic. If the pilot is successful, we hope to expand it to more schools. I'm also excited about our wellness initiatives, our academic focus on student ownership of learning, and operational changes that will help make RPS more efficient.

What challenges are you facing?

The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges that many of our families face, including poverty, housing instability, food insecurity, healthcare access, and community gun violence. It also had education specific impacts, including a drop in test scores, much higher rates of students experiencing mental health issues, and a shortage of teachers and other staff.

What are some prayer points?

1. Pray that our students, families, teachers, staff and administrators receive grace and give themselves grace
2. Pray that our children are loved for exactly who they are – no matter how they define themselves
3. Pray that our community comes together to end the scourge of youth gun violence

What are some next steps?

- Ask your church if they partner with a school and if they do, join in what's already happening
- Mentoring students
- Volunteering at schools
- Serving on the superintendent's Interfaith Advisory Council
- Contributing to the RPS Education Foundation
- Advocating at the General Assembly for increased education funding

RPS AT A GLANCE:

Enrollment: 21,706 students

Racial & Ethnic Groups: 60.5% Black, 25% Hispanic, 10.7% White, 2.7% Multiple Races, 0.8% Asian, 0.2% American Indian

Students with Disabilities: 13.1%

Economically Disadvantaged: 68.3%

English Learners: 19.5%



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Dr. Mervin B. Daugherty **Superintendent, Chesterfield County Public Schools**

Mervin B. Daugherty, Ed.D., is entering his 15th year as a superintendent. Before becoming Chesterfield's superintendent in 2018 he was superintendent 2009-2018 for the Red Clay Consolidated School District in Delaware and was named 2015-16 Delaware Superintendent of the Year.

What are you excited & hopeful about for the 2023-24 school year?

The largest school system in central Virginia, Chesterfield County Public Schools is energized to start the 2023-24 school year and support academic growth for our 64,000+ students. We will continue to instill rigorous coursework and promote strong career and technical skills for student success. At the start of school and throughout the year, we encourage students, families, and staff members to show up for each other, show up with kindness, and show up ready to learn.

What challenges are you facing?

Chesterfield County Public Schools consistently faces challenges from the issues in our society as we work to prepare students for successful futures as strong citizens. Safety is always a priority. Student enrollment continues to increase, leading to the need for additional schools. Funding is a major concern for the school division as we work to meet student and staff needs and manage general operations and school building maintenance.

What are some prayer points?

We ask for prayers for the safety of staff and students in schools and on school buses and wisdom for our staff members to meet the daily needs of our children and the school division.

What are some next steps?

- Ask your church if they partner with a school and if they do, join in what's already happening
- Volunteer in schools
- Support students with school supplies
- Become a mentor for students
- Support the Chesterfield Education Foundation

CCPS AT A GLANCE:

Enrollment: 63,962 students

Racial & Ethnic Groups: 34.9% White, 26.4% Black, 20.7% Hispanic, 5.4% Multiple Races, 3.2% Asian, 0.2% American Indian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian

Students with Disabilities: 12.4%

Economically Disadvantaged: 37.5%

English Learners: 14.1%



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Dr. Amy E. Cashwell **Superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools**

Dr. Amy E. Cashwell has served as superintendent of Henrico County Public Schools since July 2018. She provides leadership and direction for Virginia's sixth-largest school division, which has 72 schools and program centers, serving nearly 50,000 students. She is committed to maintaining Henrico's legacy of excellence, working collaboratively to build upon the division's reputation for academic innovation, and elevating issues of equity, diversity and cultural responsiveness.

What are you excited & hopeful about for the 2023-24 school year?

The Henrico community has so many reasons to be excited about the new school year. Our phenomenal teachers, principals and staff are creating dynamic learning spaces where every student is valued, supported, and has a sense of hope and belonging. As superintendent, I am thrilled by the expansion of our Advanced Career Education Centers, the new learning space within Regency Mall for our adult learners and CTE students, and the meaningful, relevant learning that is taking place at all levels to prepare our students to be life-ready. That starts with strong foundational learning, career exploration, and multiple pathways to success based on student interests and choice.

What challenges are you facing?

Henrico Schools, like so many of our neighboring communities and school divisions nationwide, faces challenges with increasing student needs. In some cases that may be food or housing insecurity; other times students may need additional mental health support. We strive to support the whole child while focusing on academic growth for all.

What are some prayer points?

The needs of our school community are as diverse as the nearly 50,000 students themselves. I simply ask our friends, neighbors and families to keep all students in their thoughts with wishes for continued safety, wellness, and above all, love and happiness.

What are some next steps?

We welcome our community into our schools as volunteers, mentors, substitute teachers and full- and part-time employees. I encourage everyone to visit the division website, henricoschools.us to explore the many opportunities to join our HCPS family.

HCPS AT A GLANCE:

Enrollment: 50,389 Students

Racial & Ethnic Groups: 35.7% Black, 33.2% White, 12.5% Hispanic, 12.1% Asian, 5.2% Multiple Races, 0.3% American Indian 0.1% Native Hawaiian

Students with Disabilities: 13.2%

Economically Disadvantaged: 44%

English Learners: 11.9%